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OTTOMENTALITY: NEOLIBERAL GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE
AND NEO-OTTOMAN MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSITY IN
TURKEY

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

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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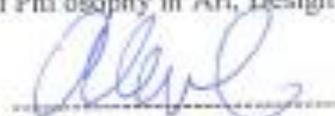
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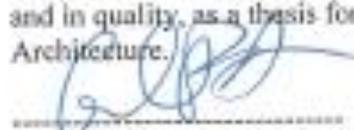


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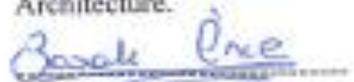
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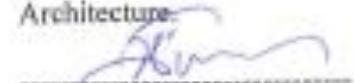
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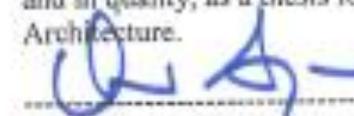
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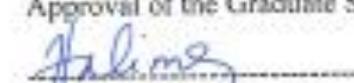
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ABSTRACT

OTTOMENTALITY: NEOLIBERAL GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE AND NEO-OTTOMAN MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSITY

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Since the 2000s Turkey has witnessed a growing array of cultural productions and sites ranging from television series to history museums featuring the magnificence of the Ottoman legacy. Contemporary cultural analyses often interpret this phenomenon as cultural expressions of the Justice and Development Party's (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*; AKP) Islamist ideology and foreign policy known as neo-Ottomanism. Nonetheless, this interpretation tends to overlook the complexity and underestimate its socio-political implications. This study draws attention to the analytical limitations of neo-Ottomanism and develops an alternative concept—*Ottomentality*—in order to more adequately assess Turkey's renewed Ottoman motto. By incorporating the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality, the study proposes to look beyond the “ideology” and “foreign policy” interpretations and reconceptualize neo-Ottomanism not only as a distinct form of governmentality, but

also in collaborative terms with neoliberal governmentality. Ottomentality is deployed here to underscore the discursive governing practices that are generated by the convergence of neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism as a means of cultural intervention. By critically engaging with the areas of history museums, television, and cinema, this study aims to examine the AKP's neoliberal approach to culture and neo-Ottoman management of diversity. The study contends that the convergence of these two rationalities has significantly transformed the state's approach to culture as a way of governing the social, produced a particular knowledge of Ottoman-Islamic multiculturalism, and constituted a citizen-subject who is increasingly subjected to exclusion and discipline for expressing critical views of this knowledge.

Keywords: Culture, Governmentality, Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*; AKP), Neoliberalism, Neo-Ottomanism

ÖZET

OTTOMENTALITY: KÜLTÜRÜN NEO-LİBERAL YÖNETİMSELLİĞİ VE KÜTÜREL FARKLILIK YENİ OSMANLICI İDARESİ

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Türkiye 2000lerden bu yana televizyon dizilerinden tarih müzelerine uzanan ve Osmanlı mirasının görkemini ön plana çıkaran kültürel bir oluşumun gelişimine tanıklık etmektedir. Günümüzde ortaya konan kültürel analizler bu oluşumu Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisinin hem İslamci ideolojisinde hem de dış ilişkelere yaklaşımında gözlenen ve yeni Osmanlıcilik olarak bilinen yaklaşımın kültürel bir yansıması olarak ele almaktadırlar. Ancak, bu iki alana odaklanmak, hem mevzunun karmaşıklığını gözardı etme hem de bu kültürel olayın sosyo-politik içerimlerini azımsama riskini beraberinde getirmektedir. Bu çalışma yeni Osmanlıcilik yaklaşımının analitik yetersizliklerine dikkat çekmekte ve Türkiye’de yeniden ortaya çıkan Osmanlı mottosunu daha yeterli değerlendirebilmek adına *Ottomentality* konseptini geliştirmektedir. Foucaultcu yönetimsellik bakış açısını kullanan bu çalışma ‘ideoloji’ ve ‘dış ilişkiler’ alanlarının ötesine bakarak, yeni Osmanlıcilik’in sadece kendine özgü bir yönetimsellik olarak anlaşılmasının ve neo-liberal yönetimsellik ile ilişkilendirilerek yeniden kavramsallaştırılmasının gerekliliğini ileri sürmektedir. Bu çalışmada, Ottomentality kavramı, yeni

Osmanlılık ve neo-liberalizmin buluşması ile ortaya çıkan söylemsel yönetim pratiklerinin bir tür kültürel müdahale olduğunun altını çizmektedir. Tarihi müzeler, televizyon programları ve sinema filmlerinin eleştirel sorgulamasından yola çıkan bu çalışma, AKP hükümetinin kültüre neo-liberal yaklaşımını ve yeni Osmanlılık'ın çeşitliliği idaresini incelemektedir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, neo-liberalizm ve neo-Osmanlılık'ın iç içe geçmesinin, devletin kültüre olan yaklaşımını sosyal olanı yönetme anlamında önemli derecede değiştirdiğini, Osmanlı-Islami çokkültürlülüğüne dair belirli bir bilgi ürettiğini, ve bu bilgiye dair eleştirel tavır takınan öznelere artan oranelerde kontrol ve dışlamaya tabi tutan bir yurttaşlık yarattığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: AKP, Kültür, Neo-liberalizm, Yeni Osmanlılık, Yönetimsellik

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First of all, this is an acknowledgement of motherhood. Yes, motherhood. It has to be acknowledged here because it too often goes unacknowledged in the professional space of academia, especially in graduate school. Too often grad school moms are faced with the exhausting challenge of finding balance, reward, and sense of self-worth in both academia and motherhood. And too often grad school moms have to fight their way through the lack of institutional support and work twice as hard in order to prove what they are capable of. This doctoral study has been a long and rough journey. Being able to arrive at the end of this journey, I am indebted to those who have accompanied me in different ways and at different stages. Without them, none of this would have been possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the establishment period of the Turkish Republic in the early 20th century, the republican elites sought to construct a modern, secular, and culturally homogeneous national identity out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. In order to achieve this end, they launched radical cultural reforms to contain religion in the private sphere and Ottoman history in the forgotten past (Çınar, 2005; Çolak, 2006; Kasaba, 1997). In the 1980s and 1990s, during the heyday of Turkish political Islam, the Ottoman-Islamic past was evoked by the Islamists as an alternative to the unitary idea of Turkish national cultural identity that was defined by the early republican elites (Çınar, 2005; Çolak, 2006; Onar, 2009a; Ongur, 2015). The Turkish Islamists' effort to revitalize the Ottoman-Islamic past is commonly known as neo-Ottomanism—a “re-identification process” that seeks to assert Ottoman-Islam as an essential component of Turkish national identity (Ongur, 2015). Not only did this so-called re-identification process take place in domains that are

conventionally defined as politics, but also was evident in the *less political* spheres where symbolisms of Ottoman-Islamic heritage were deployed in everyday practices to announce political significance. As Alev Çinar (2005) observed in the 1990s, public manifestation of Ottoman-Islamic symbolisms, such as the history of the 1453 conquest of Istanbul, the Islamic headscarf, and the use of public space could be interpreted as forms of “performative politics” through which the Islamists articulated their vision of nation and modernity. Nonetheless, since public displays associated with the Ottoman-Islamic imperial past were deemed as direct confrontation to the republic’s founding principles of secularism and modernity, judicial and military actions were often deployed to control their presence in the public life of society. The military coups that took place in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997 (also known as the “postmodern” or “soft” coup) are examples of the state’s effort at maintaining the homogeneity and secular nature of the republic.

Since the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*; AKP) came to power in 2002 and has continued to rule as a single-party government well into a second decade, neo-Ottomanism not only has gained its momentum, but also has a different configuration and novel forms of practice. In its latest phase, neo-Ottomanism is no longer an oppositional force responding to the republic’s founding principles as it has become the governing power. It is not simply a political rhetoric or doctrine of the Islamist hegemons. Nor is it merely a domestic and foreign policy that aims to realign Turkey’s position in the changing global order. Neo-Ottomanism today has evolved into a distinct style of governing rationality that draws on (politicized) Islam and a selective reading of Ottoman

tolerance and pluralism as a pragmatic framework for shaping the moral values and inter-cultural relations in society. It does so by merging with neoliberal governing rationality that the underlying principle of which is to decentralize the state from the strong grid of the Kemalist establishment and transforms its institutional practices based on market imperatives. By converting the public services provided by the state into new spheres of the free market, neoliberalism not only reconfigures the state, but also creates a condition where citizens are obliged to be responsible for conducting themselves as autonomous individuals and as a form of self-investment. Neoliberalism, in this respect, is not a standard policy framework that aims to restructure the economy and to integrate with and compete in the global market. It is a commonly accepted logic, a normative framework, for organizing different spheres of society and shaping social conducts. Like neo-Ottomanism, neoliberalism in Turkey has evolved through the course of history and formed alliances with different political thoughts and projects in order to respond to the changing questions concerning government. At its current stage, Turkey's neoliberalism has merged with neo-Ottomanism and generated innovative ways of governing culture and the social. It is the profile of the unique combination of these two rationalities that the study seeks to capture.

Turkey's latest phase of neo-Ottomanism is understood in this study as a product of these two distinct, yet compatible, governing rationalities. Both neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism have the same diagnosis of the problems of the Turkish society that it has lost its merits as a result of top-down secularization and

west-oriented modernization. They both seek to radically change the norms and ethics that guide social conduct. Neo-Ottomanism today is a moral-political rationality inseparable from the market-political rationality (Brown, 2006). Their convergence in various areas of social domain has a new set of ethics and new modalities of governance. This study focuses on the cultural domain where the two rationalities have formed a peculiar alliance. It examines how the convergence of neoliberal and neo-Ottoman rationalities has an effect on the relationship between culture, government, and society.

Over the last decade, Turkey's cultural field has witnessed an unprecedented phenomenon marked by its fervor for everything Ottoman. This revived Ottoman craze is evident in a wide spectrum of cultural sites and productions, including television series and city museums featuring the glories of Ottoman-Islamic legacy. It has also become Turkey's national motto or brand, imprinted on such products as media exports and touristic cities like Istanbul. This sweeping cultural phenomenon is often understood as the cultural dimension of the AKP government's neo-Ottomanism—referring to its approach to domestic and foreign politics based upon the Islamist universal values of imperialism, Islamism, and pluralism (Çolak, 2006; Onar, 2009a). However, unlike its earlier phase during the 1980s and 1990s, the current configuration of (cultural) neo-Ottomanism has novel characteristics and a distinctive pattern of operation. As Hakan Övünç Ongur (2015) notes, it is the “banal” and “mundane” ways of everyday practice of society itself, rather than the government and state, which distinguishes this emergent form of neo-Ottomanism from its earlier phases. For example, the celebration of the 1453 Istanbul conquest

is no longer merely initiated by Islamist political actors, but has been widely promulgated, reproduced, and consumed by private individuals in various commercial commodities. The Panorama 1453 History Museum, a fun park ride called the Conqueror's Dream (*Fatih'in Rüyası*) at the Istanbul Vialand Theme Park, the highly publicized and top-grossing blockbuster *The Conquest 1453 (Fetih 1453)*, and the primetime television costume drama *The Conqueror (Fatih)* constitute only a portion of this emergent cultural ensemble. The current form of neo-Ottomanism more often takes place in the expanding free market than in the conventionally defined sphere of politics. When converted into commercial commodities, symbols of Ottoman-Islamic heritage become an asset for advancing Turkey in global competition. When evoked as Turkey's national cultural heritage, advocates of neo-Ottomanism claim that it is a vehicle for enhancing social cohesion and promoting a culture of tolerance, peace, and diversity. Now, public manifestation of the Ottoman-Islamic past is no longer under scrutiny of the military state or disciplined by law for its subversive orientation against principles of the secularist republic; it is the emblem, trademark, of the 'new Turkey'.

Despite the claim that Turkey's renewed Ottoman motto promotes a culture of tolerance, peace, and diversity, recent cultural developments indicate a paradox, or reverse, of its expression. For instance, as part of Istanbul's urban renewal plan for transforming the city into a global cultural and financial center, the AKP administration proposed to reconstruct the Taksim Square—one of the most symbolic public spaces signifying the secular and modern Turkish republic. The urban renewal plan included demolishing the Atatürk Cultural Center and replacing

it with a new recreational center, shopping mall, and mosque on site. By evoking structures and signs associated with the golden age of the Ottoman Empire, the AKP administration sought to take this opportunity to transform Istanbul, and to stage Turkey, as a civilization of tolerance where different cultures and faiths peacefully coexist (Aksoy, 2009). And by adopting neoliberal imperatives, the government called upon private initiatives to undertake the task of promoting Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage by investing in the cultural field (Aksoy, 2009). Nonetheless, in 2013 when civilians protested against the demolition of Gezi Park in Taksim, at first over environmental issues, the government used the police force, shut down the media (especially social media), and arrested protesters as means to silence dissents from the diverse society. The Gezi protest, which became a mass anti-government movement across the country that year, perhaps signals a tipping point where the AKP's experiment with the universal ideas of tolerance and pluralism inspired by the Ottoman-Islamic history began to crumble.

The growing social tension between the government and the governed resulting from conflicting views of Turkey's cultural heritage, cultural diversity, and individual freedoms was also evident in other areas of cultural life. In 2011, the popular television series *Magnificent Century* (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*; *Muhteşem* hereafter), which attracted wide viewership in Turkey and abroad, faced accusations from conservative circles and government officials for its (mis)representation of Ottoman history and violation of moral-religious values. In 2016, similar accusations were made against the sequel of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem*. The sequel was levied a monetary penalty from RTÜK (Radio and

Television Supreme Board) for its negative effects on family values and “the psychological health of children and youth” (“Kösem’e şok ceza!,” 2016). The two cases are explicit examples of the AKP government’s endeavor in regulating the cultural domain and managing diverse views of the Ottoman past. They reveal the tangled relationships between the administration, policy, state, and civil society as well as their constituent roles in producing the conditions for reshaping the ethics of conduct of the cultural domain.

How do we understand the transformation of the current phase of neo-Ottomanism, which is marked by society-based, market-oriented, and mundane characteristics? What are the forces that gave shape to its unprecedented configuration? What kind of power relation is formulated within this cultural phenomenon? What implications does this cultural formation have for an increasingly polarized Turkish society along the lines of ethnicity, moral-religious values, and cultural difference? And what analytic tools do we have for comprehending this emergent phenomenon? These are the initial guiding questions of this study as it assesses the formation and societal significance of what I call a neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble.

1.1 On culture and governmentality

In order to assess the proliferating neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble in relation to the question of the social, I employ the Foucauldian perspective of “governmentality” and the notion of “the technologies of the self” as my analytical

lens. This approach is different from the conventional practices of Turkish studies, which primarily focuses on domains that are traditionally defined as politics. It focuses on the seemingly apolitical cultural practices and seeks to understand how culture is interwoven into the processes government. It also breaks away from predominant contemporary cultural debates, which tend to interpret this particular cultural formation as part of the AKP's ideological machinery. It follows an interdisciplinary framework formulated by such pioneer scholars as Tony Bennett, who in the last two decades has stressed the utility of Foucauldian scholarship in cultural studies for rethinking the question of culture and power.

Before addressing the influence of Michel Foucault's work in cultural studies and how it informs my approach to Turkey's emergent neo-Ottoman cultural phenomenon, a note on governmentality is necessary. In the 1970s, Foucault introduced the notion of governmentality in his lectures on "Security, Territory, and Population". His study at the time was concerned about the general problematic of government and of the government of oneself. He suggests that the general problematic of government emerged as a distinctive characteristic of the 16th century Europe at a historical conjuncture where movements of the Catholic Church reform, colonial and territorial expansions, and problems of religious dissidence raised such issues as "how to be ruled, how strictly, by whom, to what end, by what methods, etc." (Foucault, 1991, pp. 87–88). Government, as Foucault defines, is "understood as an activity that undertakes to conduct individuals throughout their lives by placing them under the authority of a guide responsible for what they do and for what happens to them" (Foucault, 1997, p. 67). It is "a right

manner of disposing things so as to lead not to the form of the common good [...] but to an end which is 'convenient' for each of the things that are to be governed" (Foucault, 1991, p. 95). Foucault's conception of government therefore entails the whole range of governing activities for managing the conduct of individuals. In his 1978-1979 lectures entitled "The Birth of Biopolitics", Foucault formulated his thought of neoliberalism as a distinctive form of governing rationality in modern liberal societies that aims at creating the "social conditions that encourage and necessitate the production of *Homoeconomicus*, a historically specific form of subjectivity constituted as a free and autonomous 'atom' of self-interest" (Hamann, 2009). He argues that the strategies, programs, and technologies pertaining to governing different areas of social life based on neoliberal rationality are characteristic of many modern liberal societies.

As Nikolas Rose (1999; 2006) notes, governmentality, "neither a concept nor a theory", is a "perspective" for analyzing political power through specific empirical inquiries. To conduct an analysis of governmentality therefore is to raise questions concerning the activities of government that aim at regulating individuals' behaviors in different areas of social life. It requires one to identify the problematics of government (i.e. government of children, of sexuality, or of security), the different styles of thought for answering the questions of government, the knowledges that they draw from and produce, the discursive practices that make these thoughts intelligible and technical, their intersections and contradictions with other forms of governmentalities, and their innovative means and failures (Rose, O'Malley, & Valverde, 2006). An analysis of governmentality is also a critique of

the *arts of government*. Rose further points out that the perspective of governmentality does not focus on any single body of power, be it the state or government, as the sole source of managing the conduct of citizens. Rather, it takes into account the whole range of governing practices pertaining to guiding citizens to become autonomous individuals of self-interest within a prescribed set of ethical rules (Rose, 1999). Hence, studies of governmentality pay attention to the relation between macro and micro practices that are deployed for producing self-interest subjects and achieving the end of government through their own actions.

In the last three decades, Foucault's perspective of governmentality has been taken up by various disciplines in divergent ways. Cultural studies has incorporated governmentality studies in seeking different approaches to contemporary questions of culture and society. Tony Bennett in his works, *Putting Policy into Cultural Studies* (1992), *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (1995), *Culture: A Reformer's Science* (1998), and "Culture and Governmentality" (2003) has underscored what he calls "'the Foucault effect' in cultural studies". What he means by 'the Foucault effect' refers to the collection of Michel Foucault's lectures under the title *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (1991), which unpack Foucault's notions of police, power/knowledge, regimes of truth, and especially the perspective of governmentality have opened up new ways for conceptualizing culture and its relations with society and the social. Foucauldian studies of governmentality hence have informed Bennett's conception of culture, which is rather different from that of a Gramscian framework. He argues that culture is not merely what Raymond

Williams defined as “a whole way of life” (2011, p. 54) or what Stuart Hall would explain as “the sum of the different classificatory systems and discursive formations, on which language draws in order to give meaning to things” (Hall, 1997, p. 222 quoted in Bennett, 2003, p. 50). According to Bennett, culture is both an object and instrument of government. Culture is “a reformer’s science” in the sense that it is “embroiled in the processes of governing [...] to help form and shape the moral, mental, and behavioral characteristics of the population” (1998, p. 21). To view culture as an integral part of government therefore is to understand culture as a transformative force emanating from multiple and sometimes conflicting sources seeking to shape individual conducts within the domain of culture and *by means of culture*. As Jack Bratich, Jeremy Packer, and Cameron McCarthy remark on the inseparable relationship between culture and government in their edited volume *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality*,

In simplest terms, governmentality refers to the arts and rationalities of governing, where the conduct of conduct is the key activity. It is an attempt to reformulate the governor-governed relationship, one that does not make the relation dependent upon administrative machines, juridical institutions, or other apparatuses that usually get grouped under the rubric of the State. Rather [...] the conduct of conduct takes place at innumerable sites, through an array of techniques and programs that are usually defined as cultural (2003, p. 4).

It is in light of this view that Bennett conceptualizes culture as a regulatory force for managing conducts of citizens and transforming society. When culture is administered by a particular style of thought, organized in a certain order, and managed by following routine institutional procedures, it affects how individual

behaviors and different areas of social life are fashioned. When particular cultural phenomena are examined at their specific historical and political conjunctures, one can identify the coordinates where culture and government intersect. For example, Bennett in his ground breaking study of public museums in the 19th and 20th century Europe explains the ways in which the museum served as a crucial institutional practice for civilizing society. He suggests that the movement of modernization, the development of history as a form of modern science, and the formation of the museum as a social institution had collided with the ruling elites' project of civilizing the public. Through such museological techniques as collection and display of artifacts, architectural design, etc., the museum operated as a space where urban dwellers are taught to acquire refined manner and knowledge.

Although the literature of governmentality has focused on contexts of what Rose terms "advanced liberal democracies" where liberal government seeks to govern through individual liberty, a growing literature has been paying attention to illiberal elements and authoritarian types of rule operating within the structure of liberal democracy (Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 2013). For example, Wendy Brown (2006, 2015) has focused on the "de-democratic" effects of neoliberal governmentality in the United States. In Turkey, scholars of various disciplines also have paid attention to the neoconservative and authoritarian components of Turkish neoliberal governmentality (Acar & Altunok, 2013; Yeşil, 2016). The question being raised in this growing Foucauldian scholarship in the last decade or two is one that tries to make applicable the perspective of governmentality for analyzing different types of rule which may fall outside of the model of 'advanced liberal

democracies'. Mitchell Deans puts forward the questions concerning the efficacy of governmentality studies for analyzing illiberal and authoritarian types of rule:

How can the study of government illuminate questions of non-liberal and authoritarian rule both inside and outside these liberal democracies? What resources do we have for beginning to consider questions of liberal rule through non-liberal means, such as might be found in forms of colonial government? Moreover, how are we to understand the prevalence of motifs of race in liberal democracies and the rise of neo-conservatism as well as neoliberalism? And what tools do we possess for thinking about the technologies and rationalities of authoritarian forms of rule per se such as in the case of Nazi Germany or, to use a quite different and in no way equivalent example, contemporary China? (Dean, 2009, p. 155).

Dean's questions are particularly pertinent as they also raise questions for thinking about contemporary Turkey, where culture has become both a target of administrative reform and a governmental instrument for transforming society, albeit through illiberal means. This is, however, by no means to say that culture was never instrumentalized in the past for social reform or that it is only the AKP's innovative governing technology. The institutionalization of (high) culture as a means of modernization has a long history and tradition in Turkey (Katoğlu, 2009). However, since the early 2000s Turkey's cultural field has witnessed a distinct shift in the way it is administered. The socio-political significance of this shift in the changing governing rationalities of the cultural field is yet to be observed and demands further study. Since the conservative AKP administration came to power, it has vigorously sought to reform the cultural field based on neoliberal and neoconservative rationalities. By adopting neoliberal imperatives, the

administration claims that Turkey's cultural domain would be liberalized from excessive state and government interventions and would enhance civic participation, cultural tolerance and diversity (Ada, 2011; Ada & Ince, 2009). The administration also sees that Turkey's west-oriented vision of modernity has had negative effects on traditional values and morality. Therefore, by promoting Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage through a wide range of cultural productions and sites, the administration seeks to restore what it deems as a fragmenting Turkish identity and degenerating social values. Nevertheless, scholarship investigating the recent development of Turkey's cultural field, in particular the media sector, indicate an outcome opposite to what the administration had proclaimed. As Murat Akser and Banu Baybars-Hawks (2012) bluntly remark, the Turkish media environment under the AKP administration "is a historically conservative, redistributive, panoptic, and discriminatory media autocracy". Bilge Yeşil (2016) shares a similar view as she describes how the AKP-led neoliberal reform, which has enhanced the government's control over the media sector, is a real cause for Turkey's democracy deficiency and descent to authoritarianism.

It would be legitimate to ask at this point: How are we to understand the governing rationalities of the authoritarian type of rule in contemporary Turkey? What tools do we possess to analyze the illiberal elements of government within the structure of liberal democracy in Turkey? What inquiries are to be made for understanding the motifs of neo-Ottomanism and the rise of neoconservatism and neoliberalism in Turkey's cultural field? What are the problematics for the government of culture? What outcome does it seek? Who is its subject? And what

are the methods for constituting a subject who is both capable of self-care and obedient? In the chapters that follow, I seek answers to these questions through empirical data collected from sites where culture in general and Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage in specific are governmentalized.

1.2. On neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and neo-Ottomanism in Turkey

To conduct an analysis of the government of culture hence entails an investigation of the rationalities that are formulated to deal with the general problematics of culture at specific historical moments. In the case of contemporary Turkey, one can hardly think of culture, or other administrative units undergoing AKP-led reform, without making reference to neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and neo-Ottomanism—understood in this study as different styles of governing rationalities, which converge, conflict, and form ephemeral constellations that shape the practices of the government of culture.

The broad scholarship of neoliberalism which has expanded since the 1980s encompasses divergent conceptions of the term. In the last two decades, a growing body of literature has taken up the Foucauldian framework for understanding various forms of neoliberal governmentality (Brown, 2006, 2008, 2015; Dean, 2009; Larner, 2000, 2003; Rose, 1999). In this study, I employ Wendy Brown's and Wendy Larner's conception, which interprets neoliberalism not as a political ideology or a unified set of economic policies, but rather as a distinct political

rationality. As Brown maintains in her investigation of the “de-democratic” traits of neoliberalism in the United States,

A political rationality is not equivalent to an ideology stemming from or masking an economic reality, nor is it merely a spillover effect of the economic on the political or the social. Rather, as Foucault inflicts the term, a political rationality is a specific form of normative political reason organizing the political sphere, governance practices, and citizenship. A political rationality governs the sayable, the intelligible, and the truth criteria of these domains (2006, p. 693).

In her more recent work *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, Brown defines neoliberalism as “an order of normative reason that, when it becomes ascendant, takes shape as a governing rationality extending a specific formulation of economic values, practices, and metrics to every dimension of human life” (2015, p. 30). Joining Brown’s approach, Larner argues in her study of New Zealand’s restructuring of the welfare state that neoliberalism is a far more complex phenomenon which cannot be adequately explained by conceptualizing it as an ideology or economic policy:

[Analyses] that characterize neoliberalism as either a policy response to the exigencies of the global economy, or the capturing of the policy agenda by the “New Right,” run the risk of underestimating the significance of contemporary transformations in governance. Neoliberalism is both a political discourse about the nature of rule and a set of practices that facilitate the governing of individuals from a distance. In this regard, understanding neoliberalism as governmentality opens useful avenues for the investigation of the restructuring of welfare state processes (2000, p. 6).

Brown's and Larner's conception of neoliberalism stresses three important aspects: First, it sees that neoliberalism can have many different formulations depending on its historically contingent and locally specific contexts. This view conceives of neoliberalism as an assembly of uneven historical processes occurring in different geographic spaces. It requires observers to examine each account by looking at its specificities without oversimplifying it as a monolithic economic and political project implemented to restructure the welfare state. The second aspect understands neoliberalism not as a lone force, but often aligns with multiple, and at times contradictory, programs, strategies, techniques, rationalities, and subjects and produces unanticipated results and alignments (Larner, 2000, p. 16). The third aspect, which is more pronounced in Brown's work, is the "de-democratic" effects of neoliberalism on society and the social. This aspect is particularly salient in such contexts as the United States, as Brown illustrates, and in this study, Turkey, where neoliberalism and neoconservatism form a peculiar alignment and produce an ethos by which society and human actions are organized.

The complex, hybrid, and de-democratic characteristics of neoliberalism underscored by Brown and Larner are also evident in the case of Turkey. Recent scholarship on the AKP-led neoliberal reform indicates a unique combination of neoliberalism and neoconservatism. They characterize the convergence of the two different, yet intersecting, forces as "Islam's marriage with neoliberalism" (Atasoy, 2009), "neoliberalism with Islamic characteristics" (Karaman, 2013), and "neoliberal conservatism in Turkey" (Lelandais, 2015). This intersecting relationship of the two rationalities is most evident in such areas as urban planning

projects (Dinçer, 2011; Karaman, 2013; Lelandais, 2015; Potuoğlu-Cook, 2006), emergent forms of social service provision (Zencirci, 2014), health and family care programs (Acar & Altunok, 2013), national education (İnal & Akkaymak, 2012), and cultural policy (Ada, 2011; Ada & Ince, 2009). This growing body of literature underscores Turkey's accelerated EU accession between the late 1990s and mid-2000s as a timely opportunity for the AKP to pursue a series of structural reforms aiming at democratization, which targeted issues of the military's political intervention, women's headscarf wearing, and the Kurdish question (Atasoy, 2009). These studies perceive neoliberalism as a tactic of the AKP to transform the state and style of governance. They suggest that by aligning with market principles, the AKP government seeks to break away from the protectionist model of the Kemalist establishment and move towards 'liberal democracy'. They also indicate that in the process of reconfiguring the state, Islam and conservative values are evoked for promulgating 'authentic' universal values as the fundamental principles of social conduct (Atasoy, 2009, pp. 10–11).

This body of literature therefore reveals that neoconservatism, alongside neoliberalism, has a significant role in constituting a new standard of morality for transforming the state and society. However, I prefer using the term neo-Ottomanism to name Turkey's current form of neoconservatism because Turkish neoconservatives not only draw from religious (Islamic) values, but also project an outlook which sees Ottoman-Islamic civilization as the cradle of modern universal values, such as human rights, tolerance, and fundamental freedoms. This outlook proclaims its authenticity and superiority over western European values. And this is

one of the reasons that the AKP government, and its conservative predecessors, has persistently evoked a selective reading of the Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage as an alternative social framework to the one informed by western (French) secularist thought. As I discuss in the subsequent chapters, what makes neo-Ottomanism *neo* is its consistency with neoliberalism and its reliance on the mechanisms and ever new spheres of the free market, without which its current formulation would not have been possible. This formulation is particularly evident in the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble, where private initiatives are the main actors and the market is the performing stage.

As for neoliberalism, neo-Ottomanism—Turkey’s current form of neoconservatism—is conceptualized here as a historically contingent and locally specific form of governmentality. The formulation of neo-Ottomanism in Turkey has a long history dating back to the late Ottoman reform period. Although it has become a key concept since the 1990s in studies of Turkish domestic and foreign politics, its meaning has been neither clearly defined nor critically assessed (Czajka & Wastnidge, 2015). Contemporary studies focusing on the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural phenomenon have often ascribed it to the AKP’s neo-Ottomanist ideology; however, such conception tends to render the term more ambiguous without critically engaging with it. In cultural analyses, neo-Ottomanism is even more loosely employed and narrowly understood as a form of symbolic representation in the cultural sphere. As I discuss in Chapter 2, the concept of neo-Ottomanism has lost its analytical value and explanatory power when deployed as a ‘sponge concept’ that can be soaked up with any meaning associated with Islamist political

ideology and/or foreign policy. In this study, I maintain that the dual lack of a clear definition and a critical evaluation of neo-Ottomanism as an analytical concept may hinder productive investigations of the emergent cultural phenomenon in question and stymie potential intellectual and political interventions.

Therefore, I propose a conceptual shift of neo-Ottomanism from common conceptions, which understand it as an Islamist ideology and foreign policy, to one that understands it as a distinctive form of governmentality. This conception recognizes that neo-Ottomanism has evolved over the course of history, especially the last two to three decades, as a governing rationality. Neo-Ottomanism tackles the social tensions that have arisen at a juncture where globalization, increasing mobility of population and cultural exchange, and movements of ‘counter-culture’ (minority rights, religious freedom, LGBTI, women’s rights, etc.) are posing challenges to the state’s effort to demarcate its cultural boundaries. Therefore, it seeks to formulate new strategies, programs, and techniques as to render governable the changing and diversifying society. When operating in the government of culture, neo-Ottomanism enforces a paradigm of pluralism by instrumentalizing the Ottoman *millet*¹—a specific form of rule where Islam marks the perimeter of multicultural relations in the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, this new paradigm

¹ According to Karen Barkey (2012), the Ottoman millet was a legal and institutional framework that provided a basis for multireligious rule while maintaining an Islamic polity of the Empire. This framework allowed religious communities, i.e. the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian, and the Jewish, to have certain autonomy in organizing their internal affairs and maintained peace and order among each other in the early periods of the Ottoman Empire. The millet system is therefore known as the Ottoman tolerance and pluralism, which has been taken out of its historical context and used in modern day Turkey as a pragmatic paradigm for managing ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity.

strips the historical meanings of Ottoman *millet* and reformulates it as a way to manage the social tensions resulting from cultural differences. And by aligning with neoliberalism, it depends on private initiatives to take active roles in mobilizing this new normative framework through their participation in the free market. As I discuss in Chapter 3, a knowledge of Ottoman tolerance and pluralism is made intelligible through the formation of a new type of Ottoman historical museum that involves primarily local authorities, private sector, and independent experts (such as historians, artists, etc.) whose activities are organized based on neoliberal imperatives. And Chapter 4 examines how an active and responsible subject of citizenry is produced through the reformed media market.

In the Turkish experience, neo-Ottomanism/neoconservatism is an ally of neoliberalism as it shares a similar task of realigning the morality of state and society. It is not only consistent with, but also dependent on neoliberalism for its operation. When operating together, they both seek “a radical cultural renewal” (Dean, 2009, pp. 190–191) through innovative technologies of government. As Dean states, “[neoliberalism] and neoconservatism share the same diagnosis of the problem of a corruption of the people and the need to lead them to accept their responsibilities and become a virtuous citizenry again” (2009, p. 190). Based on Dean’s perspective, this study conceives of neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism as the prevailing governing rationalities that seek to restore the virtues of society in contemporary Turkey. It is also through this perspective that this study will examine how the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble functions to meet the end of government.

1.3. Ottomentality

In order to more adequately assess Turkey's emergent neo-Ottoman ensemble, I propose an analytical shift from neo-Ottomanism to *Ottomentality*. This shift entails not only rethinking neo-Ottomanism as a form of governmentality, but more importantly, thinking about neoliberal and neo-Ottoman governmentalities as inseparable partners. The concept is formulated in this study as an alternative to the conventional and often ambiguous interpretations of neo-Ottomanism as either an Islamist ideology or diplomatic strategy. It seeks to look beyond these two trajectories and raises underexplored questions pertaining to the government of culture and diversity in contemporary Turkey. Ottomentality is therefore developed here to delineate the intersecting relationship of neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism that is at play in the AKP-led administrative reform of the cultural field. It recognizes the specificities of neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism in their conjunctural moments where impacts of globalization, EU accession, and transnationalism have posed challenges but also have provided new opportunities for the state to transform itself and develop new strategies for managing culture and changing society. Ottomentality is an analytical lens through which I investigate the multiple lines of thought involved in the government of culture, the conditions where different styles of thought are formulated and convergence, the knowledge these thoughts draw from and produce, the methods by which they are made intelligible, their alliances with different arts of governing, and the subjects they

produce. Such an analysis of Turkey's neoliberal and neo-Ottoman governmentalities is also, therefore, a critique of the different but conjoining arts of government.

1.4. The aim and methodology of the study

The main task of this study is twofold. First, it aims to reconceptualize neo-Ottomanism by incorporating the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality to advance its analytical utility. In order to understand Turkey's current form of neo-Ottomanism, a critical engagement with the literature on neo-Ottomanism is necessary. For the purpose and scope of this study, I focus on two common trajectories in the studies of Turkish domestic and foreign politics that have conceptualized neo-Ottomanism as an Islamist political ideology and foreign policy. By formulating a critique of these two conventional conceptions of neo-Ottomanism, I maintain that these conceptions fall short of addressing the current configuration of the neo-Ottoman cultural phenomenon in Turkey, as they tend to run the risks of overlooking the complex and dynamic processes involved therein. I also contend that these two common conceptions of neo-Ottomanism may have limited the way we come to understand the proliferating array of Ottoman-themed cultural productions and their implications on the social. Hence, as I have discussed above, by reconceptualizing neo-Ottomanism as a distinctive form of governmentality and recognizing the collaborative forces of neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism, one can begin to look beyond the interpretations of Turkey's current

neo-Ottoman cultural phenomenon as merely a representational device of the AKP's pragmatic political ideology and approach to foreign diplomacy. It is my conviction that through such a conceptual shift from neo-Ottomanism to Ottomentality, we can be equipped with the necessary tools to analyze and critique the emergent authoritarian mode of government within the cultural field at this particular historical moment.

Second, through the analytical lens of Ottomentality, this study aims to reassess the growing neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble. This approach understands the formation of the current neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble as consisting of discursive governing practices aiming at producing the necessary conditions wherein new regimes of truth are made sensible and a governable subject is produced. It therefore perceives Turkey's renewed Ottoman motto as less a cultural phenomenon in its own right, but "a reformer's science", to borrow Bennett's words, seeking to make culture and change society. In order to understand the ways in which culture becomes governmentalized as a means for transforming society, it is necessary to take each individual cultural formation as a specific locus where innovative governing techniques, strategies, and programs of governing culture and diversity are developed as well as where the process of subjectification takes place. By examining recent popularization of television Ottoman costume dramas, a new type of Ottoman history museum, and Ottoman epic films, the study seeks to trace the ways in which neoliberal and neo-Ottoman rationalities merge and ascend to an illiberal form of rule within the structure of liberal democracy. The chosen cases are vital for analyzing the formulation of different thoughts about governing culture

and society, their articulations in routine institutional operations, and how they are extended to the micro-level of everyday cultural life of private individuals. They are crucial as they provide the portals for understanding the ways in which culture becomes an integral part of government.

1.5. Outline of the study

One thesis of this study is that the AKP's approach to culture in line with neoliberal rationality within the contexts of EU accession, globalization, and democratization has enabled it to not only reconfigure, but also strengthen the state's role in the cultural domain. By shifting away from a protectionist model of cultural management and converting culture into a part of the free market, the state is, theoretically, required to retreat from its role as the main producer and provider of public cultural services. And by prioritizing initiatives of civil society, local authority, and private sector in cultural production and distribution, the process of privatization demands active participation of citizens in the cultural field. The transferal of the state's role and responsibility into the hands of private citizens therefore is translated into progress towards participatory culture, cultural democratization, and greater individual freedoms. However, as the subsequent chapters shall demonstrate, the extension of neoliberal governance into the culture domain has generated new ways for the state to interfere in culture. More significantly, it has rendered an understanding of participatory democracy that is limited to market relations. Neo-Ottomanism takes a ride along the process of

cultural reform in line with neoliberal rationality. The emergent private spheres of the culture market now provide the necessary conditions where the ethos of neo-Ottomanism is reproduced and mobilized without being subjected to political pressure. Dependent on the functioning of the market, neo-Ottomanism calls upon citizens to actively take part in the revitalization of Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage as a means to create Turkey's trademark for competing in the global market. And by using the market as a regulatory mechanism, neo-Ottomanism seeks to manage cultural differences by a prescribed set of moral-religious values and a pragmatic multicultural paradigm.

In unfolding this argument, the study is organized as follows. Chapter 2 contests the analytical concept of neo-Ottomanism developed in contemporary studies of Turkish domestic and foreign politics. It is not a literature review in the conventional sense; rather, it aims to critique two common trajectories which interpret neo-Ottomanism as an Islamist ideology and foreign policy. Passing from ideology and foreign policy approaches to the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality, this chapter develops the concept of Ottomentality as an alternative for comprehending the Turkey's revived Ottoman motto evident in a growing array of cultural productions and sites as well as their socio-political significance.

Chapter 3 focuses on the 1453 Panorama History Museum and analyzes the complex processes entailed in the production of a neo-Ottomanist knowledge. It takes into account Turkey's harmonization with the EU's criteria for enhancing cultural diversity and greater individual freedoms and the endeavor of Istanbul's

local authority to showcase the city as a European Capital of Culture in 2010 as the backdrops against which this new type of history museum is founded. The chapter makes two inquiries: one concerns the museum's function in knowledge production and its role in rationalizing the discourse of Ottoman-Islamic toleration and pluralism; the other concerns the role of museum experts in the circuit of what Foucault calls the "regime of truth" (1980, p. 133). Building on Tony Bennett's (1995) analysis of the emergence of museum as a type of social institution aiming to shape society during the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe, I contend that the Panorama 1453 History Museum can be understood as a form of governmental technology that renders sensible and intelligible the neo-Ottomanist knowledge as the basis for guiding inter-cultural and inter-faith relations. Through individuals' participation as artists, historians, sponsors, and consumers at the museum, the neo-Ottomanist knowledge is circulated and maintained as part of the normative sense of everyday life.

Chapter 4 takes up the popularization of Ottoman costume drama and children's programs on Turkish television as a site where the technologies of governing culture and diversity are developed and the process of subjectification takes place. It aims to locate the techniques of self-governance by which individual citizens are mobilized to conduct themselves based on the ethos of the market and neoconservative norms. First, by focusing on the managerial restructuring of the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (*Türkiye Radyo ve Televizyon Kurumu*; TRT), the chapter aims to illustrate the rationale and process through which the media is transformed into part of the competitive market where the government is a

key player. Second, against the backdrop of the transformed media sector, the chapter analyzes the dividing practices (i.e. media censorship, incentives, etc.) through which political subjectification takes place. My argument here is that, this new sphere of media market is organized in a way that enables direct interference of the government and functions as a regulatory mechanism, which divides media practitioners and consumers into opposing categories through their own participation in the media market. On the one hand, a ‘free subject’ is constituted based on the premise that the market obliges the individual to exercise their freedom (of choice, lifestyle, expression, and so on). On the other hand, this ‘free subject’ is increasingly subjugated to such disciplinary practices as censorship for being on the wrong side of the government. Finally, the chapter discusses the relation between the restructured media market and the proliferation of Ottoman television drama in Turkey over the last decade. I maintain that the reorganization of the media market has produced a condition where private sectors are encouraged to take an active role in reviving Turkey’s Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage and promulgating moral-religious values. Paying specific attention to the controversial case of *Muhteşem* in contrast with TRT’s growing productions of Ottoman drama and children’s programs, I aim to identify the ways in which individuals are directed to conduct themselves as a responsible and virtuous citizenry. I contend that it is through the double movement between the governing practices associated with the media market and those concerning the making of a “conservative generation” that a moral subject of citizenry is constituted.

Chapter 5 explores the relationship between cinema, government, and cultural citizenship. Focusing on two distinct cycles of the Ottoman epic genre in Turkish mainstream cinema, the chapter aims to examine the discursive ways in which the institutional practices of regulating cinema and the textual forms of the genre constitute new apparatuses where the conception of cultural citizenship is formulated. Employing Nick Stevenson's (2003) and Toby Miller's (1998, 2007) views on the role of popular media in the formulation of cultural citizenship, the chapter contends that when aligned with neoliberal and neo-Ottoman governing rationalities, the Turkish cinema has fostered a notion of citizenship outside the domain of the Constitution. On the one hand, when aligned with neoliberal rationality, cinema functions as a social resource and a mechanism for guiding practices in film production based on the ethos of the market. Through such institutional practices as legislation, cultural policy, and public funding, private individuals are encouraged to promote Turkey in the global film industry. Unlike the republican citizen, who is bonded to the nation-state by his or her formal rights, obligations, and duties, the cultural citizen plays an active role in the culture industry as an entrepreneur (i.e. film producer, sponsor, etc.) and consumer (i.e. viewer) by the rules of the market. On the other hand, when cinema is attuned with neo-Ottoman rationality, it serves as an instrument for governing such cultural problems as diversity and Turkish citizenship. During the peaks of Turkish cinema, the Ottoman epic genre has in different ways served as a formula for recounting history, mobilizing popular memories of the Ottoman past, and demarcating the cultural specificities of Turkishness. While the earlier cycle of Ottoman epic films

during the 1950s and 1970s was preoccupied with maintaining the republic's unitary idea of the modern secular citizen, the cycle in the 2010s has evoked a revisionist view of history for reconceptualizing citizenship beyond national borders based on common Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage. The chapter maintains that cinema constitutes an important part of the truth regime which makes sensible its governing rationalities and produces self-reliant subjects of its citizens.

CHAPTER 2

A CONCEPTUAL MOVE FROM NEO-OTTOMANISM TO

OTTOMENTALITY

This study pursues a critical approach to the proliferating neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble in Turkey since the early 2000s by taking culture as an essential part of governmental practice for shaping society. Culture is understood here as an integral part of government that aim to achieve an envisioned form of society in myriad ways. In light of this understanding of culture, Turkey's prevailing neo-Ottoman motif that appear in a wide spectrum of cultural formations, including the history museum, the television drama, and cinema, is understood as an effective technique of this transformative process. This conception of culture therefore suggests that the formation of neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble entails a network of different governing rationalities, strategies, projects, and policies that are formulated to direct conduct in the realm of culture. If the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble is an inseparable part of government concerning the ways in

which society's cultural domain is managed, the existing conceptions that interpret neo-Ottomanism as an Islamist political ideology and foreign policy must be reconsidered so as to generate more productive discussions about the cultural formation in question. This study, therefore, calls for a reconceptualization of neo-Ottomanism—a concept that has attained significant analytical currency in Turkish domestic and foreign politics studies, yet lacks a clear definition and critical evaluation—in order to more adequately assess the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble. By adopting an interdisciplinary framework combining cultural studies with the analytical perspective of governmentality, this study aims to develop an alternative framework for analyzing the neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble.

Paying specific attention to the civil society-based and market-oriented characteristics of the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble, this study builds upon the premise that Turkey's current configuration of neo-Ottomanism relies on and is consistent with neoliberalism in that both seek to reconfigure the relation between state, culture, and society. Since the AKP government has adopted a neoliberal approach to cultural governance, culture is no longer part of the public services provided by the state as it was under the Kemalist establishment. As the state is reorganized in accordance with neoliberal rationality, culture is now converted into an integral part of the free market, where individual citizens are obliged to exercise their right to freedom as entrepreneurs and consumers. By prioritizing the civil society, private sector, and local authorities, neoliberal governance of culture for the AKP is a means to justify its agenda of democratization within the context of EU negotiation. This is also the context

where Turkey's Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage is instrumentalized for developing resonating discourses of human rights, tolerance, and cultural diversity that are fundamental to the process of harmonization with EU standards. And by creating the necessary conditions of freedom / free market, private actors are encouraged to make innovative use of the Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage as a way to promote Turkey in the global culture industry, to preserve national culture, and to promulgate an image of a culture of tolerance and diversity. It is in this new sphere of free market that neo-Ottomanism is reformulated as a political rationality seeking to govern culture and manage cultural diversity through market mechanisms.

This chapter is devoted to reassessing the analytical utility of the concept of neo-Ottomanism and developing a framework based on which the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble will be examined. First, by offering a brief historical overview of neo-Ottomanism, I maintain that neo-Ottomanism has always been evolving as it is rearticulated at different historical moments to respond to different political questions. In its current phase during the AKP era, neo-Ottomanism has shifted from being an oppositional force to being the governing power, which is concerned with the problematics of governing culture, the social, cultural differences, and dissent. Second, through an examination of two common trajectories which understand neo-Ottomanism as an Islamist ideology and an established foreign policy, I aim to formulate a critique of their analytical capacity for comprehending the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble. I contend that these two common conceptions of neo-Ottomanism tend to render the term

ambiguous and fall short to explain the complex and dynamic characteristics of the cultural formation at question. Therefore, in the third section of this chapter, I propose a conceptual move by incorporating the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality and to raise new inquiries that would help us to look beyond the conceptions of neo-Ottomanism as an “ideology” and “foreign policy”. I deploy the term *Ottomentality* to underscore the interlacing relationship between neoliberal and neo-Ottoman rationalities. I contend that Turkey’s current configuration of neo-Ottomanism cannot be adequately understood without taking into account the converging force of neoliberalism. And finally, looking through the lens of *Ottomentality*, I will discuss the important implications of such an analysis of governmentality. I argue that when the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble is examined within this framework, it opens up new inquiries that allow us to understand the socio-political significance that seemingly banal and mundane cultural practices may have on individuals and society at large.

2.1. Phases of neo-Ottomanism

It is important to note that neo-Ottomanism is neither a novel nor a monolithic Islamist political thought of 2000s and 2010s. Its historical roots can be traced back to the late Ottoman period and it has continued to evolve throughout the history of the Turkish republic. Hakan Övünç Ongur points out four distinct phases in which (neo-) Ottomanism has (re)emerged at different historical periods as a means to respond to different political questions. Ottomanism was first formulated

during the late Ottoman period as an “elitist multicultural project” to mitigate the growing nationalist movements and prevent the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire (Ongur, 2015, p. 417). Initiated as a criticism of the Tanzimat reform (1839-76) policies, which were inspired by the European civilization and political model, Ottomanism was an opposing component emphasizing that the only way to rebuild unity among the Ottoman subjects was to construct an “Ottoman identity” based on common cultural, historical, and traditional traits rather than blindly adopting the European model. Therefore, the Young Ottomans attempted to incorporate elements of Islam, pluralism, and imperialism to construct a new Ottoman subject that would be loyal to the Empire (Ongur, 2015, pp. 417–418).

However, Ottomanism, in its second phase of evolution during the founding period of the Turkish republic, was depoliticized and conceived of as a sign of backwardness and opposition to the state’s modernization project. The early republican elite’s radical reforms, which included the formation of the Turkish Language Institute (Aytürk, 2004) and the Turkish Historical Thesis (Aktürk, 2009), attempted a systemic erasure of the Ottoman past and construction of a modern Turkish national identity based on common linguistic and historical ties. Yet the state’s repression did not entirely diminish the ideas of Ottomanism. For instance, in the 1970s, a group of secular and conservative businessmen, intellectuals, and politicians founded an organization called Hearths of the Enlightened (*Aydınlar Ocağı*) in which the Turkish-Islamic synthesis was developed. This synthesis was formulated to redefine Turkish identity by incorporating the component of Islamic civilization as a crucial part of Turkish

culture (Zurcher, 2004, p. 288). The Turkish-Islamic synthesis has played an important role in the rise of Turkish political Islam and the reformulation of neo-Ottomanism in the following decades (Çolak, 2006; Onar, 2009a; Tanasković, 2013).

In the 1980s and 1990s, Ottomanism made its comeback to Turkey's political scene as neo-Ottomanism. In its third phase of evolution, Ottomanism was reformulated in the Welfare (*Refah*) Party's discourse as a new framework for resolving socio-cultural tensions resulting from identity-based claims and a renewed diplomatic strategy focusing on regions of former Ottoman territory (Çolak, 2006). Informed by the ideas of its predecessor National Outlook (*Millî Görüş*), Welfare Party's neo-Ottomanism "rejected the ethnic version of Turkish nationalism and reinterpreted Turkish identity on the basis of regional and religious grounds (multiethnic and multireligious bases) and cosmopolitan liberal values" (Çolak, 2006, p. 593). The administration under Turgut Özal's leadership integrated elements of Ottomanism, namely Islam(ism), Ottoman pluralism, and imperialism, and the Turkish-Islamic synthesis to construct a new Turkish identity, which would acknowledge Turkey's Ottoman-Islamic heritage that the secularist state had attempted to negate (Zurcher, 2004, p. 288). According to Yılmaz Çolak, Özal was a "leading figure in perpetuating Ottomanism as the core of a political vision based on a new collective memory, for a new form of foreign policy, and social contract" by incorporating "Ottoman pluralism" and "modern liberal multiculturalism" (Çolak, 2006, p. 587). Up until this point, neo-Ottomanism had served as an opponent responding to the republican elites' effort in modernization and

secularization. It continued to evoke Turkey's Ottoman-Islamic heritage in the public sphere to resist and disrupt the republican version of modernity, historiography, and national identity (Çınar, 2005). The Ottoman-Islamic heritage was also utilized as a pragmatic means to alleviate the escalating social tension resulting from identity-based claims, most notably, the Alevi and Kurdish questions (Çolak, 2006).

Since 2002 after the AKP came to power and having consecutively ruled as a single-party government, neo-Ottomanism has undergone yet another phase of transformation. It has shifted from being an oppositional force to being the governing power. According to Ergun Özbudun, by *bringing back the Ottoman*, the AKP in its early years of governance had attempted to create a liberal-conservative socio-political framework, “which defined its political agenda within boundaries of human rights, liberal-economic development and social conservatism” (quoted in Ongur, 2015, p. 424). As Ongur remarks, what distinguishes the AKP's neo-Ottomanism from the Özalıan version and makes it more politically sustainable is its prioritization of and strong connection with civil society. This connection is compellingly evident in the wide spectrum of routine social conducts and everyday cultural practices. Ongur suggests that the Ottoman theme has been reintroduced and promulgated through practices of private sectors, such as the Istanbul Municipality's mega projects of the third Bosphorus Bridge that is named after Yavuz Sultan Selim and the Marmaray undersea rail tunnel, which Recep Tayyip Erdogan claims as a realization of an Ottoman design, the new curriculum of Ottoman language as an elective course in high schools, and the proliferation of

Ottoman-themed entertainment productions (Ongur, 2015, pp. 425–428). Employing Michael Billig’s (1995) notion of “banal nationalism,” he terms this latest phase of neo-Ottomanism under the AKP’s government “banal Ottomanism”:

[Unlike] under Özal’s neo-Ottomanism, during the AKP era Ottomanism’s social dimension appears to be prioritized [...] This process is not carried out by the government exclusively; once established, society itself assumes the pivotal role in promulgating Ottoman images [...] As current ‘banal Ottomanism’ is perpetuated through practice by society itself, it therefore also functions as mechanism of re-identification alienating today’s society from that of the Republican era (Ongur, 2015, p. 425).

Hence, according to Ongur, neo-Ottomanism in the 2000s and 2010s continues to serve as an Islamist political vision for redefining the Turkish identity—one that selectively invokes the glorious Ottoman-Islamic past, through “mundane” and “everyday routine,” as an integral and “continuous rather than disjointed” part of Turkey’s history. As he states,

[The AKP’s banal Ottomanism] contains pivotal discursive value [...] in encouraging society to recover from the history- and religion-deprived version of the Turkish identity seen to have been imposed upon it in the Republican era, and in the legitimization of the Turkish state’s newly active role in both domestic and international relations (Ongur, 2015, p. 429).

Ongur’s analysis of the continuous transformation of (neo-) Ottomanism reveals the malleability of neo-Ottomanism; its characteristics and functionality have always been in flux in order to cope with the socio-political questions of certain historical moments. His emphasis on the prioritization of and strong link

with civil society in the latest phase of neo-Ottomanism is particularly worth noting and demands further examination. As mentioned, the society-based practice of neo-Ottomanism still remains under-discussed and under-theorized within contemporary Turkish studies. This is partly due to the academic analyses of neo-Ottomanism in Turkish domestic and foreign politics have produced over the last few decades. I shall now attempt to offer an overview of these common trajectories and explain how they may have confined our understanding of the cultural dimension of neo-Ottomanism today.

2.2. A critique of neo-Ottomanism as an analytical concept

My task of reassessing neo-Ottomanism and its analytical value within the context of Turkey's recently revived interest in the Ottoman-themed cultural productions and practices focuses on two trajectories that have been produced by studies of Turkish domestic and foreign politics. While there are various and at times competing interpretations of neo-Ottomanism, it is most commonly understood as an *Islamist political ideology* responding to the secularist notions of modernity and national identity and aiming to reconstruct the Turkish identity along Ottoman-Islamic lines and a *foreign policy framework* reflecting Turkey's renewed diplomatic strategy in the Balkans, Central Asia, and Middle East. In both cases, neo-Ottomanism is closely linked to the Islamists' (Özal's and AKP's) selective interpretation of the glories of Ottoman past in Turkey's present. Yet, it remains unclear how this link between the Ottoman past and Turkey's present is established

and how neo-Ottomanism may play a significant role in transforming the collective memory and identity of society remains unclear. I argue that these two trajectories have limited our understanding of the very specific and unique form of neo-Ottomanism that over the last decade has evolved into a widespread cultural phenomenon characterized by its society-based and market-oriented practices that its omnipresence and pattern of operation demand further examination and theorization.

Partly due to a lack of critical evaluation of the conception of neo-Ottomanism, current cultural analyses have largely adopted these two conventional interpretations as explanatory guidance when assessing the neo-Ottoman cultural phenomenon. I contend that neo-Ottomanism is a more complex and dynamic process than what the “Islamist political ideology” and “foreign policy” perspectives offer to explain. Cultural analyses that adopt these two approaches tend to run a few risks. First, they tend to conceive of neo-Ottomanism as a monolithic and hegemonic ideology imposed upon society and inscribed in a set of (foreign) policies. This view falls short of explaining the emergent forms and dispersed nature of current neo-Ottoman cultural sites and practices, which do not operate in a state-centered manner. Second, they fail to acknowledge the hybrid and malleable characteristics of neo-Ottomanism that its “private” and “banal” practices often rely on in collaboration with other political projects and rationalities, such as neoliberalism. Finally, these approaches may have underrated the significance of the tolerance and liberal multicultural discourses that the current phase of neo-Ottomanism seeks to promulgate.

2.2.1. Analytical trajectories and limitations of neo-Ottomanism

Although neo-Ottomanism was initially formulated by an alliance of heterogeneous segments from both secular and conservative circles in the 1980s, it is often associated with the consolidated socio-economic and political power of the conservative elites and Islamism. In contemporary Turkish domestic and foreign politics analyses, neo-Ottomanism is commonly conceptualized as a political ideology, or doctrine (often referring to Ahmet Davutoğlu's *Strategic Depth* serving as the guidebook for Turkey's diplomatic strategy in the 21st century), which seeks to construct a new Turkish national identity and reshape foreign policy (Çolak, 2006b; Onar, 2009a, 2009b; Yavuz, 1998). It has become a key concept in domestic and foreign politics analyses especially after Ahmet Davutoglu was appointed as the Foreign Minister in May 2009. As Darko Tanasković defines,

neo-Ottomanism is mostly taken to signify a complex *macro-ideological platform* according to which present day Turkey, as a legitimate civilization heir of the Ottoman Empire, should reaffirm its entire spiritual, cultural and political legacy so that it could secure and effectively play the role of a global force to reckon within the undergoing shift of power balance and influence in the world (2013, p. 11; emphasis added).

Neo-Ottomanism [...] as a foreign policy doctrine systematically and consistently (many would also say intrusively) implemented by the incumbent government of Turkey. [...] Neo-Ottomanism is a state of mind, an anchor of specific identity, an independent system of values and a view of oneself and the world in harmony with it (2013, p. 11).

Neo-Ottomanism [...] has become a prominent and deeply rooted constant of this [Turkish foreign] policy (2013, p. 12).

When conceptualized as an Islamist ideology and foreign policy of the post-Cold War era, neo-Ottomanism is perceived as a competing counterpart of Kemalism—“Turkey’s official ideology” (Çolak, 2006). It is commonly argued that the neo-Ottomanist ideology serves as the primary reference for Turkey’s foreign policy towards its neighboring countries in the context of a changing global order (Çandar, 2009; Kınıklıoğlu, 2009). For its advocates, neo-Ottomanism is the antidote for the authoritarian, state-centric, and top-down projects of secularization and modernization. It is an alternative to the rigidly defined unitary Turkish identity determined by ethnic and linguistic characteristics, which have failed to encompass large segments of the ethnically diverse society (Kınıklıoğlu, 2007a, 2007b). It is argued that by invoking the shared Ottoman heritage, incorporating Islam, and combining the ideas of Ottoman *millet* and modern liberal multiculturalism, the decades-long Kurdish question and other (ethnic) identity-based social issues could be resolved (Kınıklıoğlu, 2007a, 2007b). As Özal once remarked, “I believe that the most powerful single constituting element of identity in this society is Islam” (quoted in Yavuz, 1998, p. 24). As a crucial element of neo-Ottomanism, Islam is seen as *the* bonding element of society and a ‘liberal’ quest as it proclaims to “transcend ethnic differences” and unite the citizens on the basis of their common Muslim (read Sunni) identity (Özal quoted in Yavuz, 1998, p. 24). On the contrary, critics of neo-Ottomanism suggest that despite its emphasis on liberal multiculturalism, it has failed to produce a more inclusive socio-political model. The neo-Ottomanists’ selective reading of and pragmatic approach to the Ottoman past and its insistence on Islam as the ethical code and binding element for a

diverse society has nonetheless failed to acknowledge the ethno-religious differences and the demands for cultural rights of its citizens (Aktürk, 2009; Çolak, 2006; Onar, 2009b, 2009a).

Notwithstanding the two camps of argument, one thing that the advocates and critics of neo-Ottomanism have in common is that they both understand neo-Ottomanism as a set of Islamist ideas, which incorporate the 19th century Ottomanism, modern liberal multiculturalism, and Islamism to transform the official nationalist ideology which was conceived of during the founding period of the Turkish republic in the early twentieth century. This conventional conception, therefore, considers neo-Ottomanism as an ideological transformation and a form of identity politics that is primarily a result of a political struggle in opposition to Kemalism. Although this interpretation is helpful for understanding the two major competing views of the Ottoman past in Turkey, which plays a significant role in formulating the notion of 'nation', it has produced a persistent dual dichotomy of Kemalism vs. neo-Ottomanism and secularism vs. Islamism. It also has produced certain trajectories which may have undermined the analytical value of neo-Ottomanism in not only Turkish domestic and foreign politics, but also the cultural milieu.

First, the 'ideology' and 'policy' perspectives tend to see neo-Ottomanism as a monolithic, state-centric, hegemonic imposition upon society. The two perspectives assume that this ideology, when implemented into domestic and foreign policy, somehow has an effect on how the society perceives its identity and renews its national interest. For instance, Hakan Yavuz (1998) argues that Turkey's

identity and foreign policy formulations are inseparable processes. He suggests that the latter is determined by the former. According to him, the rise of neo-Ottomanism during the 1980s and 1990s served as a form of Islamist nationalism seeking to redefine Turkey's national identity on the bases of a common Ottoman-Islamic heritage and further influence its diplomatic strategy within the region. In his comparative analysis of the neo-Ottomanist and Kemalist foreign policy approaches, Ömer Taşpınar (2008) similarly suggests the intertwined relationship between Turkish national identity and foreign policy. He points to the similarity between Kemalism and the neo-Ottomanism (both the Özalpian and AKP versions) that, despite their different approaches to the Kurdish question and foreign policy in the Balkans, Central Asia, and Middle East, "at the end of the day, both Kemalism and neo-Ottomanism share a state-centric view of the world and Turkish national interests" (Taşpınar, 2008, p. 17). Yavuz's and Taşpınar's arguments reflect the common conception of neo-Ottomanism as an Islamist nationalist ideology that its consolidation since the 1980s has a direct impact on the state's and society's mindset of what the Turkish nation means, that is, a shift from Kemalism to neo-Ottomanism.

However, as Fatma Müge Göçek (2011) criticizes, the connection between nationalist ideology, be it Kemalist or neo-Ottomanist, national interest, and identity in such analyses as Taşpınar's remains questionable. Her sociological perspective suggests that each social group, i.e. the Alevis, Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds, may perceive its relationship with the notion of Turkish nation and the Ottoman past differently than the one promulgated by the Kemalist or neo-

Ottomanist nationalist ideology. Göçek’s perspective also leads us to question the often taken-for-granted view of the ideological function and hegemonic effect of neo-Ottomanism in transforming the collective memory, history, and identity of the Turkish society—a claim that is often made in current cultural debates. The ideology claim has had an influence on how cultural analysts understand the neo-Ottomanization of Turkey’s cultural field. For instance, in her discussions of the Miniaturk theme park and the 1453 Panorama History Museum, Şeyda Barlas Bozkuş argues that these two institutions are essential for understanding the “AKP’s neo-Ottomanist nationalist ideology [...] in creating a new class of citizens with a new relationship to Turkish-Ottoman national identity” (Bozkuş, 2014, p. 1). Her claim is based on an observation of the museums’ exhibitory display, spatial design, and visual technique, which together, according to her, conveys a dominant neo-conservative nationalist ideology and produces an Ottoman-Islamic national identity. In “The Past as a Spectacle: The Magnificent Century” Selin Tüzün and Aygun Sen (2014) similarly suggest that through an ideological appraisal of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, one can begin to understand the ways in which public debates about Turkish national identity are informed.

The ideological function of these newly established Ottoman history museums and theme parks, as well as other emerging sites and practices such as television drama, epic film, etc., is indeed indubitable. Yet, as mentioned earlier, neo-Ottomanism in Turkey’s current cultural field has taken a very unique form of “banal” and “mundane” practices, which not only prioritizes the society, but is practiced *by* the society itself (Ongur, 2015). Neo-Ottomanism in its current phase

is not merely a set of ideas articulated by political actors as a way of negotiating what the Turkish nation means in domestic and foreign politics, but tangible practices and material objects that are commodified and consumed as commercial products in everyday life. It is also important to note that current neo-Ottomanism is often practiced on the basis of neoliberal principles, which involve the withdrawal of the state's role as the main provider of culture and arts to its public, the transformation of the cultural sphere into a free market, and reduction of the state's control to ensure the functioning of the free market of culture. I will turn to the relationship between neo-Ottomanism and neoliberalism in the subsequent chapters, but at this point some questions arise. How do we explain the current phase of neo-Ottomanism, which cannot be categorized as merely a set of Islamist ideas aiming to produce a new collective memory, history, and identity of the society? How do we make sense of Turkey's current cultural neo-Ottomanization that is not practiced exclusively by the state but more often in a privatized, commercialized, and market-oriented fashion? And what is the significance of this particular cultural form of neo-Ottomanism for the Turkish society? For example, how do we interpret the growing number of Ottoman-themed television shows and children's programs aired on the commercialized channels of TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation)—Turkey's national public broadcasting service was established in 1964 as a state-run communication institution, which had undergone privatization since the 1980s? And how do we understand the function of and relationships between the emerging forms of Ottoman-themed popular culture, including such sites as the 1453 Panorama History Museum and the blockbuster

Fetih, the neo-Ottomanist view of history, and the market in which Ottoman history and cultural heritage are circulated and consumed?

These questions lead us to consider another analytical shortcoming in regards to the ‘ideology’ and ‘foreign policy’ trajectories of neo-Ottomanism. These two conceptions tend to fail to acknowledge the hybrid and complex characteristics of current phase of neo-Ottomanism, which often relies on and blends with other political projects, such as the ongoing European Union (EU) accession, globalization, and neoliberalism. They tend to assume that the neo-Ottomanist ideology is internally consistent and implemented straightforwardly into a complete (foreign) policy, which further has a hegemonic effect on how society perceives its collective identity. However, when closely examined, current forms of what Ongur describes as society-based, banal, or everyday practices of neo-Ottomanism are more likely to reveal complex and dynamic processes where neo-Ottomanism blends with other political strategies, projects and programs. When taking into account the individual, but interrelated political projects, it is possible to identify a distinctive configuration of neo-Ottomanism that is currently in question as well as the various coordinates at which neo-Ottomanism and other political projects intersect. Moreover, it is also likely to identify the inconsistencies of neo-Ottomanism particularly in popular culture, i.e. in Ottoman-themed television series and films.

Turkey’s current configuration of neo-Ottomanism perhaps can be more sufficiently understood as an amalgam of different styles of thought, strategies, techniques, and projects which aim at reconfiguring the state, reforming culture,

and governing the social. It is more of a hybridity constantly in flux than a monolithic ideology or established set of domestic and foreign policy. As Yıldız Atasoy illustrates in *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism* (2009), although without explicitly using the term, the formulation of neo-Ottomanism has always relied on opportune political moments and various political projects for advancing its agenda. She argues that the EU accession, which requires Turkey's compliance with the European model of democracy, provided such an opportunity wherein the AKP's neo-Ottomanist discourses have been rearticulated as an ideal model for pursuing democratization and enhancing greater fundamental rights and freedoms. The Ottoman-Islamic liberalism, according to her, is central to the AKP's logic of rule, which aims to govern a population consisting of diverse economic, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds (2009, pp. 37–42). As she argues, the AKP's pragmatic approach and instrumental adaptation of the Ottoman-Islamic liberalism has fostered a “counterclaim to [...] the Kemalist knowledge structure and its explanation of socio-historical reality” (Atasoy, 2009, p. 11). Atasoy's comments on the AKP's tactic blend of the traditional values of Ottoman-Islamic civilization with the universal (EU) values of fundamental freedoms and rights of individuals as a means to transform the state therefore implies that it has produced a new normative framework for the general social conduct.

Atasoy's useful insight of neoliberalism and Islam(ism) hence may offer a way to rethink neo-Ottomanism beyond the “ideology” and “foreign policy” trajectories. By taking into account the encounter of Ottoman-Islamic civilizational discourses and neoliberal credo in the context of Turkey's EU membership

negotiation, it allows us to acknowledge the hybrid, complex, and changing characteristics of neo-Ottomanism that it exists not as a coherent ideology or an established policy, but very much depends on the discourses the EU accession (at least between the late 1990s and mid-2000s), neoliberalism, globalization, and democratization that without which its current formulation would not have been possible.

Moreover, as a consequence of the two analytical limitations discussed above, contemporary cultural debates may have overlooked some of the symptoms, hence, underestimated its socio-political significance of the latest phase of neo-Ottomanism. A major symptom that is often missed in cultural debates on the subject is *culture* itself. Insufficient attention has been paid to the AKP's rationale of reconceptualizing culture as an administrative matter—a matter that concerns how culture is to be perceived and managed, by what culture the social should be governed, and how individuals might govern themselves *with* culture. At the core of the AKP government's politics of culture and neoliberal reform of the cultural field is the question of the social (Silverstein, 2010). Its reform policies, projects, and programs are a means of constituting a social reality and directing social conduct. When culture is aligned with neoliberal governing rationality, it redefines a new administrative culture and new rules and responsibilities of citizens in cultural practices. Culture has become not only a means to advance Turkey in global competition (Aksoy, 2009), but also a technology of managing the diversifying culture as a result of the process of globalization. As Brian Silverstein notes, “[culture] is among other things and increasingly to be seen as a major target of

administration and government in a liberalizing polity, and less a phenomenon in its own right” (Silverstein, 2010, p. 24). While many studies acknowledge the AKP government’s neoliberal reform of the cultural field, they tend to regard neo-Ottomanism as primarily an Islamist political agenda operating outside of the neoliberal reform. It is my conviction that neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism are inseparable political processes and rationalities, which have merged and engendered new modalities of governing every aspect of cultural life in society, including minority cultural rights, freedom of expression, lifestyle, religious beliefs, and so on. Hence, by overlooking the “centrality of culture” (Hall, 1997) in relation to the question of the social, contemporary debates tend to oversimplify the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble as nothing more than an ideological machinery of the neoconservative elite.

2.3. Neo-Ottomanism as governmentality

Having critiqued the trajectories and limitations of the ‘ideology’ and ‘foreign policy’ conceptions of neo-Ottomanism, here I turn to the Foucauldian perspective of “governmentality” for reassessing the concept of neo-Ottomanism. In order to distinguish neo-Ottomanism from its ambiguous interpretations in the contexts of Turkish domestic and foreign politics, I propose the term *Ottomentality* to delineate the incoherent, historically contingent, mutable, and dispersed characteristics of the amalgamating Ottoman-themed cultural ensemble, which operates in various forms and at multiple levels and scales of social life as

regulatory mechanisms for managing the populace. According to Foucault, governmentality is “understood in the broad sense of techniques and procedures for directing human behavior” (Foucault, 1997, p. 81). It is a “normative sense” (Rose, 1999) of a particular “way of doing things” (Rose et al., 2006), of “disposing things so as to lead [...] to an end which is ‘convenient’ for each of the things that are to be governed” (Foucault, 1991, p. 95). It is concerned with a certain knowledge and regime of truth that are central to this normative reason. And when this knowledge is circulated and maintained, it becomes a common sense, serving as the basis for all activities of government and social life.

I shall note that Ottomentality is an authoritarian type of governmentality—a specific type of illiberal rule operated within the structure of modern liberal democracy. As Mitchell Dean notes, although the literature on governmentality has focused mainly on liberal democratic rules that are practiced through the individual subjects’ active role (as citizens) and exercise of freedom, there are also “non-liberal and explicitly authoritarian types of rule that seek to operate through obedient rather than free subjects, or, at a minimum, endeavor to neutralize any opposition to authority” (2009, p. 155). He suggests that a useful way to approach this type of governmentality would be to identify the practices and rationalities which “divide” or “exclude” those who are subjected to be governed (Dean, 2009, p. 156). According to Foucault’s notion of “dividing practices,” “[t]he subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the ‘good boys’” (Dean, 2009, p. 156). Turkey’s growing neo-Ottoman cultural

ensemble can be considered as such an exclusionary practice, which seeks to regulate diversity by dividing subjects into categorical, if not polarized, segments based on their cultural differences. For instance, mundane practices such as going to the museums and watching television shows may produce subject positions dividing individuals into such categories as the pious and the secular, the moral and the degenerate, and the Sunni-Muslim-Turk and the ethno-religious minorities.

Seen in this perspective, Ottomentality is not simply an ideology resulting from the hegemonic struggle between the secularist and Islamist elites, nor is it merely an effect of Turkey's renewed foreign policy or political culture and identity. It is understood here as a distinct political rationality, which possesses a "moral form", an "epistemological character", and is expressed as an "idiom"—the "language that constitutes political discourse" (Rose & Miller, 2013, pp. 58–59). It arose as a critique of the Kemalist state's projects of modernization and secularization, which it sees have failed to accommodate the culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse society. It is an art of government seeking to dismantle the strong grid of the repressive military state wherein ethno-religious identities and cultural demands were systemically suppressed. Far from being a coherent ideology or foreign policy, it is constantly in search for novel technologies of government that can respond to the problematics of the Kemalist establishment which it criticizes. Its technologies do not necessarily center on the state, but more often are organized in sites that are not directly linked to the state, such as the Panorama 1453 History Museum, the Vialand theme park, and television Ottoman costume dramas, and epic films which I will discuss. It often combines with other

rationalities and political projects to cope with the various problematics involving issues of minority cultural rights, choice of lifestyle, and freedom of expression. And when it merges with other rationalities and political projects, it may generate tensions and divisions among members of society as well as new modalities of governing them.

For example, as Gizem Zencirci (2014) observes, the emergent forms of social service provisions, such as foundations (*vakıf*), which have replaced former forms of welfare services provided by the state, can be understood as “neoliberal technologies of poverty governance” which is combined with the AKP’s construction of Ottoman-Islamic culture as one that promotes the autonomy of civil society. Ferid Acar and Gülbanu Altunok share a similar view and suggest that the AKP has effectively incorporated the neoliberal and neoconservative rationalities in health and family programs, which simultaneously transform the state’s welfare provisions in line with the market logic and govern the areas of society in “reproduction, sexuality, and family and partnership” (2013, p. 15). They call this mode of government the “politics of the intimate”—“the web of policies, decisions, discourses and laws and norms which regulate intimate and family relationships, sexualities and reproductive capabilities of individuals” (Acar & Altunok, 2013, p. 15). Moreover, the combination of neoliberal and neo-Ottomanist rationalities may strengthen the state as the latter “reaffirms the state’s existence in the political order by assigning it a moral mission” (Acar & Altunok, 2013, p. 15). As Ozan Karaman remarks, the Islamic “trust-based [social] networks are crucial in the AKP-led urban renewal projects”, which often involve reconstruction of poor neighborhoods for

entrepreneurial purposes. According to him, the AKP has been able to attain support from the urban poor and forcefully launch its urban renewal projects by promulgating an Islam-based “ethics of market rule amongst the populace” (Karaman, 2013, p. 3412). What these studies reveal is a unique combination of two distinct yet compatible political rationalities that seek to transform the state and strengthen its capacity to manage different areas of society.

The overlapping relationship between neo-Ottomanism and neoliberalism is also compellingly evident within the cultural field. The annual reports of Turkish cultural policy and management prepared by a team of researchers at the Istanbul Bilgi University reveal that the AKP-led cultural policy in the 2000s and 2010s indicates a “neoliberal mindshift” in the way culture is administered (Aksoy, 2009, pp. 192–193, 2011, pp. 274–275). Reconceptualized in line with neoliberal rationality, culture is now perceived as a means for advancing Turkey in global competition. More specifically, Turkey’s Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage, including historical structures and traditional cultural practices, has become a part of the free market, a marketable commodity, and a resource for city/nation branding as it “enhances a city’s attractiveness [...] and gives it cultural cachet in the competition for foreign investments and tourist trade” (Öncü, 2007, p. 233). And when reconceptualized in line with neo-Ottomanist rationality, culture is central for reshaping the moral values and code of conduct which direct every aspect of social relations, namely between gender, class, and ethno-religious groups. The Ottoman-Islamic heritage is therefore essential in the production of what Atasoy refers as a

“knowledge structure” of the state and “ontology for understanding socio-historical reality” (2009, p. 11).

As the following chapters shall illustrate, Turkey’s current neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble features a lively neo-Ottoman and neoliberal duet. By focusing on the historically contingent, mutable, and dispersed characteristics of neo-Ottomanism, one can argue that neo-Ottomanism is more of a discursive and complex process than an ideology or a foreign policy. A conceptual shift towards the standpoint of governmentality thus enables us to identify the various lines of thought, strategies, and techniques that are deployed and coordinated to achieve certain ends. It also allows us to see the contradictions within neo-Ottomanism itself, thereby reducing the risk of limiting it to a state-centered hegemonic force. Turkey’s current neo-Ottoman phenomenon is understood here as a part of this political process, reasoning, and technology, which is always concerned with the question of how to formulate new ways for exercising political power. This dissertation stresses the centrality of culture as a site wherein the neo-Ottoman and neoliberal rationalities are extended as the new normative value for directing social conduct and relations. It pays specific attention to the construction of a neo-Ottomanist knowledge of tolerance and pluralism as the basis for a “moral-political rationality” that is skillfully blended with the “market-political rationality” of neoliberalism (Brown, 2006).

2.4. Reassessing the neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble through the lens of Ottomentality

Conducting an analysis of the government of culture and diversity of contemporary Turkey through the lens of Ottomentality therefore requires us to open up a new set of inquiries by paying attention to four important aspects: First, we must understand the historical condition(s) in which neoliberal and neo-Ottoman rationalities are formulated and converge. Second, it pays attention to the process where the state is governmentalized and how that reformulates the relations between state, culture, and society. The third is concerned with culture as a pivotal site where regimes of truth are reproduced to rationalize the practices of government. And ultimately, it is an analysis of how the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble, including the practices of history, museum, television, and cinema, constitutes new technologies of the self in concert with neoliberal and neo-Ottoman governing rationalities. This final section is devoted to a discussion of these aspects as it attempts to set the analytical framework on which this study is formulated.

2.4.1. Context

Since the establishment of the Turkish republic, the state has played a major role in maintaining a homogeneous national identity by suppressing public claims of ethnic and religious differences through militaristic intervention. The state's strict control of cultural life in society, in particular its assertive secularist approach to religion and ethnic conception of Turkish citizenship, has resulted in unsettling

tensions between ethno-religious groups in the 1980s and 1990s, i.e. the Kurdish question and the 1997 “soft coup.” These social tensions indicated the limits of state-led modernization and secularization projects in accommodating ethnic and pious segments of society (Kasaba, 1997, p. 31). This was also a time when Turkey began to witness the declining authority of the founding ideology of Kemalism as an effect of economic and political liberalization. When the AKP came to power in 2002, one of the most urgent political questions was thus the “the limits of what the state can—or ought for its own good—reasonably demand of citizens [...] to continue to make everyone internalize an ethnic conception of Turkishness” (Silverstein, 2010, p. 24). At this political juncture, it was clear that a more inclusive socio-political framework was necessary in order to mitigate the growing tension resulted in identity claims.

Apart from domestic affairs, a few vital transnational initiatives also took part in the AKP’s formulation of neoliberal and neo-Ottoman rationalities. First, in the aftermath of the attacks in New York on September 11 (9/11) in 2001, the Middle East and Muslim communities around the world became the target of intensified political debates. In the midst of anti-Muslim and anti-terror propaganda, Turkey felt a need to rebuild its image by aligning with the United Nations’ (UN) resolution of “The Alliance of Civilizations,” which called for cross-cultural dialogue between countries through cultural exchange programs and transnational business partnerships (İğsüz, 2014, pp. 689–704). Turkey took a leading role in this resolution and launched extensive developmental plans that were designated to create Turkey’s image as a civilization of tolerance and peaceful

co-existence (İğsiz, 2014, pp. 691–692). The Ottoman-Islamic civilization, known for its legacy of cosmopolitanism and ethno-religious tolerance, hence became an ideal trademark of Turkey for the project of alliance of civilizations (İğsiz, 2014, pp. 691–692).

Second, Turkey's accelerated EU negotiation between the late 1990s and mid 2000s provided a timely opportunity for the newly elected AKP government to launch "liberal-democratic reform" (Atasoy, 2009, p. 5) , which would significantly transform the way culture was to be administered. Culture, among the prioritized areas of administrative reform, was now reorganized to comply with the EU integration plan. By incorporating the EU's aspect of culture as a way of enhancing "freedom, democracy, solidarity and respect for diversity,"² the AKP-led national cultural policy would shift away from the state-centered, protectionist model of the Kemalist establishment towards one that highlights "principles of mutual tolerance, cultural variety, equality and opposition to discrimination" ("Cultural Policy in Turkey--National Report," 2013, p. 7).

Finally, the selection of Istanbul as 2010 European Capital of Culture (ECoC) is particularly worth noting as this event enabled the local authorities of Istanbul to put into practice the neoliberal and neo-Ottoman governing rationalities through extensive urban projects and branding techniques. By sponsoring and showcasing different European cities each year, the ECoC program aims at

² Council Resolution of 21 January 2002 on the role of culture in the development of the European Union. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32002G0205\(02\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32002G0205(02))

promoting a multicultural European identity beyond national borders (Hein, 2010). The 2010 Istanbul ECoC was an important opportunity for Turkey not only to promote its EU candidacy, but also for the local governments to pursue urban developmental projects (Hein, 2010). Some of the newly formed Ottoman-themed cultural sites and productions were a part of the ECoC projects for branding Istanbul as cultural hub where the East and West meet. It is in this context that the interplay between the neoliberal and neo-Ottoman rationalities can be vividly observed in the form of neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble.

2.4.2. Strong state, culture, and the social

Given the contextual background mentioned above, one could argue that the AKP's neoliberal and neo-Ottoman rationalities arose as critiques of the republican state's excessive intervention in society's cultural life. The transnational initiatives that required Turkey to adopt a liberal democratic paradigm have therefore given way to the formulation and convergence of these two forms of governmentalities that would significantly challenge the state-centered approach to culture as a means of governing the social. However, it would be inaccurate to claim that the AKP's prioritization of private initiatives in cultural governance has effectively decentralized or democratized the cultural domain from the state's authoritarian intervention and narrow definition of Turkish culture. Deregulation of culture entails sophisticated legislation concerning the roles of the state and civil society in cultural governance. Hence, for instance, the law of promotion of culture, the law

of media censorship, and the new national cultural policy prepared by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism explicitly indicate not only a new vision of national culture, but also the roles of the state and civil society in promoting and preserving national culture. It shall be noted that culture as a governing technology is not an invention of the AKP government. Culture has always been a major area of administrative concern throughout the history of the Turkish republic. As Murat Katoğlu illustrates, during the early republic, culture was conceptualized as part of the state-led “public service” aiming to inform and educate the citizens (2009, p. 32). Arts and culture were essential means for modernizing the nation; for instance, such the state-run cultural institutions as state ballet, theater, museum, and broadcast “[indicate] the type of modern life style that the government was trying to advocate” (Katoğlu, 2009, p. 33). Nonetheless, the role of the state, the status of culture, and the techniques of managing it have been transformed as Turkey undergoes neoliberal reform. In addition, Aksoy suggests that what distinguishes the AKP’s neoliberal mode of cultural governance from that of the early republic modernization project is that market mentality has become the administrative norm (Aksoy, 2009). Culture now is reconceptualized as an asset for advancing Turkey in global competition and a site for exercising individual freedom rather than a mechanism of social engineering. And Turkey’s heritage of Ottoman-Islamic civilization in particular is utilized as a nation branding technique to enhance Turkey’s economy, rather than a corrupt past to be forgotten. To achieve the aim of efficient, hence *good*, governance, the AKP’s cultural governance has heavily relied on privatization as a means to limit state intervention. Thus, privatization has

not only transformed culture into an integral part of the free market, but also redefined the state's role as a facilitator of the culture market, rather than the main provider of cultural service to the public.

The state's withdrawal from cultural service and prioritization of the civil society to take on the initiatives of preserving and promoting Turkey's traditional arts and culture has the immediate effect of reducing the authority of the Kemalist cultural establishment. Since many of the state-run cultural institutions now are managed with a corporate mentality, they begin to lose their status as state-centered institutions and their former significance in defining and maintaining a homogeneous Turkish culture. Instead, these institutions, together with other newly formed cultural sites and productions by private initiatives, are converted into a marketplace or cultural commodities in competition with each other. Hence, privatization of culture brings the following consequences: First, it hollows out the 20th century notion of the modern secular nation state, which sets a clear boundary confining religion within the private sphere. Second, it gives way to the neoconservative force, who "models state authority on [religious] authority, a pastoral relation of the state to its flock, and a concern with unified rather than balanced or checked state power" (Brown, 2006, p. 706). Finally, it converts social issues that are resulted from political actions into market terms and a sheer matter of culture, which is now left to personal choice.³ As a result, far from a declining

³ See Brown's argument on neoliberalism's effect of "de-politicization" in "American Nightmare" and Regulating Aversion.

state, Ottomentality has strengthened the state's role in cultural governance by combining "market-political" and "moral-political" rationalities (Brown, 2006). In particular, neoliberal governance of the cultural field has enabled the ruling neoconservative government to mobilize a new set of political truth and norms for directing inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations in society.

2.4.3. New regime of truth

Central to Foucault's notion of governmentality is "truth games" (Foucault, 1997)—referring to the activities of knowledge production through which particular thoughts are rendered truthful and practices of government are made reasonable (Rose et al., 2006, pp. 7–8, 2006, pp. 28–31). What Foucault calls the "regime of truth" is not concerned about facticity, but with a whole range of activities that connect the different governing practices and make sense of the political rationalities marking the "division between true and false" (Foucault, 2010). The neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble is a compelling case through which the AKP's investment of thought, knowledge production, and truth telling can be observed. The controversies of two popular media productions, *Magnificent Century* (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*; *Muhteşem* hereafter) and *The Conquest 1453* (*Fetih 1453*, *Fetih* hereafter), are particularly worth mentioning here as I work through the politics of truth in the AKP's neoliberal governance of culture and neo-Ottoman management of diversity.

Between 2011 and 2014, the Turkish television historical drama *Muhteşem*, featuring the life of the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman, who is known for his legislative

establishment in the 16th century Ottoman Empire, attracted wide viewership in Turkey and abroad, especially in the Balkans and Middle East. Although the show played a significant role in serving the fundamental aims of the AKP-led national cultural policy which seeks to promote Turkey through arts and culture, including media export, it stirred up controversy among the viewers. The series received harsh criticism from the conservative circles and Ottoman(ist) historians and warning from the RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council, a key institution of media regulation in Turkey). The criticism included the show's misrepresentation of the Sultan as a hedonist and its harm to moral and traditional values of society. Oktay Saral, an AKP deputy of Istanbul at the time, petitioned to the parliament for a law to ban the show. He said, “[The] law would [...] show filmmakers [media practitioners] how to conduct their work in compliance with Turkish family structure and moral values without humiliating Turkish youth and children” (“Muhteşem Yüzyıl’ will be off air,” 2012). The then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also stated, “[those] who toy with these [traditional] values would be taught a lesson within the premises of law” (“Muhteşem Yüzyıl’ will be off air,” 2012). After his statement, the show was removed from in-flight-channels of national flagship Turkish Airlines.

Another popular media production, the 2012 Turkish blockbuster *Fetih*, while acclaimed for its success in domestic and international box offices, also generated mixed reception among Turkish and foreign audiences. Some critics in Turkey and European Christians criticized the film for its selective interpretation of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and offensive portrayal of the (Byzantine)

Christians. The Greek weekly *To Proto Thema* denounced the film as a “conquest propaganda by the Turks” and “[failed] to show the mass killings of Greeks and the plunder of the land by the Turks” (“Fetih 1453,” 2012). A Turkish critic also commented that the film portrays “extreme patriotism” in Turkey “without any hint of [...] tolerance sprinkled throughout” (“Istanbul, not Constantinople!,” 2012). Furthermore, a German Christian association campaigned to boycott the film. Meanwhile, AKP officials praised the film for its genuine representation of the conquest. As the former Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç stated, “This is truly the best film ever made in the past years.”⁴ He also responded to questions regarding the film’s historical accuracy, “This is a film, not a documentary. The film in general fairly represents all the events that occurred during the conquest as the way we know it.”⁵

When *Muhteşem* and *Fetih* are examined within the larger context of the neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble, the connections between particular types of knowledge and governmental practice become apparent. First, the cases of *Muhteşem* and *Fetih* reveal the saturation of market rationality as the basis for a new model of cultural governance. When culture is administered in market terms, it becomes a commodity for sale and promotion as well as an indicator of a number of things for measuring the performance of cultural governance. When Turkey’s culture, in particular Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage, is converted into an asset

⁴ For Arınç’s statement see AKP official website. <https://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/son-yillarda-cekilmis-en-muhtesem-film/20422>

⁵ See note 3 above.

and national brand to advance the country in global competition, the reputation and capital it generates become indicators of Turkey's economic development and progress. The overt emphasis on economic growth, according to Irving Kristol, is one of the distinctive features that differentiates the neoconservatives from their conservative predecessors. He suggests that, for the neoconservatives, economic growth is what gives "modern democracies their legitimacy and durability" (Kristol, 2003). In the Turkish context, the rising neoconservative power, which consisted of a group of Islamists and secular, liberal intellectuals and entrepreneurs (at least in the early years of the AKP's rule), has consistently focused on boosting Turkey's economy. For them, economic development seems to have become the appropriate way of making "conservative politics suitable to governing a modern democracy" (Kristol, 2003). Henceforth, such high profile cultural productions as *Muhteşem* and *Fetih* are valuable assets that serve the AKP-led cultural policy because they contribute to growth in tourism and culture industry by promoting Turkey at international level. Based on market rationality, as long as culture can generate productivity and profit, the government is doing a splendid job in governance. In other words, when neoliberal and neoconservative forces converge in the cultural domain, both culture and good governance are reduced to and measured by economic growth, which has become a synonym for democracy "equated with the existence of formal rights, especially private property rights; with the market; and with voting," rather than political autonomy (Brown, 2006, p. 703).

Second, the AKP officials' applause for *Fetih* on the one hand and criticism of *Muhteşem* on the other demonstrate their assertion of the moral-religious

authority of the state. As the notion of nation state sovereignty has become weakened by the processes of economic liberalization and globalization, the boundary that separates religion and state has become blurred. As a result, religion becomes “de-privatized” and surges back into the public sphere (Brown, 2006, p. 706). This blurred boundary has enabled the neoconservative AKP to link religious authority to state authority and religious truth to political truth (Brown, 2006, pp. 706–707). These links are evident in AKP officials’ numerous public statements declaring the government’s moral mission of sanitizing Turkish culture in accordance with Islamic and traditional values. For instance, as Erdoğan once reacted to his secular opponent’s comment about the AKP’s interference in politics with religious views, “we [AKP] will raise a generation that is conservative and democratic and embraces the values and historical principles of its nation” (“Religion Takes Over Politics,” 2012). According to his view, despite *Muhteşem*’s contribution of generating growth in industries of culture and tourism, it became subjected to censorship and legal action because its content did not comply with the governing authority’s moral mission. The controversy of *Muhteşem* illustrates the rise of a religion-based political truth in Turkey, which sees Islam as the main reference for directing society’s moral conduct and individual lifestyle. Henceforth, by rewarding desirable actions (i.e. with sponsorship law and tax incentives) and punishing undesirable ones (i.e. through censorship, media ban, and jail term for media practitioners’ ‘misconduct’), the AKP-led reform of the cultural field constitutes a new type of political culture and truth—one that is based on moral-religious views rather than rational reasoning.

Moreover, the AKP officials' support for *Fatih* reveals its endeavor in a neo-Ottomanist knowledge, which regards the 1453 Ottoman conquest of Constantinople as the foundation of modern liberal multiculturalism in Turkey. This knowledge perceives Islam as the centripetal force for enhancing social cohesion by transcending differences between faith and ethnic groups. It rejects candid and critical interpretations of history and insists on a pragmatic and selective view of Ottoman-Islamic pluralism and a pragmatic understanding of the relationship between religion and state (Barkey, 2012, pp. 12–13). It does not require historical accuracy since religious truth is cast as historical and political truth. For instance, a consistent narrative of the conquest can be observed in such productions and sites as the Panorama 1453 History Museum, television series *Fatih*, and TRT children's program *Çınar*. This narrative begins with the Prophet Muhammad's prophecy, which he received from the almighty God, that Constantinople would be conquered by a great Ottoman soldier. When history is narrated from a religious point of view, it becomes indisputable as critical views of history would imply challenge to religious truth, hence God's will. Nonetheless, the neo-Ottomanist knowledge conceives the conquest as not only an Ottoman victory in the past, but an incontestable living truth in Turkey's present. As Nevzat Bayhan, former general manager of Culture Inc. in association with the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (*İBB Kültür A.Ş.*), stated at the opening ceremony of Istanbul's Panorama 1453 History Museum,

The conquest [of Istanbul] is not about taking over the city... but to make the city livable... and its populace happy. Today, Istanbul continues to present to the world as a place where Armenians, Syriacs, Kurds... Muslims, Jews, and Christians peacefully live together (“Müzeye ziyaretçi akını!,” 2010).

Bayhan’s statement illustrates the significance of the 1453 conquest in the neo-Ottomanist knowledge because it marks the foundation of a culture of tolerance, diversity, and peaceful coexistence in Turkey. While the neo-Ottomanist knowledge may conveniently serve the branding purpose in the post-9/11 and ECoC contexts, I maintain that it more significantly rationalizes the governmental practices in reshaping the cultural conduct and multicultural relations in Turkey. The knowledge also produces a political norm of indifference—one that is reluctant to recognize ethno-religious differences among populace, uncritical of the limits of Islam-based tolerance and multiculturalism, and indifferent about state-sanctioned discrimination and violence against the ethno-religious minorities.

2.4.4. Ottomentality and its subject

The AKP’s governance of culture and diversity constitute what Foucault calls the “technologies of the self—ways in which human beings come to understand and act upon themselves within certain regimes of authority and knowledge, and by means of certain techniques directed to self-improvement” (Rose et al., 2006, p. 90). The AKP’s neoliberal and neo-Ottoman rationalities share a similar aim as they both seek to produce a new set of ethical code of social conduct and transform the Turkish society into a more economically liberal and

culturally conservative one. They deploy different means to direct the governed so as to achieve the desired outcome. According to Foucault, the neoliberal style of government is based on the premise that “individuals should conduct their lives as an enterprise [and] should become entrepreneurs of themselves” (Rose et al., 2006, p. 90). Central to this style of government is the production of freedom—referring to the practices that are employed to produce the necessary condition for the individuals to be free and take on responsibility of caring for themselves. For instance, Nikolas Rose suggests that consumption, a form of governing technology, is often deployed to provide the individuals with a variety of choice for exercising freedom and self-improvement. As such, the subject citizens are now “active,” or “consumer” citizens, who understand their relationship with others and conduct themselves based on market mentality (Rose et al., 2006, pp. 164–166). Unlike the republican citizens, whose rights, duties, and obligations are primarily bound to the state, citizens as consumers “[are] to enact [their] democratic obligations as a form of consumption” in the private sphere of the market (Rose, 1999, p. 166).

The AKP’s neoliberal governance of culture hence has invested in liberalizing the cultural field by transforming it into a marketplace so that citizens can enact their freedom and act upon themselves as a form of investment. The proliferation of the neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble in this regard can be understood as a new technology of the self as it creates a whole new field for consumer citizens to exercise their freedom of choice (of identity, taste, and lifestyle) by providing them trendy Ottoman-themed cultural products, ranging from fashion to entertainment. This ensemble also constitutes a whole new imagery of the Ottoman

legacy with which consumer citizens may identify. Therefore, through participation in the cultural field, as artists, media practitioners, intellectuals, sponsors, or consumers, citizens are encouraged to think of themselves as free agents and their actions as a means for acquiring the necessary cultural capital to become cultivated and competent actors in the competitive market. This new technology of the self also has transformed the republican notion of Turkish citizenship to one activated upon individuals' freedom of choice through cultural consumption in the marketplace.

Furthermore, as market mechanisms enhance the promulgation of moral-religious values, consumer citizens are also offered a choice of identity as virtuous citizens, who should conduct their life and their relationship with the others based on Islamic traditions and values. Again, the public debate over the portrayal of the revered Sultan Süleyman as a hedonist in *Muhteşem* and the legal actions against the television producer, are exemplary of the disciplinary techniques for shaping individuals' behaviors in line with conservative values. While consumer citizens exercise their freedom through cultural consumption, they are also reminded of their responsibility to preserve traditional moral values, family structure, and gender relations. Those who deviate from the norm are subjected to public condemnation and punishment.

Finally, as the neo-Ottomanist cultural ensemble reproduces and mediates a neo-Ottomanist knowledge in such commodities as the film *Fetih* and Panorama 1453 History Museum, consumer citizens are exposed to a new set of symbolic meanings of Ottoman-Islamic tolerance, pluralism, and peaceful coexistence, albeit through a view of the Ottoman past fixated on its “magnificence” rather than its “monstrosity.”⁶ This knowledge sets the ethical code for private citizens to think of themselves in relation to the other ethno-religious groups based on a hierarchical social order, which subordinates minorities to the rule of an openly Sunni Islamic government. When this imagery of magnificence serves as the central component in nation branding and aligns Turkey with the civilization of peace and co-existence in the post 9/11 and ECoC contexts, it encourages citizens to take pride in and identify with their Ottoman-Islamic heritage. As such, Turkey’s nation branding also can be considered as a novel technology of the self as it requires citizens, be it business sectors, historians, or filmmakers, to take an active role in building an image of tolerant and multicultural Turkey through arts and culture. It is in this regard that I consider the neo-Ottoman rationality as a form of “indirect rule of diversity” (Barkey, 2012, pp. 21–24) as it produces a citizenry who actively participates in the

⁶ Asuman Suner (2011) in “Between Magnificence and Monstrosity” employs the terms “magnificence” and “monstrosity” to refer to the dilemma within the notion of Turkishness represented in Turkish films during the 2000s. On the one hand, “magnificence” refers to the AKP government’s invocation of the glorious part of Ottoman history in its political discourses and Turkish society’s growing aspiration of becoming a confident and powerful global actor. On the other hand, “monstrosity” refers to the cynical societal attitude towards critical views about Ottoman history and state-sanctioned collective violence against minorities groups. Suner suggests that imageries of magnificence and monstrosity in contemporary Turkish films “appear [...] as two sides of the same coin.”

reproduction of neo-Ottomanist historiography and continues to remain uncritical about the “dark legacy of the Ottoman past.”⁷ Consequently, Ottomentality has produced a type of subject that is constantly subjected to techniques “that will divide populations and exclude certain categories from the status of the autonomous and rational person” (Dean, 2009, p. 156).

This chapter has undertaken the task of reassessing the analytical utility of neo-Ottomanism by reviewing the development of neo-Ottomanism as a political rationality through the course of history, and, then, by formulating a critique of its common conceptions in studies of Turkish domestic and foreign politics. Keeping in mind the central question of how the concept of neo-Ottomanism may be useful for investigating Turkey’s renewed Ottoman motto in the 2000s and 2010s, I maintain that the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality may shed light on under-explored questions pertaining to the formation of this particular cultural ensemble and its socio-political implications on the social. Therefore, I set out to develop the alternative concept of *Ottomentality* as to delineate the current configuration of neo-Ottomanism which cannot be adequately assessed without acknowledging its alliance with neoliberal governmentality. Here I maintain that by rethinking neo-Ottomanism as inseparable from neo-liberalism, it requires us to pay

7 Fatma Müge Göçek (2011) in *The Transformation of Turkey* calls for a critical approach to Turkey’s Ottoman past during the transition from Empire to Republic. She criticizes the Turkish state’s persistent effort (both Kemalist and neo-Ottomanist nationalist views) in forgetting the histories of collective violence against its minorities groups. She suggests that in order for the Turkish society to establish meaningful dialogue between groups and pave the road to reconciliation, it is necessary to “recognize, alongside the heroism and glory, the violence and resistance that took place” during that period (see Introduction).

attention to the important aspects of the role of the state in cultural governance, its changing relation with society, the complex and dynamic process entailed in reproducing new regimes of truth, and the technologies that are deployed to guide individuals to govern themselves.

CHAPTER 3

THE PANORAMA 1453 HISTORY MUSEUM AND THE PRODUCTION OF NEO-OTTOMANIST KNOWLEDGE

History museums play a significant role in modern societies as they serve to constitute apparatuses of knowledge demarcating certain versions of truth about societies' shared pasts, beliefs, cultural values, and norms of conduct. The constructed knowledge of history inform the public a sense of what Benedict Anderson (2006) calls "imagined communities." For the emerging nation states during the early 20th centuries, history museums were an important social institution as they embodied the state's vision of modern, civilized, and homogeneous societies. In Turkey, for instance, the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara and the Istanbul Archeology Museums were established with the aim of educating citizens about the nation's history and progress. As the founders of the Turkish republic tried to build a modern nation out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, they negated the immediate imperial past as an obstacle to

modernization and looked to the distant past of the Anatolian civilizations for an authentic origin of Turkish culture and identity.

Since the 1980s, as a result of the expansion of global economy and transformation of public services in line with neoliberal logics, the absolute authority of the state in defining the apparatuses of knowledge began to be challenged by such concepts as ‘citizenship’, ‘cultural rights’, and ‘civil society’ (Ünsal, 2009, p. 173). History museums in the new millennium thus have shifted away from state-centric model of organization towards one that stresses the value of the market for civil participation as a means for enhancing democracy. It is in this historical context that Ottoman history and history museums have begun to be reconceptualized as a vehicle for decentering the notion of the state as the dictating force in government and a new sphere (of freedom/free market) in society for mobilizing democratization.

Istanbul’s Panorama 1453 History Museum (1453 Museum hereafter) is an example of a new type of museums, such as Istanbul Miniaturk and Bursa 1326 Panorama Historical Museum (scheduled to be completed at the end of 2017), that have been established since the 2000s—a time in which Turkey’s cultural policy has undergone accelerated reforms adopting neoliberal principles and universal values of human rights, individual freedom, tolerance, and cultural diversity. What distinguish as this new type of history museum from previously state-run museums and cultural heritage sites, such as Hagia Sophia, Topkapı Palace, and the Civilization Museum, are their theme park-like, commercial-oriented, and civil society-based characteristics. Turkey’s museums and Ottoman-Islamic heritage

(including tangible historical structures and intangible cultural values) now are converted into a brand for advancing Turkey in global competition and a free market wherein individual citizens can enact their right (to freedom of choice and lifestyle) through cultural consumption at the museums. It is through such civil participation at the culture market, museum practice and visitation in particular, that museums are redefined as a social space for enhancing “cultural democracy”—an objective of Turkey’s current cultural policy that regards culture as a means to develop participatory democracy and to promulgate principles of “mutual tolerance, cultural variety, equality and opposition to discrimination” (“Cultural Policy in Turkey--National Report,” 2013, p. 7).

Contemporary cultural debates have generally approached the 1453 Museum and other newly formed Ottoman historical museums as sites wherein competing narratives of Turkey’s national history, identity, and collective memory are contested. Although this approach is helpful for identifying the competing narratives of nation, Turkishness, and Ottoman past, they tend to reproduce such persistent dichotomies as the republican vs. Islamist and Kemalist vs. neo-Ottomanist nationalism. And hence, may fall short for comprehending the formation of this new type of Ottoman historical museums, which not merely evoke the Ottoman past as a way of negotiating the nation, but more significantly, produce a particular knowledge that rationalizes governmental practices of managing culture and diversity.

In this chapter I aim to examine the role of this new type of Ottoman historical museum and Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage in knowledge production

through the analytical lens of Ottomentality. Paying specific attention to the 1453 Museum, I look beyond the common approach of contemporary cultural debates that focus on Istanbul's history museums and Ottoman-Islamic heritage as a site of identity politics and political struggles among groups with competing views of the Ottoman past and nationalist ideologies. By taking into account the convergence of neoliberal and neo-Ottoman governmentalities and the multiple forces that shape the condition in which the 1453 Museum was formed, I contend that the museum plays a significant role in constituting the knowledge of Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and multiculturalism through which inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations are shaped in Turkey today. More significantly, the museum's redefined role in society also has an effect on the relationship between the state, culture, and society. The following consists of an ethnographic account of the 1453 Museum; a brief contextual background of the formation of a new type of Ottoman history museum in Turkey since the 2000s; and an analysis of the role of 1453 Museum in the production of a particular knowledge of Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and multiculturalism.

3.1. "Your are invited to witness the conquest!"

The 1453 Museum was established in 2009 by Culture Inc. (*Kültür A.Ş.*) in association with the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM). Its self-declared mission is to bring the history of the 1453 Ottoman conquest of Istanbul to the present. Its highly publicized panoramic room is therefore designed to enhance

visitors a virtual experience through which they can *witness* the conquest “almost exactly as it happened.”⁸ By incorporating historical documents, exhibitory techniques, and media technology, the museum stages this monumental combat as the founding moment of a (Ottoman-Islamic) civilization of tolerance and peaceful coexistence as well as a crucial turning point in world history.

The 1453 museum was a part of the projects that aimed at promoting Istanbul as a European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2010. The IMM claimed that by constructing this tourist attraction, it would “boost Istanbul’s image as an ECoC” (“Istanbul’s Panoramic Museum,” 2009). The museum is located in the Topkapı Culture Park, which was a bus terminal before the IMM transformed it into a city museum. The location of the park and museum is significant as it was where Mehmed II the Conqueror was stationed during his campaign of the conquest. It is surrounded at a distance by the walls of Edirnekapı, Topkapı, the gate through which the first Ottoman soldier entered Constantinople, and Silivrikapı.⁹ Although it is inside the museum’s panoramic room that visitors can best “experience” the conquest of Istanbul, the bus route 1453 (a city bus line that runs between Beyoğlu and Fatih districts) also enhances this experience by taking the visitors on a journey in the once besieged city. As highlighted in the museum’s official website and press reviews, the museum attracts its visitors with the “world’s first full panoramic room” that is designed to simulate a virtual experience of the conquest.

8 1453 Museum brochure.

9 1453 Museum’s official website: www.panoramikmuze.com. Accessed in October 2013.

This is Topkapı [...] Here you will witness the conquest of Constantinople once again and experience the moment when the soldiers entered the city, almost exactly as it happened. You will witness the explosion of the cannonballs [...] and see them flung at the walls of Constantinople. The battle cry of Sultan Mehmed II's soldiers and the sound of the marches played by the Janissary band will accompany you (1453 Museum's official website).

Turkey's first panoramic museum [...] allows visitors to experience the excitement of the conquest of Istanbul [...] with authentic material, the museum enables visitors to feel as if they were traveling back in time ("Istanbul's Panoramic Museum," 2009).

The museum's exhibition is organized into two main sections. The first is its exhibition halls on the first and second floors where a detailed documentation of the conquest is displayed in the forms of extensive written panels (in Turkish only) and an animated documentary automatically replayed on plasma television screens in the middle of the exhibition halls. As the visitors reach the end of the exhibition hall on the bottom floor, they are advised to go to the second section, the panoramic room, which is located on the third, or the top, floor of the museum, to *join* the conquest. After climbing up the dimly lit staircase, the visitors reach a platform as if it is an outdoor space. The dome which is painted with blue sky and white clouds creates an illusion of a real sky. The tune of the Janissary march and sounds of explosions and clanging of swords in the background produce a celebratory sentiment of the conquest. The detailed paintings on the walls surrounding the dome and such artificial objects as cannons and cannon balls are claimed to capture what the city looked like on the day of conquest (see figure 1).



Figure 1: Panorama 1453 History Museum
(Photographed by author)

The museum's documentation constitutes not only a chronology of the event, but also a discourse of Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and pluralism. For example, the Ottoman conquest is justified as a necessary means to end the unjust rule of the Byzantine Empire where non-Christians faced persecution. The conquest of Istanbul therefore marks a turning point in world history where the Ottoman-Islamic civilization of tolerance and peaceful co-existence was established.

Through its visual technologies, the museum claims to genuinely represent the conquest of Istanbul and form "a bridge between history and today" ("Panorama 1453 History Museum," 2010). As the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan commented during his visit to the museum, "the museum is a true representation of

Istanbul's conquest as told in history and literature. Our children will look at the future with respect for their history and feel proud of it" ("Turkey's First Panoramic Museum," 2009). The idea of *bringing history to the present* entails the museum's effort to insert this particular historical moment into Turkey's national history. Alev Çınar once argued that the informal public celebration of the conquest by the Islamist circles in the 1990s "has disruptive effects on the public perceptions of national time" as it "subverts the mechanisms that present and maintain official national history as natural, objectively [...] realized around the founding moment" (2001, p. 379). She stressed the performative aspect of the celebration that the Islamists' public manifestation of the Ottoman-Islamic identity is an act of contesting the Kemalist view of national historiography and identity. According to Çınar's view, the 1453 Museum's recreation of the history of conquest also disrupts the Kemalist narrative of the Turkish nation. By building a permanent site—a public museum—that is designated to simulate the experience of the 1453 conquest, the IMM has been able to engender public interest and political passion for Ottoman history.

3.2. The birth of a “democratic museum”

What draws my attention about the 1453 Museum, however, is not so much its reproduction of neo-Ottomanist view of Turkish national history and identity, but the logic of its formation, its function as a cultural institution, and its relationship with the state and society. Tony Bennett in *The Birth of Museums*

(1995) asserts that in order to understand the formation of certain types of museum and the power relations that they generate in society, it is crucial to examine the specific historical and social contexts in which culture is conceptualized. He argues that the conception of culture, particularly by the ruling elite, has significant impacts on the role of museums in society. In his analysis of the emergence of museums during the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe, Bennett suggests that museums as social institutions, which were assigned educational and regulatory purposes, were coordinated with the project of the bourgeois class that envisaged high cultural practices as a way of “civilizing the population as a whole” (Bennett, 1995, p. 6, 1995, p. 19). High cultural practices were regarded as a method through which social norms and cultural values could be shaped and lifted. They were conceptualized as a form of governmental practice aiming at directing individual behavior. Museums, along with other public spaces, including public libraries, amusement parks, and department stores, were thus thought of as places in which such governmental practice could be materialized.

Museums in Turkey in the early 20th century also played a similar role as state institutions aiming at civilizing citizens and modernizing the nation. As Deniz Ünsal (2009) and Murat Katoğlu (2009) suggest, during the founding period of the Turkish republic, museums and other institutions of high culture were regarded as a crucial means to mobilize the republican elites’ modernization project, “economic and social development” (Ünsal, 2009, p. 163), and a western model of civilization. Hence, Ünsal argues that the proliferation of museums at the time should be understood as a part of the republican elites’ “cultural revolution”, which sought to

construct the republic's national history and subject of citizens. For instance, the Ankara Archeological Museum played such role of educating citizens about the nation's history and progress (Ünsal, 2009).

However, in the 21st century, museums have become obsolete as state institutions and a means for modernizing societies. Contemporary literature of museums studies indicate that many museums in liberalizing societies across the world have followed a global trend that incorporates such concepts as human rights, individual freedom, and participatory democracy. Museums now are increasingly seen as a public space for enhancing democratization through institutional decentralization, civil participation, and cross-cultural dialogue between communities (Haan, 2011; McIntyre, 2006). According to Ünsal, since the 1980s museums in Turkey have gradually adopted this global trend and started emphasizing on the need of social integration and participatory democracy rather than nation building (2009, pp. 160–161). Museums in Turkey, which were assigned the role of enhancing the state's nation building and modernization projects, are increasingly seen as public spaces for developing participatory democracy. Yet, as I shall illustrate below, the concept of “participatory democracy” or “cultural democracy” in the AKP-led national cultural policy narrowly refers to civil participation in market terms. And the concepts of “tolerance” and “diversity” (or “multiculturalism”) are based on pragmatic and selective readings of Ottoman-Islamic pluralism. As cultural policy researchers caution, “current Turkish legislation and museum regulations *do not* permit museums to organize activities targeting existing social needs or priorities or to

encourage people to exercise their cultural rights” (Dinçer, Enlil, Ünsal, Yılmaz, & Karabacak, 2011, p. 226; my emphasis). Private citizens are instead encouraged to take part in culture as entrepreneurs and consumers. And as a result, despite administrative reforms, public museums continue to function as state institutions and fail to provide the necessary support and platform for “reconciliatory social dialogue” and exercise of cultural rights (Dinçer et al., 2011, p. 227).

Although the AKP-led cultural policy indicates that historical museums and cultural heritage should be given priority as a way of “strengthening tolerance, social dialogue and common culture” (“Cultural Policy in Turkey--National Report,” 2013, p. 29), Ünsal’s observation indicates a gap between policy and actual practice of history museums and cultural heritage in Turkey today. This gap further reveals the need for reconsidering the objective of enhancing participatory democracy in Turkey by means of reform of cultural policy, and in particular through historical museums and cultural heritage. In order to more adequately comprehend the emergence and social role of such new type of historical museums as the 1453 Museum and its use of Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage, it is necessary to take into account the intersecting political thoughts, policies, strategies, and programs that created the condition of their formation. Here I focus on how the rise of a neoconservative elite in Turkey, its reconceptualization of culture, and its utilization of Turkey’s EU membership negotiation and the 2010 Istanbul European Capital of Culture (ECoC) have shaped the larger context in which the 1453 Museum is established. These converging forces have significantly

transformed the role of history museums and cultural heritage in Turkey as well as their relationship with society.

3.2.1. The rise of neoconservative elite

Since the 1980s a neoconservative middle class has emerged in Turkey (İnsel, 2003; Yılmaz, 2009). This neoconservative middle class, of which the AKP has become the political representative since the 2002 election, mainly consisted of a group of entrepreneurs of small and midsize businesses in provincial areas of central Anatolia. As Ahmet Insel characterized in the early 2000s, the distinctions that differentiate the neoconservative elite from the republican secularist elite is that the former is “culturally conservative, politically nationalist and moderately authoritarian, economically liberal, or rather, on the side of free enterprise” (2003, p. 298). Many members of both the burgeoning neoconservative middle class and the TÜSİAD (Association of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen), a main representative body of Turkey’s business circles since the 1970s, became influential figures within the political arena by directly participating in politics (Ahmad, 2002, p. 217). The political participation of this group of entrepreneurs, who strived for both political existence and impact under the rule of the military regime, has influenced the rise and consecutive electoral success of the AKP.

Studies of Turkey’s transformation under the AKP’s rule indicate that the rise of an economically and politically powerful neoconservative elite is mainly due

to the negative effects of “assertive secularism” (Kuru, 2008) and modernization project of the Kemalist republic (Çınar, 2006; İnel, 2003; Yılmaz, 2009). As Menderes Çınar argues, the AKP’s political identity and cultural outlook are set against the “non-pluralist and illiberal form of secularism and state-society relationship” (2006, p. 476). Thus, the task for the AKP administration when it first came to power was to democratize the established political structure and state-citizen relation by means of administrative reforms. As Yıldız Atasoy argues, the AKP’s deployment of neoliberal principles, which presume privatization as an effective means to minimize state intervention and enhance civil participation, was a strategy to dismantle the state’s stronghold over society (Atasoy, 2009, sec. Introduction).

It is in this context that culture, along with other administrative units, began to be seen as an area of reform for mobilizing democratization. History museums and cultural heritage thus have become a target of reform and given a new role in society to achieve that end. Through privatization, history museums and their services have shifted away from a state-centered administrative model and from the Kemalist-statist view of history towards one that regards Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage, namely Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and pluralism, as a central component of Turkish culture and a pragmatic socio-political framework for the diversifying culture in society.

3.2.2. The AKP’s utilization of EU negotiation

The AKP's prioritization of Turkey's EU membership negotiation in its early years of governance should also be understood as a strategy for mobilizing democratization. As the 2002 Copenhagen criteria requires Turkey to comply with western European model of democracy, the AKP administration launched political reform packages, which tackled major issues of headscarf wearing in public places, the Kurdish question, and military intervention in politics (Atasoy, 2009, pp. 1–29). By combining western European universal terms of human rights, individual freedom, and democracy with Ottoman-Islamic values of tolerance, freedom, and pluralism, the AKP has tactically produced an alternate set of universal values as a model for resolving socio-political issues in Turkey. For instance, the AKP has reframed the headscarf issue as a matter of human rights, which could be resolved by means of democratization. However, I shall note that the AKP's prioritization of EU negotiation does not necessarily mean internalization of such values as human rights, tolerance, individual freedom, and democracy. Rather, these European universalities have been taken out of their context for promulgating a locally specific version of universal truth (Atasoy, 2009, sec. Introduction). As İhsan Dağı suggests, the EU and the preconditions for Turkey's membership have been instrumentalized, "rather than internalized", by the AKP to create and maintain a political space within the legal framework of the secular state (2006, p. 89). He argues,

[T]he [AKP] has developed a three-layered strategy: first, adopt a language of human rights and democracy as a discursive shield; second, mobilize popular support as a form of democratic legitimacy; and third, build a liberal-democratic coalition with modern/secular sectors that recognize the [AKP] as a legitimate political actor (2006, p. 89).

By utilizing the EU accession, the AKP has been able to mesh this particular political project with its aim for establishing political legitimacy, normalizing its conservative democratic political identity, and mobilizing participatory democracy. One could therefore argue that Turkey's EU negotiation and preconditions have become a political strategy for the AKP to pursue democratization reform according to its own vision and agenda. And the mentioned European universalities have coordinated with the AKP's search for "authentic" value systems," which would redefine "the Kemalist knowledge structure and its explanation of socio-historical reality" (Atasoy, 2009, pp. 10–11).

Henceforth, the AKP's instrumentalization of the EU and the mentioned European universalities has enabled the government to produce a new form of knowledge based on which its democratization reform is rendered reasonable. Rearticulated within the legal framework of Turkey's Constitution, the concepts of human rights, individual freedom, and democracy are now the fundamental goals and priorities of the AKP-led cultural policy. As the 2013 *Cultural Policy in Turkey—National Report* states, "in the core of Turkey's cultural policy lie the principles of mutual tolerance, cultural variety, equality and opposition to discrimination. The fundamental rights and freedoms stated in the Constitution are closely related to culture" ("Cultural Policy in Turkey--National Report," 2013, p.

7). This particular statement reveals that culture in the renewed cultural policy is regarded as a venue at which individuals' fundamental rights and freedoms are exercised. Historical museums and cultural heritage are thus assigned the task of providing the platform on which the public is able to participate in the process of democratization.

3.2.3. The 2010 Istanbul ECoC program

Istanbul's selection as the 2010 European Capital of Culture (ECoC) provided a timely opportunity for central and local authorities to further pursue a liberal democratic path by means of culture. According to Carola Hein (2010), the ECoC Program, sponsored by the EU, is designated to developing an awareness of a European community beyond national borders. By showcasing and promoting the arts and culture of European cities each year, the ECoC Program "seeks to create new 'urban imaginaries' [...] and 'European', rather than 'national', ways for citizens to perceive the cities in which they live and work" (2010, p. 258). Thus, cities that are traditionally cosmopolitan and decentralized are selected to represent the "EU motto 'United in Diversity'" (Hein, 2010, p. 254). Nonetheless, Hein also points out that while the ECoC Program promotes 'Europeanness' by integrating the local culture of cities, the cities utilize the Program as a means for local developments. Istanbul's ECoC 2010 candidacy, she states,

allowed the organizers in the city to bypass political controversies at the national or international level and to use the EU's decentralization strategy to market the city. The ECoC title is seen by cities as an opportunity; it is a case of 'opportunism' [...], or promotion of, European aspects or respect for the needs and wishes of citizens in the cities (2010, pp. 253–254).

Istanbul's ECoC title, to some extent, has legitimized the local government to accelerate the ongoing urban renewal project in the name of transforming Istanbul as an ECoC. While Istanbul was set to represent a diverse European characteristic, the organizers of the city—namely the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) and Kültür A.Ş., and the ECoC Agency, which functioned as a legal body to conduct activities under the name “Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency” (Öner, 2010, p. 270)—sought to use this opportunity to further the ruling government's vision of cultural democracy through urban restructuring. Culture in this context has become a site in which such vision can be articulated in tangible forms. Although the ECoC Agency was founded on the basis of participative cultural practice, which is one of the focuses of the ECoC program that required the involvement of non-governmental organizations and individual citizens, Oğuz Öner, a former practitioner of the ECoC Agency, suggests that it was in fact turned into an Agency for bureaucratic legitimacy. Participative cultural practice, he explains, “can be invoked to serve two different purposes: participation to *legitimize* or participation to *transform*” (2010, p. 268; my emphasis). Instead of transforming the city by enhancing citizens' access and participation and incorporating the culture of diverse social groups in organizing the events for Istanbul ECoC 2010, the Agency operated as an agent for governmental authorities to legitimize urban renewal

projects (Öner, 2010, pp. 269–272). Since the Agency’s organizational structure was directly linked to the Prime Minister “in the name of facilitating speedy action”, according to Öner, the central government became the key figure in decision making in most of the projects (2010, p. 270).

By modifying the EU language (of fundamental rights and freedoms) and utilizing the ECoC program as a facilitator to restructure Istanbul through arts and culture, the central and local governments have also been able to produce the city’s cultural demand. The IMM and Kültür A.Ş. can be considered as key producers of Istanbul’s cultural needs. Following Istanbul’s participation as an ECoC 2010, the IMM and Kültür A.Ş. declared that city’s development will continue to center around cultural and artistic aspects so that the city’s cultural needs can be served. In defining the role of Kültür A.Ş., the organization’s former director Nevzat Bayhan stated:

The conclusion of Istanbul’s year as a 2010 European Capital of Culture will not mean the end of cultural and artistic activities unique to the city [...] Kultur A.S. will continue sponsoring and organizing cultural activities throughout the city [...] I believe a country can build its own future through its culture and art (“Istanbul in Cultural Spotlight,” 2010).

The IMM and Kültür A.Ş.’s shared vision on culture as a central element in urban restructuring invokes the government’s conception of the role of culture in governance. According to Asu Aksoy, the AKP has brought with it a new model of governance of culture. She suggests, “the Islamist-origin AKP has reinvigorated the field of cultural politics by bringing the question of public governance into the

center of their reform package” and this new mode of governance of culture “has fundamental implications for the local cultural arena for the first time” (2011, p. 274). The AKP’s reconceptualization of culture in governance entails a “shift towards a new sense of culture as a resource for income, for urban branding and uplifting, and social cohesion” (Aksoy, 2011, p. 274). In recent years, there has been an increase in cultural centers, museums, and theme parks in Turkish cities. By transforming public lands into profitable cultural sites, the central government and municipalities have found their way to not only produce the cities’ cultural demands but also mobilize their vision of culture. For example, by transforming the Thrace Bus Terminal into a public park in which the 1453 Museum is located, the municipality has been able to generate capital from Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage, increase interest in Ottoman history, create a culture market and demand, and promulgate the central government’s democratization reform. Viewed in this light, the formation of the 1453 Museum hence reveals the convergence of a number of governing rationalities, policies, programs, and strategies through which the ruling neoconservative elite is able to rationalize its practices of democratization reform.

3.3. Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and pluralism as the 1453 Museum’s object of knowledge

The 1453 Museum and other related cultural productions under the same theme should thus be examined within the larger context of democratization

process under AKP's rule. The grand narrative of the 1453 conquest is not merely an articulation of the Islamists' nostalgia for a glorious past long gone. The museum's reconstruction of the 1453 conquest entails a production of knowledge of tolerance and multiculturalism, which serves as the basis for rationalizing the AKP's governmental practices of democratization. This knowledge, which is based on an Ottoman-Islamic time and identity, one that had been constructed as the *other* within the official historical narrative of the Republic, operates as a challenge to the Kemalist notion of Turkish nation and identity. Two of the key components that formulate the narrative of the conquest are democracy and human rights, which have become a pragmatic language adopted by the AKP to speak against Turkey's military regime—a regime that saw Islam and Islam-oriented political actors as a threat to national unity and obstacle for the state's modernization project. Since democracy and human rights are also a part of the Copenhagen criteria for Turkey's full EU membership, according to İhsan Dağı (2006), the AKP has instrumentalized these universal norms and the EU accession to justify its rule and reforms within Turkish politics. Over the last decade, the AKP has been able to legitimize its governance and win electoral support from both the conservative and secular circles as it proclaims that its policies are for the common good of the society. For example, the AKP's "democratization package," which includes legislations on citizens' rights to education in their mother tongues, the lift of the ban on headscarves in universities and bureaucratic offices, and the ongoing process of the constitutional draft, are claimed to be great leaps toward a more democratic society.

When examined in this light, the 1453 Museum can be analyzed as an

institution of knowledge production as it helps to link the interrelated discourses—the Islamic nostalgic discourse on Istanbul that sees Istanbul and 1453 as the foundation of Turkey’s national history, the AKP’s grand narrative of the conquest, its discourse on democracy and human rights, and Turkey’s EU bid. The museum’s production of knowledge is achieved through its exhibitory organization and technologies. At each point, the visitors are advised to follow the exhibition in a certain direction so that they learn the story the right way. The 1453 Museum does not provide a novel or critical account of the conquest; it reproduces a standard narrative of this history as it is written in school textbooks. As the then Prime Minister Erdogan stated, “the museum [is] a true representation of Istanbul’s conquest as told in history and literature” (“Turkey’s First Panoramic Museum,” 2009). The extensive written panels which are serially numbered not only serve as an audio guide which provides foreign translations since the writings are in Turkish only, but also organize the history of the conquest into a linear narrative that establishes a cause-effect relation. The museum’s exhibition begins with the justification of the conquest, which evokes the Prophet Muhammad’s prophecy about the conquest of Istanbul by a great Ottoman. The following panels continue to depict the historical developments that led to the conquest. By portraying the Muslims as victims of the Byzantine Empire and Christianity, the panels on the first floor of the exhibition hall conclude that the conquest was necessary for economic and political reasons and to end the injustice inflicted by Byzantine rule.

The second exhibition hall on the bottom floor again contains written panels that narrate a detailed documentation of the siege from its planning stage, the

upbringing of Mehmed II the Conqueror as an intelligent and righteous leader, and the prosperity in the region brought by the Ottoman Empire after the conquest. However, the writings on the panels are so lengthy that not every visitor has the interest or patience to read through all of them. The animated documentary that is automatically replayed on both exhibition floors thus fills in for those who prefer a quick tour. Since the documentary is placed in the middle of both exhibition halls, there is not a chance the visitors can miss it. I shall note that the documentary is in Turkish only and no foreign subtitles are provided. Although the museum was a part of the projects that promoted Istanbul as an ECoC, the use of Turkish as the primary language of narration suggests that the general Turkish public is the museum's target audience. And the knowledge produced is aimed at constituting an Ottoman-Islamic civilizational identity and reinforcing the government's discourse of democratization. The written panels in the museum serve a similar function to that of textbooks. The blown-up photocopies of original documents, such as Mehmed II's sketches and letters, convey that the museum's account of conquest is based on *authentic* sources; hence, its narrative is a genuine representation. The museum's overt emphasis on 'historical accuracy' and 'authenticity' is worth noting as it reveals the museum organizers' intent to popularize and maintain a singular version of the history of the conquest. By dedicating a panel listing the names of academics, artists, and technicians who have contributed to assuring the authenticity of documentation, the museum conveys to its visitors that it possesses the intellectual authority over the knowledge of the Ottoman history.

In addition, the twelve-minute long animated documentary offers yet another way of knowing the conquest through its visual representation. The visuality of the conquest is presumed to provide a different perspective on history based on the notion of *seeing is believing*, which is taken as the primary source of knowledge in scientific thinking. As Barbie Zelizer (2001), points out in her study of the increasing array of visual representations of the Holocaust, “Western epistemology has always been ocular-centric or vision-based. With ‘the seen’ taken as a primary ground of knowledge in Western thought, ‘seeing’ has become in many cases a metaphor for perspective” (Zelizer, 2001, pp. 1–2). My intention here is to point out the problem of visual *re*-presentation of a historical event that does not have a firsthand witness account. The documentary presented at the 1453 Museum demands us to ask: What does it mean to *see* the conquest? What perspective do visitors learn when they visualize the conquest? In the case of the visual representation of the Holocaust, according to Zelizer, “the translation of Nazi atrocity into visual form in itself is seen not only as an act of expression but as an act of negotiation with the array of meanings by which the Holocaust presents itself to us” (2001, pp. 1–2). The documentary presented at the 1453 Museum must be understood as a translation of the conquest that it is a recycled work that reuses the materials available while presenting itself as a representation of truth. In recent years there has been a proliferation of visual productions, i.e. television series, films, etc., which adopt Ottoman periods as the settings of stories. However, recent popularization of the Ottoman history does not indicate a homogenous understanding of the Ottoman past. Each single piece has its unique way of

interpreting and aestheticizing the Ottoman past. And each must be examined individually in relation to the other productions under the same theme because each representation of the 1453 conquest or Ottoman history in general, is an act of negotiation with the array of meanings. Although the documentary presented at the 1453 Museum may seem like a conventional representation of the conquest “as told in history and literature”, the meaning produced by its visuality must be understood in relation to other visual productions. The museum’s emphasis on authenticity and historical truth presented through this documentary thus reveals the museum organizers’ intention to *correct* the *misrepresentations* of the Ottoman history.

If seeing is not enough, knowledge about the conquest can be best learned when it is *experienced*. The highly publicized virtual experience at the museum’s panoramic room is central to the conception of the conquest, or Ottoman history in general, in the present. The experience serves as a source of knowledge, not so much about the past, but how this past has a constitutive role in the present. In his study on the postwar efforts to experience the Holocaust through various cultural venues in the formulation of the Holocaust discourse, Gary Weissman (2004) makes a useful distinction between two ways of knowing about the Holocaust. One is the often the privileged personal experience of the survivors that specifically calls for those who bear “witness to the catastrophe in its aftermath” (Weissman, 2004, pp. 91–92). The other way of knowing is through texts, i.e. historical documents, photographs, (documentary) films and so on. Weissman further suggests that these two ways of knowing—“knowing by experience” and “knowing about”—in fact leads us to think about “two objects of knowledge” (Weissman, 2004, p. 92). One

deals with the knowledge about the *full experience*, from being deported, tortured, starved, and almost killed to living with the trauma inflicted by horror and profound loss. Whereas the other object of knowledge concerns the *historical event* of the Holocaust learned secondhand through survivors' testimonies and other texts. The Holocaust and the conquest of Istanbul are completely two different historical events indeed; however, Weissman's distinctions between the two different *ways of knowing* and *objects of knowledge* are useful in thinking about how the museum's exhibited materials operate in knowledge production.

Therefore, the same distinctions between different ways of knowing and different objects of knowledge can also be made in the case of the 1453 Museum. The visitors are given two venues to understand the conquest. They can learn about the event of the conquest through the written panels and documentary. They can also acquire an "experiential knowledge" of the conquest by touring the panoramic room. One thus may ask, what does it mean to experience the conquest when there is no one to actually bear witness to a war that was fought in the 15th century? What kind of understanding about the conquest are the visitors expected to obtain when they experience it personally? How is the Ottoman history connected through the experience of the conquest? And what relevance does the experience of the conquest have in the present day? In other words, what is the museum's objective by *bringing history to the present*? As Weissman points out that the survivors' personal accounts are crucial in the experiential knowledge of the Holocaust. The survivors' full experience of the event, which includes not only witnessing the event but also living through its aftermath, serves a particular function in the

(re)production of the Holocaust knowledge and discourse (Weissman, 2004). Survival implies continuity, or linkage, between history and the present in that the historical event still has an impact today and it is a lesson to be remembered for the future. I do not suggest that the panoramic experience of the conquest at the museum is in any way equivalent to the Holocaust experience. My intention is to point out that, although it is impossible to bear witness to the conquest, it is assumed to be possible to attain an experiential knowledge enhanced by the museum's technologies. It is indeed a simulated and manipulated experience that by subjecting the visitors in the position of witnesses, who not only have come to experience the conquest, but also are living the enduring impact of it, the panoramic room operates to construct a personal account of the conquest that is essential for understanding the significance of the conquest in the present day. The enduring impact of this monumental combat, as the visitors learn from the written panels and documentary before they experience the conquest, is the establishment of a an Ottoman-Islamic civilization that its unique culture has laid the foundation of a dynamic and tolerant society in which they live today. Hence, the museum's panoramic room operates to "[form] a bridge between history and today" ("Panorama 1453 History Museum," 2010) that by producing an experiential knowledge, it aims at connecting the conquest and present. This connection enables the museum visitors to comprehend the meanings of human rights, individual freedom, and democracy. And hence the museum's knowledge of Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and multiculturalism helps to mobilize and rationalize the AKP government's democratization reform.

Some may argue that the orientation and function of the 1453 Museum thus can be described as primarily pedagogical as it claims to present a truthful historical account which had been denied as a part of the national history since the establishment of the republic. The museum's claim of historical accuracy reveals its organizers' intention to negotiate the meanings of the Ottoman history produced by both the republican historiography and other popular texts of the same theme. As a public manifestation of the Ottoman-Islamic time and identity, the museum's effect is indeed a disruption of national time as the experiential knowledge produced by the panoramic room also enables the production of continuity between the temporalities of the Ottoman past and present.

This view is helpful for understanding the politics of history, memory, and identity that take place at the 1453 Museum. However, this view is insufficient for comprehending the social role of this new type of historical museums in contemporary Turkey. When examined within its larger context, the museum plays an important role as a governing technique for rationalizing the AKP's practices of reform in the cultural field, which is reconceptualized as a public sphere for enhancing democracy. By combining the European universalities of human rights, freedom, and democracy with local particularities, the museum produces an *authentic* set of values to readdress socially and politically-produced issues, such as discrimination and inequality against ethno-religious minorities, as merely a matter of culture that can be resolved in market terms. By reproducing the knowledge of Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and pluralism, the 1453 Museum neutralizes these social and political issues concerning the rights and demands of ethno-religious

minorities, rather than encouraging social dialogue between communities. It is in this respect that I argue the 1453 Museum's objective of knowledge reveals the ruling authority's Ottomentality in managing society's cultural activities and regulating cultural diversity.

3.3.1. The role of museum experts

The transformation of the social role of historical museums and cultural heritage in Turkey over the last two to three decades also has an effect on the role of museum experts in relation to society. With the emergence of a new type of history museum, along with other Ottoman-themed cultural productions, experts in Ottoman and Islamic studies have acquired a prestigious status and task in the process of knowledge production. Since historical museums and cultural heritage are conceptualized in current cultural policy as an important venue for enhancing cultural democracy, museum experts are assigned the role of producing a particular type of knowledge that would help to link history museums with other key social institutions, i.e. the media, economy, education, etc. The 1453 Museum, for instance, has employed artists, historians, and media technicians to not only ensure the authenticity of documentation, but also make intelligible the relevance of the museum's knowledge of Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and multiculturalism in the process of democratization.

As the Turkish historian Oktay Özel observes, history in Turkey, both as a profession and a field of knowledge, has gone through transitions over the last three decades. He indicates that after the mid-1980s, a time in which the Alevi and Kurdish issues were central to Turkish politics, there has been an attempt within Turkish society to uncover the “unknown” (*bilinmeyen*) or “alternative” histories (Gürata, 2013). Ottoman history during this time, according to Yılmaz Çolak, became a political instrument for alleviating social tensions resulting from cultural differences (2006, p. 587). Özel also suggests that, since the AKP took power in 2002 there has been yet another shift towards an “Islamization of history”, and this shift has taken the form of popular history (Gürata, 2013). Ottoman history now is no longer practiced exclusively by the elite class as it was in the early republic; it has become a popular practice and object in popular culture. Both printed and visual media have contributed to popularizing the Islamization of history. And this shift in the practice of Ottoman history can be seen as an indication of a bottom-up approach, rather than top-down, of a new “conservative social engineering project” (*muhafazakar toplum inşa projesi*) (Gürata, 2013). In speaking of the role of historians in current Turkish society and politics, Özel further makes an important distinction between Ottoman (*Osmanlı*) historians and Ottomanist (*Osmanlıcılık*) historians that the latter play a significant role in the production of popular Ottoman history, which can serve as a mechanism in the popularization of Ottoman history.

Based on Özel’s view, the experts of the Panorama Museum would fit into the category of Ottomanist historians (among them includes artists and technology specialists). Unlike the Ottoman historians, the Ottomanist historians occupy a

specific position and serve a particular function in society and politics. The latter can be regarded as what Foucault calls the “intellectual” that his or her “specificity”—namely class position, profession, and production of knowledge—“is linked to the general function of an apparatus of truth” (1980, p. 132). As Foucault defines,

Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. ‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A ‘regime’ of truth (1980, p. 133).

[Truth] is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements (1980, p. 131).

Henceforth, the task at stake for the Ottomanist historians, along with the other museum experts, is that of establishing and maintaining the function of the regime of truth—one that sees the 1453 conquest and Islam as an ideal model of multiculturalism for contemporary Turkish society. The expertise of the experts runs in the circulation of power that through the institution of museum, their professions as academics, artists, and technology specialists have become mechanisms for sustaining and rendering reasonable the AKP’s governing practices. The museum and the museum experts can be considered as extensions of the governmental power. By representing the conquest of Istanbul in a more accessible and popularized fashion, the museum is able to not only attract public

interest in the Ottoman history, but also attain “access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behavior” (Foucault, 1980, p. 125). It is in this sense that the 1453 Museum experts, historians in particular, take part in constituting the museum as a social space for promulgating the AKP-led democratization.

Nevertheless, this is not to say the neoconservative elite’s regime of truth has an absolute effect on the society as it intends to produce. In Foucault’s view, this regime of truth is only a part of the already existing network of power relations. Power is to be thought of in positive terms rather than in negative and repressive forms. The AKP’s ‘apparatus of truth’ in fact has productive effects on society as it produces new power relations. As the regime of truth tries to re-codify the social norms and cultural values by introducing its ideal value system based on the Ottoman-Islamic heritage, it further generates public debates on issues of identity politics and social democratization. The Gezi incident, which took place in the summer of 2013, can thus be understood as an instance of the positive product of power. Despite the ruling government’s effort at inventing new technologies of dominance, its capacity still falls short of encompassing the entire field of power relations.

The 1453 Museum does not merely reproduce a neo-Ottomanist narrative of Turkish national history and identity. The museum should be understood as a governmental technique for mobilizing the ruling government’s democratization discourse and practices of reform. First, by using Ottoman-Islamic history and cultural heritage as a branding technique, the 1453 Museum enables local and

central authorities to reconstruct Istanbul's, and Turkey's, image as an ally of the international communities, such as the EU and the UN, and a major contributor to a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. In addition, by converting Ottoman-Islamic history and cultural heritage into a commercial product for cultural consumption, the museum adheres to the objective of the AKP's national cultural policy, which redefines culture as a way to enhance national economic growth. Moreover, the museum also plays an important role in promulgating participatory democracy in society. The concept of participatory democracy, or democratic culture, is however narrowly defined in accordance with neoliberal and neo-Ottoman governing rationalities. By encouraging private initiatives to sponsor the production of the knowledge of Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and pluralism, the 1453 Museum shifts away from a state-centered model of museum management and conception of single-culture Turkish identity to one that stresses civil participation and tolerance towards cultural diversity. Yet, such narrow definition of participatory democracy allows civil participation only in market terms, i.e. as sponsors and consumers, while contemporary issues of cultural rights and social demands of minority groups continue to be largely ignored. Such negligence is partly due the Ottoman-Islamic based knowledge of tolerance and pluralism, which does not recognize ethnic difference or encourage social demands of minorities. By staging the 1453 conquest as the founding moment of a civilization of tolerance and peace, the 1453 Museum represents only one dimension of the conquest at the expense of reconciliatory social dialogue between groups. Hence, the knowledge that the 1453 Museum has produced is yet another state-centered conception of

history, which sees Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and pluralism as a pragmatic solution to the diversifying culture in Turkey.

CHAPTER 4

TURKISH TELEVISION, OTTOMAN HISTORICAL DRAMA, AND TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF

In this chapter, I take up the growing number of Ottoman historical drama and children's programs on Turkish television as a site where the process of subjectification takes place. Since the early 2010s, Ottoman dramas have become a popular television genre, attracting wide viewership not only in Turkey, but also across the Central Asian, Balkan, and Middle Eastern countries where Turkey seeks to become a pivotal player. The increasing exportation of Turkish television productions to these regions hence indicates the significant role that television plays in advancing Turkey in the global media industry. For instance, the series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (*Magnificent Century*; *Muhteşem* hereafter) depicting the life of the 16th century Sultan Süleyman has become a household name both at home and abroad. In 2016, Netflix, a major online streaming service of television shows and films available to international audience, had purchased and begun streaming the series in many countries including China, Croatia, Pakistan, and Peru.

The existing cultural analyses focusing on the recent popularization of Turkish television series in other countries tend to interpret this phenomenon as an indication of Turkey's growing 'soft power' in former Ottoman lands and beyond. However, as mentioned in the previous chapters, this interpretation tends to fall short to explain this complex cultural phenomenon. This chapter pays attention to the implications of the convergence of neoliberal and neo-Ottoman rationalities on the media sector and media practice. Specifically, it is concerned with the governing activities that are involved in the restructuring of the media sector and regulating media practice.

The chapter is divided into three main sections aiming to locate what Foucault terms the "techniques of the self" by which the media practitioners are mobilized to conduct themselves based on the ethos of the market and neoconservative norms. The first is a brief discussion of recent development of the Turkish media towards an authoritarian model. Referring to Michel Foucault's notion of "dividing practice" (1983, p. 208) and Mitchell Dean's approach to authoritarian type of governmentality (2009, pp. 155–174), I suggest that the relation between the emergent cultural form of Ottoman television drama and the political subject in question cannot be adequately examined without understanding the force of the market. The second section discusses the administrative restructuring of Turkish television based on the imperatives of neoliberalism since the 1980s. By focusing on the changing style of management of the Turkish Television and Radio Corporation (*Türkiye Radyo ve Televizyon Kurumu*; TRT), I aim to illustrate the rationale and process through which the Turkish media sector is

transformed into an integral part of the free market where the government becomes a key player. My argument here is that this new sphere of free market/freedom is organized in a way that enables direct interference of the government and functions as a regulatory mechanism, which divides media practitioners and consumers into opposing categories through their own participation in the media market. On the one hand, a 'free subject' is constituted based on the premise that the market is a sphere where individuals are obliged to exercise their right to freedom (of choice, lifestyle, expression, and so on). On the other hand, this 'free subject' is increasingly subjugated to such disciplinary practices as censorship for being on the wrong side of the government. The third section examines the relation between the restructured media market and the proliferation of Ottoman television drama in Turkey over the last decade. I maintain that the reorganization of the media market has produced a condition where private sectors are encouraged to take on active role in reviving Turkey's Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage and promulgating moral-religious values. Paying specific attention to the controversial case of *Muhteşem* in contrast with TRT's own Ottoman drama and children's programs, I aim to identify the ways in which these productions and individual citizens are directed to conduct themselves as a virtuous citizenry.

I contend that it is through the double movement between the governing practices associated with the media market and those concerning the making of a “conservative generation”¹⁰ that a moral subject of citizenry is constituted.

4.1. Neoliberalism, the media market, and the divided subjects

Although a general trend of Ottoman costume drama can be observed on Turkish television in the 2010s, one can identify a distinction between two subgenres. One is highly valued by the ruling government as a genuine representation of Turkey’s Ottoman-Islamic heritage, an authentic form of national culture, and an asset and “national brand”¹¹ for promoting Turkey in the global media industry. The other is subjected to such disciplinary practice as censorship for its misrepresentation of history and offense to traditional values. For instance, the popular series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* projects an image of the Ottoman-Islamic past that the AKP government rails against whilst the TRT production of *The Revival: Ertuğrul (Diriliş: Ertuğrul; Diriliş* hereafter) becomes an ideal type of the AKP’s neo-Ottoman cultural object. This distinction divides not only this television genre, but also those who produce and consume it, into categories of the pious and the

10 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Once commented in response to the oppositional Republican People’s Party’s (CHP) criticism about the AKP government’s interference in politics with religious views, “we [the AKP] will raise a generation that is conservative and democratic and embraces the values and historical principles of its nation” (Hurriyet Daily News, February 2, 2012).

11 The Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmuş stated that the series has become a brand of Turkey. See Sabah, November 15, 2016. Available: <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/11/15/cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-dirilis-ertugrul-yorumu>

secular, the moral and the degenerate, or simply, the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’. This distinction also raises the following questions: What is the rationale of regulating this particular television genre along the thin line of historical accuracy and the knowledge of moral-religious truth? What, and who, is to be governed through such dividing techniques? Why should they be governed? And what are the practices that are employed to govern them?

Here I take the contrasting cases of *Muhteşem* and *Diriliş* as a starting point for investigating the relationship between this emergent cultural form and the making of the subject of Ottomentality. Although *Muhteşem* has become an internationally acclaimed television series attracting an international viewership of 400 million, generated public interest in Ottoman history, and boosted revenue in the Turkish television industry through its sales abroad, it received rather bitter reception from conservative audiences in Turkey, especially the conservative government. During the time of broadcast between 2011 and 2014, the series’ broadcaster Show TV and producer Meral Oktay received more than 70,000 individual complaints from local audience and warning of banishment from RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Board), a key organ of media regulation in Turkey. The criticisms targeted at the series’ historical accuracy, its representation of the revered historical figure Sultan Süleyman as an alcohol drinker and womanizer, and alleged harm to society’s moral values by portraying adulterous acts (Fowler, 2011). As the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan denounced, “[those] who toy with [traditional] values would be taught a lesson within the premises of law” (“Muhteşem Yüzyıl’ will be off air,” 2012). The controversy over *Muhteşem*

is an explicit example of the AKP government's intent to assert its moral-religious authority by inscribing Ottoman-Islamic civilizational discourse into institutional practices.

The controversy of *Muhteşem* stands in stark contrast with the steadily increasing number of Ottoman dramas broadcasted on TRT during the same period (see Table 1 and 2 for comparison). Between 2010 and the beginning of 2017, TRT and its associated media companies have produced more than a dozen Ottoman television shows, including primetime series and children's programs for the channel TRT *Çocuk*, Turkey's first local children's channel. Among these series, *Diriliş*, featuring the story of Ertuğrul Gazi, the father of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, has become the most acclaimed, winning the best television series at Turkey's national Golden Butterfly Award in November 2016. It became the most-watched series in Turkey in 2016 and reached nearly 200 million viewers in 173 countries ("Diriliş Ertuğrul Kaç Ülkede İzleniyor?," 2016). The production received considerable amount of financial support from the AKP. It also received the AKP officials' acknowledgement for its 'support for democracy' in the aftermath of the July 15 attempted coup that year. Erdoğan stated that the show's winning of the award indicates that it "has won the nation's heart" ("Diriliş Ertuğrul yorumu," 2016; my translation). His statement is not only praise for the show's contribution in reviving Ottoman history in popular culture, but also its solidarity with the government's stance on 'democracy'. It suggests that viewers' choice of *Diriliş* signals their choice for 'democracy'.

Table 1: Ottoman-themed television dramas and children’s programs on TRT (2010-2017)

Year	Channel	Production	Episodes	Production company
2010	TRT Çocuk	<i>Küçük Hezarfen</i>	26	TRT Düsler Evi Çizgi Film Stüdyosu
2010	TRT Çocuk	<i>Barbaros</i>	26	Animax
2011	TRT 1	<i>Yamak Ahmet</i>	60	Okur Film
2011	TRT 1	<i>Evvel Zaman Hikayesi</i>	4	TRT
2012	TRT 1	<i>Bir Zamanlar Osmanlı Kıyam</i>	20	Herşey Film
2012	TRT 1	<i>Esir Sultan</i>	5	Okur Film
2013	TRT Çocuk	<i>Çınar</i>	26	Gafi2000 Productions
2013-2014	TRT 1	<i>Osmanlı Tokadı</i>	34	Duka Film
2014	TRT 1	<i>Çırağan Baskını</i>	4	Piar DNA
2014-2017 ongoing	TRT 1	<i>Diriliş: Ertuğrul</i>	91+	Tekden Film
2014-2016	TRT 1	<i>Filita</i>	56	ES Film
2015	TRT 1	<i>Zeyrek ile Çeyrek</i>	29	ES Film
2016	TRT 1	<i>Yunus Emre: Aşkın Yolculuğu</i>	44	Tekden Film
2017-ongoing	TRT 1	<i>Payitaht Abdülhamid</i>	17+	ES Film

Table 2: Ottoman-themed dramas on other Turkish television channels (2010-2017)

Year	Channel	Production	Episodes	Production company
2011-2014	Kanal D, Star TV	<i>Muhteşem Yüzyıl</i>	139	Tims Productions
2012-2013	Fox	<i>Harem</i>	32	Gani Müjde
2013	Kanal D	<i>Fatih</i>	5	MEDYAPIM
2015-2017	Fox, Star TV	<i>Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem</i>	60	Tims Productions

How do we assess the proliferation of Ottoman motifs on Turkish television in the 2010s? What tools do we possess to comprehend the differentiation between *Muhteşem* and *Diriliş*? And who is the subject to be governed in the controversy of *Muhteşem*? My approach to the relation between the proliferation of Ottoman television drama and the process of subjectification draws on Foucault's perspective of "dividing practices" (1983, p. 208) in government. Foucault's notion of dividing practices refers to the whole range of governmental activities, including reform policies and public campaigns, which presuppose a particular human subject to be governed and guide them to conduct themselves in accordance with a set of ethics (Rose, 1999, p. 42). Each of these practices creates a moral subject who is "either divided inside himself or divided from others" (Foucault, 1983, p. 208). In this case, such dividing practices can be located in the AKP government's renewal of national cultural policy, its restructuring of the media in line with market mentality, its campaign for an authentic national culture by reviving Turkey's Ottoman-Islamic past, and its restoration of so called "traditional moral values" which the conservative government claims have been lost in the process of modernization. These practices presume a subject of citizenry, who has become morally corrupt and is deprived of the knowledge of their Ottoman-Islamic lineage as a result of the early republican elites' nation-building and modernization projects. These practices therefore aim for a cultural renewal by guiding subjects to accept their responsibility to become economically liberal, culturally conservative, and morally just (in the view of Islamic justice). Such practices can be understood as what Foucault calls the "techniques of the self" through which individuals come

to understand themselves as moral subjects who are capable of “self-reflection”, “self-caring”, and “self-control” (Rose, 1999, pp. 42–44).

The self-caring, moral subject is central to liberal government, which is based on the premises of governing through the individuals’ autonomy and free will. And in order to achieve this end, the government must continuously invest in creating new spaces of freedom where the subjects are obliged to become free agents of their own actions and to conduct themselves as a form of enterprise (Rose et al., 2006, pp. 90–91). For instance, as Nikolas Rose notes, the market is organized as one such space of freedom and consumption, and it can be understood as a technology of the self by which the individuals’ active participation as consumers is deemed as a responsible act of exercising their right to freedom and self-improvement (1999, pp. 85–87). The strategy of the market in what Rose calls “advanced liberal government” is crucial as it produces autonomous, self-interested subjects who “account for their own lives and their vicissitudes in terms of their freedom” (Rose et al., 2006, pp. 90–91). According to him, this free subject “would produce the ends of government by fulfilling themselves rather than being merely obedient, and would be obliged to be free in specific ways” (2006, p. 89). Hence, the ‘free’ subject, as Rose remarks, is one of the underlying elements in liberal government.

The AKP’s adoption, in its early years of governance, of a neoliberal approach to cultural management geared towards Turkey’s EU membership has accelerated the transformation of the Turkish media into an integral part of the free market. This growing media market has become a new sphere of ‘freedom’ where

private individuals are responsible for enacting their civic rights to freedom through entrepreneurship and consumption. The premises of this approach to media reform is that, by privatizing the media sector, it would help to reduce state expenditures on public services, minimize state interference, and achieve more efficient governance by transferring the responsibility of (media) production and generating capital onto private sector. It is also assumed that the process of privatization would be an effective means to meet the preconditions of EU membership which include administrative reforms toward democratization, greater individual rights and freedoms, and cultural diversity.

Nonetheless, as studies on recent developments of Turkish media suggest, the AKP-led media reform has led to “a model of neoliberal media autocracy” (Baybars-Hawks & Akser, 2012) and produced a self-censored, submissive subject of citizenry. Burcu Sümer and Gülseren Adaklı (2010) suggest in their report of the managerial restructuring of TRT under the AKP that marketization of the media has created advantageous conditions for establishing a conservative, pro-government media. Murat Akser and Baybars-Hawks (2012) similarly argue that the AKP’s neoliberal intervention in the media sector has contributed to Turkey’s descent to authoritarianism, where increasing political pressure and judicial suppression on dissent have de-democratic effects on media institutions. Bilge Yeşil (2016) also observes that the AKP’s strategic reform of the media market in line with neoliberalism has enabled it to reconfigure the state and strengthen state power. As she argues, the reform of the Turkish media today resembles an “authoritarian neoliberal order” in which a “strong state” and “free market politics” are its main

ingredients. This “new media architecture” (Sümer & Adaklı, 2010) where the government plays an active role in administrative executives, has produced a highly disciplined and exclusive sphere of freedom where private citizens are obliged to exercise their freedom of choice, expression, and lifestyle in conformity with not only the rules of the market, but also conservative values. Given recent developments of Turkish media, one may ask: How do we comprehend such authoritarian and illiberal rules within the structure of liberal democracy where the ‘free subject’ is obliged to be autonomous and free in market terms (as investors, producers, and consumers of the media market), and yet, remain obedient to the ruling authority?

As Mitchell Dean points out, the notion of an ‘autonomous free subject’ must not be taken at its face value, as it may overlook the illiberal elements within rules of liberal democracy. He argues that although studies of governmentality mainly focus on the context of liberal democracy, they also help to shed light on “non-liberal and explicitly authoritarian types of rule that seek to operate through obedient rather than free subjects, or, at a minimum, endeavor to neutralize any opposition to authority” (Dean, 2009, p. 155). He poses the question: “How can the study of government illuminate questions of non-liberal and authoritarian rule both inside and outside [...] liberal democracies?” (Dean, 2009, p. 153). Given the rise of neoliberalism and neoconservatism across Europe, the United States, and in this case, Turkey in the past decades, Dean’s call for a critical approach for comprehending the rationalities and practices of illiberal government and its constitution of submissive rather than autonomous subjects is particularly pertinent

to the changing political environments of these places today. He argues that Foucault's notion of dividing practices would be a useful analytical tool for identifying the illiberal characteristics of liberal democracies. As I shall discuss below, this approach would equip us with the necessary tools to identify the regulatory practices of the Turkish media market and the ways in which the political subject in question is constituted.

4.2. The transformation of TRT (1960s-2010s): from national public broadcaster to key media player

Turkey's national broadcasting service TRT provides a vital case for understanding the AKP's cultural intervention based on neoliberal and neo-Ottoman rationalities. As I discuss in the introduction, the coupling of these two distinct, yet interdependent forms of governmentalities arose as a critique of the excessive control of the Kemalist regime in all areas of cultural life in society, especially in its restrictions on public manifestations of ethnic and religious identities. Ottomentality thus can be understood as an art of governing culture and diversity, which seeks to constitute a new normative framework for reshaping society's cultural conduct in accordance with the imperatives of neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism (read: neoconservatism). It sees the problem of a morally corrupt and unjust society, which ought to be redirected onto the 'right' path by restoring Ottoman-Islamic norms and values and employing market principles as the general guidelines of the social order. It also invests in various means of constituting

governable subjects, who relate to themselves “as subjects of freedom” and act responsibly based on a prescribed set of rules. Hence, the task of the governing authority is to produce the necessary condition in which the ethos of neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism are imbedded in governmental practices and according to which individuals would conduct themselves as a form of self-improvement.

As Dean points out, what neoliberalism and neoconservatism have in common is that they both detect “the problem of a corruption of the people and the need to lead them to accept their responsibilities and become virtuous citizenry again” (2009, p. 190). These two governmentalities call for “a radical cultural renewal” as they try “to [implant] the norms and values of the market and the forms of conduct to be derived from it in all spheres, including the institutions and instruments of government themselves” (Dean, 2009, p. 190). It is from this perspective that I attempt to understand the reform of Turkish television industry in general, and TRT’s restructuring in particular, into a new sphere of freedom—free market—wherein the governed subjects, including governmental institutions themselves, act in accordance with, or in obedience to, the rules of the media market and neoconservative values. Here I devote my attention to the transformation of TRT since its establishment as a case for illustrating the reorganization of the Turkish media market. I contend that the governmental intervention in the media market under the banner of democratization, which is reduced to and measured by the performance of the market, has produced a new set of rules for individual media practice. As such, individual subjects are obliged to act in conformity with preset rules or their deviation would be conceived as threats

against ‘democracy’. A consequence of such cultural intervention is thus a self-governing and highly self-censored subject of citizenry, whose dissent becomes neutralized as they enact their right to participate in the media market.

4.2.1. TRT as a state institution

Established in 1964, TRT’s role was defined by the 1961 Constitution as “an autonomous state organization with monopoly rights over broadcasting” (Aksoy & Avcı, 1992, p. 5). It served as Turkey’s national broadcasting service and maintained its monopolistic hold over the Turkish media until the late 1980s. Its administrative structure and production were state-centered. As Aksoy and Robins note, TRT’s centralized production from the Ankara studio generally neglected productions of regional studios. They argue that TRT’s geographic location and centralized production in the Ankara studio reflected “the symbolic stronghold of Kemalist values, counterposed to the old capital of the Ottoman past, Istanbul” (1997, p. 1943). TRT’s role in society as the sole provider of public broadcasting service therefore determined the relationship between state and society at the time. Since its productions were concentrated in the hands of republican elites, it embodied the state’s vision of modernity and the type of culture that society ought to be shaped by. Similar to other state-run cultural institutions, TRT was assigned the mission of providing cultural service through broadcasting and educating citizens in accordance with the state’s vision of modernity and progress. It aimed at

promoting and protecting the homogeneity of Turkish culture and identity by suppressing other elements of cultural identity. As Aksoy and Avcı note,

[TRT] monopolized the task of promoting and securing the continuation of the national, Turkish culture defined within the framework of Kemalist principles [...] by means of exclusion, censorship and political partiality [...] Broadcasting was seen as a vehicle to promote a common and collective agenda in the direction of modernization [...] to bind the cultural identity of Turkey into a straight-jacket (1992, pp. 4–6).

Ayşe Öncü similarly observes that TRT in the 1980s and 1990s continued to speak in the voice of the state as it followed “the official canons of correct and proper speech forms”—known as the state’s campaign of “correct and beautiful Turkish” (*düzgün ve güzel Türkçe*) (2000, pp. 300–301). She argues that the state’s effort to purify the Turkish language from elements of other dialects and languages fostered clear boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, marking “distinctions between new/old, high/low Turkish” (2000, p. 296). Since the Turkish law criminalized public use of minority languages (Ada, 2011, pp. 253–254), TRT’s use of proper speech form reinforced the state’s vision for a unitary Turkish identity. TRT’s practice of inclusion and exclusion hence created an “imagined community” (Anderson, 2006) of modern Turkey that was sanitized from signs of old (Ottoman language and Arabic script), low (folk), and *other* (minority languages and dialects) cultural elements.

TRT’s state-centered operation and use of standardized speech form can thus be understood as what David Nolan calls as a “technology of citizenship.” He argues that the notion of the public, or citizenship, is not something given, but is

historically contingent as it is constantly reshaped by discursive governmental practices, in this case public broadcasting and television. As he states, “contemporary formation of citizenship is shaped by interactions between different authorities, and different ways of defining ‘the public’ they deploy” (2006, p. 227). As public broadcasting produces a particular “public knowledge” which demarcates the “communicative norms” of society, it simultaneously addresses its audience as its subject of concern (Nolan, 2006). With the state’s direct intervention in broadcasting, the relationship that TRT formed with the public/citizen at the time was thus directly bound up with TRT’s relationship with the state. When TRT addressed the Turkish public, it spoke in the state’s voice concerning the public’s interest.

4.2.2. The end of the “TRT era”¹² in post-1980s

The late 1980s and early 1990s marked the end of TRT’s monopolistic control of Turkey’s broadcasting (Aksoy & Robins, 1997; Çetin, 2014; Öncü, 2000; Şahin & Aksoy, 1993; Sümer & Adaklı, 2010). The 1980 military coup and the Özal government’s economic liberalization policies helped restructure Turkish media towards a market-oriented administrative model in the following decades. The proliferation of unregulated private channels also posed a challenge to the

¹² Aksoy and Robins (1997) refer to the “TRT era” as the period from its establishment in 1964 to the end of 1980s, during which time TRT held a monopoly role in the Turkish media.

state-centered characteristics of TRT. First, as a result of multiparty government in the 1950s, the state's top-down, elitist approach in maintaining society's modern, secular order of cultural life was increasingly challenged by various social segments (Aksoy & Robins, 1997). It became apparent that the state's repressive measures could no longer contain the cultural diversity and particularity of the masses. For instance, in the aftermath of the 1980 coup, as the military focused on weakening the forces of the Left and Right, the Islamists found themselves a political space and opportunity to articulate their opposition against the state's institutional practices that excluded the pious segment (Aksoy & Robins, 1997). The coup, as Fuat Keyman states, created a condition for "the marginalized and silenced identity to surface and express its resistance to the national secular identity as the privileged modern self" (Keyman, 1995, pp. 112–1113 quoted in Aksoy & Robins, 1997, p. 1939).

Second, immediately after the 1980 coup, the Özal government initiated neoliberal reform aimed at restructuring Turkey's economy in tune with the expanding global economy. This process also posed a significant challenge to such state-centered institutional practices as public broadcasting. As a result of economic globalization, increasing cultural exchange across national borders gradually eroded the distinctiveness of national characteristics. There was also an increasing popularity of local, religious, and vernacular culture, which together signaled the rise of multiple identities in society that resisted the domination of both foreign media culture and the state-centered notion of Turkishness promulgated by TRT. During this period, the Turkish media witnessed an influx of unregulated

commercial television channels and foreign programs. For instance, the popularity of Kemal Sunal films (known for their vulgar/low form of culture) on commercial channels and the proliferation of “alternative/Islamic channels”, such as TGRT, STV, and Mesaj TV, signaled the rise of “subversive” forces in the burgeoning Turkish media market (Öncü, 2000).

During this period TRT found itself at odds with the unregulated private channels and media market and the growing cultural diversity that demanded outlets for expressing their voices. Its state-centered, protectionist administrative model had prevented it from competing with commercial-oriented channels in the expanding market (Sümer & Adaklı, 2010). In addition, its reluctance to include popular/low cultural content and persistence on the Kemalist notion of Turkish (high) culture also kept it from attracting a mass audience (Öncü, 2000; Sümer & Adaklı, 2010). Its role and relationship with society during this period continued to be bound up with the state as defined by the 1982 Constitution.

4.2.3. TRT between the 2000s and 2010s

TRT entered a new phase in the 2000s and 2010s as the AKP sought to strategically transform the media market by enforcing neoliberal imperatives. Turkey’s EU accession, which accelerated in the early and mid-2000s, provided a timely opportunity for the AKP to launch a series of reforms aiming at integrating with the EU and the world economically and politically. The EU was also a strategy

for the AKP to promulgate democratization, which promised greater rights and freedoms for minorities. It is in this larger context that the media, and TRT, became one of the targets of administrative reforms (Adaklı, 2013). According to the National Report of Cultural Policy in Turkey presented to the Council of Europe in October 2013, the AKP administration defines the media, television in particular, as not only an asset for advancing Turkey in the global media industry, but also a platform for enhancing cultural democracy (“Cultural Policy in Turkey--National Report,” 2013). Yet, despite the legal developments in the media have followed the criteria of EU membership negotiation, particularly on the issues of cultural diversity and minority rights, recent studies suggest that the AKP’s neoliberal approach to media reform has amounted to an increasingly authoritarian form of government and has therefore undermined media independence, freedom of speech, and democracy (Baybars-Hawks & Akser, 2012; Sümer & Adaklı, 2010; Yeşil, 2016). The changing media environment raises questions about the nature of TRT as a state institution operating with a corporate mindset and about its relation to the formation of governed subjects.

Since the AKP took power in 2002 and has continued to rule as a single party government, it has endeavored to restructure state enterprises, including the media, in line with market mentality. Neoliberal restructuring of the state and its institutions, according to Bilge Yeşil (2016), is a crucial tactic for the AKP administration, as it creates favorable conditions where its governmental practices (including democratization policies, EU agenda, etc.) are legitimized. She notes that neoliberalism, in the Turkish experience, is a major cause for Turkey’s democratic

shortcomings and descent to authoritarianism. Using Ian Bruff's (2014) term "authoritarian neoliberalism", she underscores the AKP's "mixing of the strong state with free market politics" and "reconfiguring of state and institutional power in an attempt to insulate certain policies and institutional practices from social and political dissent" (Yeşil, 2016, p. 12). Yeşil's argument is buttressed by Sümer and Adaklı, who suggest that the emergent Turkish media market in the past decade favors the AKP's agenda of establishing a pro-government media. Their report indicates that through closure of critical media outlets, selling off media assets of private companies, and bidding for public tenders, the AKP has sought to utilize the market to "[construct] a pro-AKP media through promoting the burgeoning of the green [conservative] capital in the media sector" (Sümer & Adaklı, 2010). The market therefore can be understood as a governing technology as it simultaneously prioritizes the participation of private sector, yet casts out those who do not conform to the agenda of the government.

The changing landscape of the Turkish media has had significant effects on the restructuring of TRT. The managerial restructuring of TRT in the 2000s would significantly transform its role from a public broadcaster to a key market player in the Turkish television industry. First, as neoliberalism entails a rollback of public expenditures to promote efficient governance, TRT's managerial structure became subjected to evaluation to this effect. In order to more efficiently manage its resources and generate income, TRT spent a decade between 1998 and 2008 evaluating its administrative performance and adjusting its managerial structure (Sümer & Adaklı, 2010). According to Sümer and Adaklı, by adopting corporate

style of management, TRT has shifted towards a market-oriented organization. For instance, by abolishing some of its departments and regional offices and cutting back on staff recruitment, TRT has been able to reduce general expenditures (Sümer & Adaklı, 2010, p. 6). In addition, by eliminating the Coordination Board's "mediating between the Director General and the Executive Board in setting the internal strategies and policy", the institution intends to ensure faster and less complicated decision-making processes, hence more efficient (Sümer & Adaklı, 2010, p. 6). This means that the government now has direct influence and more authority over decisions at TRT. Moreover, the new TRT Law, which allows TRT to "sell or buy news, programs, and services", not only enables TRT to reduce production costs, but also enhances its influence in the media market (Sümer & Adaklı, 2010, p. 5). As Sümer and Adaklı suggest, TRT's outsource of "the advertising sales of more than half of its available advertising slots" in 2009 indicates the corporation's "commercial motive" to increase revenue by attracting bids from marketing companies (2010, p. 13). As a result, TRT has become a competent player in the competitive media market. As they remark,

TRT under the AKP leadership is increasingly becoming a strategic actor in the Turkish broadcasting market and forces the market to self-regulate itself [...] This in turn, strengthens the AKP government's hand to regulate the broadcasting market in an indirect way, by allowing more polarizations between the AKP supporting media and the anti-AKP media (2010, p. 2).

Second, the AKP's prioritization of democratization, introduced within the framework of EU membership negotiation, also had an impact on the

transformation of TRT's role in society. As the EU accession requires Turkey to comply with the European model of democracy, which emphasizes values of human rights, individual freedom, and respect for cultural diversity, the media is increasingly seen as a target of administrative reform to meet the EU requirements. Television broadcasting under the AKP's administration is thus reconceptualized as not only a source of income, but also a platform for mobilizing democratization. By launching multilingual channels, TRT now aims to appeal to wider viewership of different social segments and global audience. Its launch of TRT 6 Kurdish channel in January 2009 is particularly worth noting here. Following the amendment of the Law 4771 on the Establishment and Broadcasts of Radios and Televisions, which lifted the ban on minority languages and dialects in broadcasting, TRT's broadcast in Kurdish indicates one of the AKP government's first steps to promote democratization (Ada, 2011, pp. 235, 254–255).

Nonetheless, as the Turkish Cultural Policy Report: A Civil Perspective reveals, although the ideas of democratization, cultural diversity, and cultural rights are central components in the AKP-led cultural policy, the 1982 Constitution continues to lag behind in “reflecting the multilingual, multi-faith, and multi-cultural structure in Turkey” (Ada, 2011, p. 255). Following the short-lived Kurdish peace process which ended in June 2015, the recent closure of Kurdish media outlets including IMC (Kurdish television news channel), and the arrests of HDP (Kurdish-based People's Democratic Party) members as part of the AKP government's counter-terrorism act raise further questions concerning the role of TRT and its intention in establishing multilingual broadcast as a medium for

promoting democratization and cultural diversity. Or, perhaps one may argue, TRT's multilingual and multicultural channels can be understood as a way of managing cultural diversity since the Constitution and the Law on the Establishment of Radio and Television continue to monitor and restraint the use of minority languages and dialects in such public spaces as the media.

Third, apart from efficient governance and mobilizing democratization, TRT's restructuring also colludes with the AKP's agenda to revive Turkey's Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage and restore moral-religious values as the ethical reference for social conduct. The collusion of neoliberal restructuring of television and the rise of neo-Ottomanism/neoconservatism is particularly evident in the proliferation of primetime Ottoman costume dramas and children's programs on TRT. For example, during the first half of the 2010s TRT launched a number of primetime Ottoman costume dramas depicting particular historical periods and events (See Table 1 above, p. 112). To name a few of the most popular: *The Conqueror (Fatih)*, *Once Upon a Time*, *Ottoman Revolt (Bir Zamanlar Osmanlı: Kiyam)*, and *The Revival: Ertuğrul (Diriliş: Ertuğrul)*. In addition, in 2008 TRT launched Turkey's first children's channel, TRT *Çocuk*, broadcasting designed to teach school-age children about Turkish folklore and Ottoman history. For example, *Barbaros* tells the story of Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa as a child adventuring his path to becoming a famous naval admiral during the reign of Sultan Süleyman. Other programs, such as *Keloğlan* and *Dede Korkut*, are based on Anatolian and pre-Islamic Turkic folklore and convey ethical values and moral lessons from children's perspective. These prime-time television series and

children's programs demand further study, as they bring unprecedented imagery of the Ottoman past and folk culture to television broadcasting.

This section has focused on TRT's transformation from a state-centered protectionist model to one that follows market principles as a way to illustrate the rationale of reforming Turkish media in line with neoliberalism. The marketization of television, in particular TRT, has generated a new ethos that sees the media market as a site for exercising individual rights and freedoms, campaigning for democratization in the context of EU negotiation, reviving Ottoman-Islamic culture, and restoring traditional moral values. Hence, the institutional practices entailing the reform of the media are crucial governing techniques as they frame the ethics for individuals' self-conduct as a form of practicing freedom. And it is through individuals' own practice of freedom in the media market that the agenda of the government is achieved. This is part of the reason that the AKP has vigorously invested in restructuring state institutions as a means to create new spheres of freedom and transform the governed into free subjects.

4.3. The good citizen

The reorganized Turkish media market and restructured TRT as a key market player are crucial mechanisms for mobilizing the AKP government's agenda of restoring a moral subject of citizenry. This agenda is envisioned by the renewed Turkish national cultural policy and reinforced by a range of media regulatory practices. Using a carrot-and-stick approach, the government has been

able to achieve this agenda by rewarding private initiatives for their alliance with the government's vision of national culture and disciplining those who diverge from it. The government's prioritization of the private sector as a means for promulgating cultural change is particularly worth noting here as it constitutes an ideal subject who is capable of and responsible for carrying out the government's mission of reform. In this final section, I pay specific attention to the AKP's prioritization of civil and private initiatives and the incentives for the private sector to invest in the preservation, production, and promotion of Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage and moral-religious values in the form of television series. The contrasting cases of *Muhteşem* and the steady productions of TRT's Ottoman dramas and children's programs illustrate of the dividing practices that are entailed in constituting an active and responsible citizenry.

Turkey's integration with the EU and global economy, which accelerated in the late 1990s and early 2000s, has generated questions concerning its national cultural borders. Similar to many contemporary nation states facing the impacts of globalism and transnationalism, Turkey's cultural policy during the AKP era is designated to cope with the problem of how to maintain the distinctive characteristics of national culture while successfully integrating with the world. Although neoliberalism, cultural globalization, and transnationalism have challenged the state's capacity to maintain its distinctive national culture, the Turkish experience reveals that the state, rather than waning, has developed new strategies for managing the cultural field to protect its national cultural borders (Robins & Şeyben, 2016, Introduction). For instance, by converting Turkey's

Ottoman-Islamic heritage into a national brand with such commercial products as films and television series, the AKP-led cultural policy aims to promote Turkey in the global culture industry. And by handing over its responsibility of cultural services to the private sector, the state calls upon private initiatives to actively participate in preserving and promoting the ‘originality’ of Turkish (read Ottoman-Islamic) culture. As Kevin Robins and Burcu Yasemin Şeyben observe, the responsabilization of civil society in the cultural domain and the “initiatives of neo-Ottomanism” in Turkey hence indicate the state’s effort “to work actively and to maintain its hold over the national cultural space” (2016, p. 13). Neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism therefore serve as the underlying logic for the AKP-led administrative reform of the culture field where private citizens are charged with reviving Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage.

Set against the dual backdrop of harmonization with the EU and integration with the global economy, the AKP-led national cultural policy defines the culture industry as a vehicle for preserving the essence of Turkish culture and generating national income (“Cultural Policy in Turkey--National Report,” 2013, pp. 8–9). Hence media exports are considered as an asset. In order to achieve this end, private initiatives are assigned active and responsible role in the development of Turkish culture in the form of audio-visual productions. As the Cultural Policy in Turkey—National Report states its fundamental aims and targets:

-It will be insured that Turkish culture will be open to development without losing its original structure and richness, it will contribute to the universal culture background and

participation in culture and artistic activities will be developed as lifestyle habits.

-Our cultural relationship will be developed with world countries, notably with the countries having common historical background. The impact of culture industry on national income, exports and contribution to the promotion of the country will be increased.

-The role of local administrations, private and civil initiatives will be increased in the scope of development and promotion of cultural and artistic activities, notably audio-visual and performing arts.

-The major figures of history, events, fairy tale characters and cultural [heritage] will be transformed into documentaries, series and cartoons.

-The incentive mechanism will be created to handle the basic elements of our culture and values of the Turkish film industry (“Cultural Policy in Turkey--National Report,” 2013, pp. 8–9).

These objectives set the general guidelines for the direction of television industry under AKP’s rule.

The parallel process of the withdrawal of the state and the transferal of cultural production and distribution to the private sector is evident in the managerial adjustment of TRT. As Asu Aksoy notes, “we can interpret the downsizing attempt of the [TRT] as a signal indicating that the state is gradually distancing itself from its position as chief producer in the domain of culture” (2009, p. 197). This parallel process also can be observed in the partnership between TRT and private media companies, which have produced many of the popular television series and children’s programs for TRT in the 2010s. For instance, the production company Tekden owned by Mehmet Bozdağ and Kemal Tekden, former AKP parliamentarian, has produced the series *Yunus Emre: Aşkın Yolculuğu* and *Diriliş: Ertuğrul*, which became the most-watched series in Turkey in 2016. The two series

focus on the lives of two significant figures during the early period of Ottoman Empire. Yunus Emre, a poet between the 13th and 14th centuries, is regarded as an influential figure of Anatolian culture. And Ertuğrul Gazi was the father of Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman Empire. Other production companies, such as Grafi2000 and Animax, also take part in this state-market relationship by producing children's programs for TRT *Çocuk* channel. As stated on Animax's website, the company's aim is to collaborate with TRT's objectives of "protecting local culture from foreign influence and transmitting the essence of Turkish cultural values onto younger generations through animated works and films".¹³ The public-private partnership between TRT and private media companies hence reveal what Atilla Koç, former Minister of Culture and Tourism, characterized as a "neoliberal mindshift" (Aksoy, 2009, p. 193) in the AKP-led cultural policy, which prioritizes civil and private initiatives in the cultural field.

Although it is not well documented which television productions have received government subsidies, ministerial and private enticements indicate that the AKP government has established funding mechanisms to encourage private investment in productions that would help to generate national income and maintain the 'original structure' of Turkish culture. The law (no. 5524) on the Evaluation, Categorization, and Funding of Cinematics Works which was enacted in 2004 states that government funding would be granted to productions contributing to the general aims of Turkish cultural policy. For instance, the Ministry of Culture and

¹³ See Animax's website at <http://www.animax.com.tr/weare/>

Tourism plays a key role in providing incentives for films, documentaries, television series, and animations that are made for exportation. In addition, the export consulting company, İGEME (*İhracatı Geliştirme Etüd Merkezi*) in association with the Ministry of Economy is set up to assist private entrepreneurs in the area of exportation. İGEME's consulting services include guiding media companies to obtain government monetary assistance. Cinematic works, television series, and animations that contribute to the development of Turkey's media industry abroad are eligible for government funding.¹⁴ These various actors and incentives are important mechanisms in the developing Turkish media market as they encourage civil society to actively contribute to the maintenance of national cultural borders and the advancement of national economy.

In addition to government monetary assistance designated to encourage private investment in media productions, media censorship also plays a significant role in preserving components of Turkish culture by regulating media content and dissident views about Turkey's history. The controversy over the series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* perhaps best exemplifies the AKP's endeavor in managing the diverse views about Turkey's Ottoman past and moral-religious values. Before *Muhteşem* went on air in January 2011 and during the time of its broadcast between in the following three years, RTÜK had received thousands of complaints from the conservative circle, including government officials, demanding a ban on the series in Turkey and abroad. The series' production team Tims Productions and screenwriter Meral

¹⁴ See İGEME's website at <https://www.igeme.com.tr/dizi-ve-film-kulturel-tesvik-danismanligi/>

Okday were accused of a ‘false’ portrayal of Turkey’s Ottoman ancestry and traditional Islamic values. It is worth noting that the sequel of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl, Kösem* (2015), Tims Productions’ series depicting the life of Kösem Sultan, a slave girl who became a powerful figure in the 17th century Ottoman Empire, also came under the radar of conservative circles and RTÜK for similar reasons. A petition calling for a ban on *Kösem* was submitted to RTÜK and other public administration offices, including the Parliament, Prime Minister, and President.¹⁵ According to RTÜK’s decision, Star TV, the broadcaster of *Kösem*, would be assessed a fine of one percent of its advertising revenue made in the month before the decision for the show’s “negative impacts on society’s moral values and the mental and physical developments of children and youths” (“Kösem’e şok ceza!,” 2016, “‘Muhteşem Yüzyıl Kösem’ cezası,” 2016). What the cases of *Muhteşem* and the sequel *Kösem* illustrate is that such governmental practices as media censorship can play a significant role in managing diverse views of the Ottoman past and rationalizing the government’s assertion of moral values and social order. By disciplining those who do not conform to the government’s vision of history, culture and morality, such judicial discipline as RTÜK’s bans and fines entail what Foucault calls the “dividing practices” distinguishing the governed populace into groups of the good and the bad, the virtuous and the degenerate, and the conforming and the disobedient citizens.

¹⁵ For the petition and campaign for taking *Kösem* off air see <https://www.change.org/p/rt%C3%BCk-muhte%C5%9Fem-y%C3%BCzy%C4%B1l-k%C3%B6sem-dizisi-yay%C4%B1ndan-kald%C4%B1r%C4%B1lmal%C4%B1d%C4%B1r>

Media regulation as a governing technique for reshaping the ethics of media conduct therefore produces such subjects as audiences, television producers, and broadcasters who are divided along the lines defining national culture and moral-religious values. Those who are engaged in the production of Ottoman dramas now are in competition with one another in both terms of business and moral rivalries. Amidst the controversies over *Muhteşem* and the sequel *Kösem*, Tekden's production of *Diriliş Ertuğrul* (2016), which has been well-received by general audience, especially the AKP officials, therefore can be interpreted as the entrepreneurs' alliance, wittingly or unwittingly, with the AKP's vision of moral values and national cultural boundaries. As Kemal Tekden commented on the need to develop a national film and television industry which would reflect the moral values of Turkish society,

As we see in retrospective, we are losing our younger generation with the negative effects of cinema, theater, and television. Unfortunately, there is a lack of conservatives participating in the film sector. And in fact, there is a lack of conservative actors enrolled in television series who would represent our minds and values [...] Our society has for years watched its own [Ottoman] history being degraded in television series [...] There has been a rating-seeking production in the past years that depicted the reign of Kanuni [Sultan Süleyman] as a Byzantine palace [...] Now we have produced *Diriliş*, which appeals to our hearts with truthful representation of history. When we look at Turkey's television/film sector, [*Diriliş*] is an extraordinary work above all others. The series has thrived to bring out the hero of our society through its artistic visual works [...] My partner Mehmet Bozdağ and I entered the film sector with the thought of creating an alternative. Instead of complaining about *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, we produced something that is more powerful and defeats *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* ("Ertuğrul'un yapımcısı," 2017; my translation).

Tekden's comparison of *Muhteşem* and *Diriliş* reveals that Tekden Film, a private media company having close ties with the ruling government and the state broadcaster TRT, sees itself as a market rival with such enterprises as Tims Productions. As contenders of the media industry, the two are competing for television ratings, which in this case imply popular support for opposing versions of national culture and history, and therefore, political leanings. And as rivalries of moral standards, according to Tekden, his company's productions, such as *Diriliş*, represents the true values of Turkish culture that the AKP government aims to promulgate through the mainstream media.

The virtuous citizenry framed by the reformed Turkish media sector constitutes also includes conservative subjects of children and youths, who are expected to acquire knowledge of the Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage and embrace moral-religious values. TRT's launch of *Çocuk* channel in 2008 serves the AKP government's objective of raising a conservative generation. The channel has its own on-site studio and collaborates with private media companies for production of children's programs. The channel follows the general aims of cultural policy of preserving the "original structure and richness" of Turkish culture by transforming historical events, tales, and figures into educational programs for school-age children ("Cultural Policy in Turkey--National Report," 2013, pp. 8–9). As former General Manager of TRT İbrahim Şahin expressed the importance of investment in *Çocuk* channel:

I believe that if we were to make a difference in Turkey, it must be done by investing in children. Since private [television] channels are commercial-based, they broadcast foreign cartoons [as a way to make profit]. We are a public channel. We produce our own characteristics, culture, and national and moral values. For example, our project *Çinar* tells stories of Ottoman sultans. Children will learn about our history through this cartoon. The cartoons of the other [private] channels contain unrealistic and supernatural creatures such as the aliens. As we think such contents are dangerous for children, we [decided to] make large investment to produce our own films/cartoons for our children. And they [children] are interested in watching it (“Osmanlı padişahlarını çocuklara anlatacağız,” 2013; my translation).

Şahin’s statement illustrates that children and youths are a target of government and media reform. Through historical stories, TRT *Çocuk*, as state broadcaster, aims to educate this particular segment of population with local productions that embrace the values of national (conservative) culture and history.

For instance, the series *Çinar* in each episode tells a contemporary young boy’s encounter, in his dreams, with a historical event and period of the Ottoman Empire. The series begins with the establishment of the Ottoman Empire and follows a chronological order of timeline as it narrates the history of Ottoman Empire. Narrating from the main character *Çinar*’s perspective, the series constitutes a subject position of a courageous, righteous male child eager to learn about the Ottoman legacy. In one episode, as *Çinar* confronts the Byzantine enemies alongside the soldiers of Fatih Sultan Mehmet, he ‘witnesses’ the injustice induced by Christian rule and the tolerant nature of Islamic order towards other religions and cultures. For another example, the animated series titled *Barbaros* focuses on the golden age of naval expansion during the 15th and 16th centuries. The series recounts the childhood of Oruç and Hızır, who later became the renowned

Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa, a prominent figure during the Ottoman dominance of the Mediterranean Sea. The production of *Barbaros* coincided with the Year of Piri Reis. In 2013, a wide range of cultural forms, including literature and tourist paraphernalia, were produced to mark the historical significance of Piri Reis, an Ottoman admiral and geographer who is known for his first world map drawn in 1513. Since the Ottoman marine was crucial to the expansion and rise of the Empire, the show *Barbaros* carries symbolic meanings of a powerful and tolerant Empire encompassing vast territories and diverse cultures. Again, when history is recounted through the view of Barbaros as a young child exploring the sea, the series projects a world view from a golden period of the Empire.

As mentioned above, since TRT has become a key media player under the AKP administration, the Corporation's investments in joint projects of *Çocuk* channel raise question concerning the administration's intent to guide the direction of Turkey's media production. For instance, in 2016, the opposition CHP (Republican People's Party) parliament representative Atilla Sertel drew attention at the Parliament by questioning TRT's disproportionate expenses on television series and children's programs ("TRT Çizgi Film," 2016). TRT purchased the animation *Maysa ve Bulut (Maysa and Bulut)* from the media company Resimli Filim Animasyon Studiyosu at the price of 450,000 Turkish Lira for each episode. This amount is reportedly ten times higher than the other animations that TRT purchased. The Corporation also spent 1,100,000 on each episode of *Diriliş* while paying thirty times less for the other series. Sertel suggests that the disproportionate amounts of money that TRT spent for purchasing projects from private media

companies indicate internal corruption of the Corporation. He commented that TRT has paid significantly larger sums for *Diriliş* because the series' producer has connections to the TRT's Assistant General Manager, Ibrahim Eren, and Bilal Erdoğan, President Erdoğan's son.

A different way of interpreting this incident could be the government's intent to reshape the media sector and culture through exclusionary practice. Among the list of animations which TRT purchased for *Çocuk* channel, *Maysa ve Bulut* is the only production that explicitly complies with the aim of the AKP's conservative cultural agenda. By depicting traditional nomadic lifestyle through such visual symbols as nomadic tent, attire, and grassland, the animation teaches young urban audience about their Anatolian ancestry and traditions. Hence by making desirable projects less expensive and undesirable ones more costly for the media entrepreneurs, TRT's disproportionate investment in television programs signals the state institution's intent to regulate the area of television through what Foucault calls technologies of the self.

As these shows illustrate, the popularization of Ottoman costume dramas and children's programs in Turkey during the 2000s and 2010s is a complex and dynamic phenomenon entailing various regulatory practices, which demand private individuals' compliance with the ruling government's agenda of cultural reform. By reorganizing the media sector and institutional practices, such as TRT's corporate managerial style, the AKP's neoliberal approach to the media has created a sphere of freedom/free market where private citizens are deemed as active and responsible for exercising their civic rights to freedom and democracy. Based on the ethos of

the market, their participation in the media market as consumers and entrepreneurs are regarded as acts of self-care and a form of investment in themselves. Nonetheless, the restructured media market under the AKP administration, as the case of TRT illustrates, functions as a regulatory mechanism directing individual conducts towards the end of the government. By providing monetary incentives to television productions that promulgate the government's conservative cultural agenda and penalizing those who do not conform, such practices as government funding, media censorship, and media law, together constitute a self-governing subject of citizenry, who understands the distinctions between the 'right' and 'wrong' history, the good and bad culture, foreign and 'authentic' Turkish traditions. The steady growth of Ottoman costume dramas and children's programs of TRT as opposed to a lack of competitors from other private television channels hence demonstrates the domination of TRT and the current status quo of Turkish media market.

CHAPTER 5

CINEMA, GOVERNMENT, AND THE TECHNOLOGIES OF CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

This chapter aims to examine the interconnecting relationship between the mainstream cinema, government, and the formation of cultural citizenship in contemporary Turkey. The genre of Ottoman epic film is given specific attention since it has witnessed a revival in the 2010s and constituted a part of the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble that seeks to transform culture and the social. While the previous cycle of Ottoman epic films during the 1950s and 1970s served to maintain the notion of modern secular Turkish citizen, the recent cycle in the 2010s evokes a revisionist view of history for reconceptualizing citizenship based on common Ottoman-Islamic cultural heritage. Cinema genres and themes hence have become a concern of the government of culture as to how it can be most efficiently managed as a resource for shaping the minds and conduct of individual citizens. By looking through the lens of Ottomentality, the chapter aims to examine the role of cinema in the formulation of cultural citizenship. As Lee Grieveson points out, by incorporating the perspective of governmentality in film studies, it would allow one

to unpack the ways in which cinema is “being utilized and fashioned by various elite individuals, groups and institutions as a resource to manage conduct and thus to shape populations” (2009, p. 186). In order to assess the venues where cinema, government, and citizenship intersect, the study maintains that an examination of the recent development of Turkish film industry at the crossroad of neoliberal and neo-Ottoman governing rationalities is necessary to comprehend how institutional practices, cultural policy reform, and certain film genre(s) and cycles formulate an assemblage of the government of culture and citizenship.

In order to understand the relationship between the historical epic genre in Turkish cinema, government, and the conception of citizenship, both the institutional practices pertaining to the management of cinema as a social resource and the films’ textual forms must be taken into consideration for analysis. The chapter is organized into three main sections. The first section is a brief discussion on the notion of cultural citizenship in relation to the historical epic genre discussed in this context. Here I employ Nick Stevenson’s (2003) and Toby Miller’s (1998, 2006) conceptions of cultural citizenship to assess the practices of the historical epic genre as a novel technology of cultural citizenship. The second section discusses the transformation of Turkish cinema in line with neoliberal governmentality in the 2000s and 2010s. The main thesis here is that Turkish cinema in this period has been redefined as an instrument for generating national capital and advancing Turkey in global competition. As neoliberalism stresses the role of civil society and relies on the functioning of the market as a means to enhance the efficiency of governance, a network of governing practices, including

legislation and public funding, is developed to encourage active participation of private individuals in the production of historical genre. This process has fostered a subject of cultural citizenship—one that is more defined by such actions as cultural production and consumption and less confined within the formal framework of the Constitution (Miller, 1998, 2006; Stevenson, 2003). The last section pays attention to the renewed cycle of Ottoman epic films and its role in mobilizing a popular memory based on which a cultural citizenship is constituted. Through a comparison of the earlier cycle of Ottoman epics between the 1950s and 1970s and the recent cycle in the 2010s, this section will formulate a textual analysis and discuss the role of this particular film genre in the making of popular memory. The main argument here is that the recent cycle of Ottoman epic films cultivates a neoconservative vision of society and re-establishes the framework of citizenship which draws on Islam as the perimeter of a multicultural community. It shall be noted that the main argument here does not suggest that there is an overall, consistent effect of the recent cycle of Ottoman epic films on the audiences' understanding of Turkish citizenship. In order to assess whether and how the audiences are informed by the films, it would require a different set of research questions and method, which are beyond the purpose and scope of this study. The study is mainly concerned with the activities that are involved in producing the condition in which a new cycle of Ottoman epic films has taken off and the utilization of this particular genre as a technology of the government of culture and citizenship.

5.1. Cultural citizenship

During the founding period of the Turkish Republic in the early 20th century, the development of the concept of citizenship was essential to the state's nation-building project (İçduygu, Çolak, & Soyarık, 1999). A citizen learns about his or her national identity, right, duty, and obligation through compulsory civic education courses in schools. These information concerning "the relations that individual members of the state have among each other and with the governing body" are also imprinted in the Constitution, which binds citizenship within the boundaries of nation-state (İçduygu, Çolak, & Soyarık, 1999: 187). Nonetheless, such notion of "constitutional citizenship" has faced various challenges in contemporary societies undergoing processes of globalization and impacts of social movements, notably demands for minority rights, women's rights, etc. As Nick Stevenson (2003) notes in the context of the United Kingdom, such processes as the end of the welfare state, globalization, migration, transnational spheres of governance, the development of global networks, and social movements have significantly undermined the concept of citizenship as defined by formal rights and duties. In the Turkish context, these developments also have notable impacts on the way Turkish citizenship is conceptualized. İçduygu at al. suggests that in the late 20th century the unitary idea of Turkish citizenship confronted emigrant citizens seeking rights and (dual) citizenship in their host countries as well as the pressing question of ethno-religious minorities seeking cultural rights and freedom of expression in Turkey. As a result, the notion of Turkish citizenship is becoming less rigidly confined within the borders of nation-state and more fluid in the processes

of globalization, transnational forces, and diversification of culture. It is in this context that the notion of cultural citizenship becomes increasingly pertinent as it seeks to address concerns of those who do not fall into the category as defined by the republic.

Stevenson argues that what we are witnessing in societies experiencing social transformations, globalization, and transnationalism is the “culturation of citizenship” (2003, p. 16). What he means is that in the age of information, culture serves as a crucial venue through which the notion of citizenship is rearticulated. For instance, the media of mass communication including television, radio, and cinema, which function as part of the public sphere in society, constitutes a vital “source of popular cultural citizenship” (Stevenson, 2003, p. 96). According to him, the media has become a crucial site where the marginalized and under-represented groups express their ideas about the elements that are included and excluded in the political understandings of citizenship. As he notes,

Cultural understandings of citizenship are concerned not only with ‘formal’ processes, such as who is entitled to vote and the maintenance of an active civil society, but crucially with whose cultural practices are disrespected, marginalized, stereotyped and rendered invisible [...] Cultural citizenship then becomes defined through a site of struggle that is concerned with the marginalization of certain social practices (2003, p. 23).

Stevenson’s remark thus reveals a close relationship between the media, popular culture, cultural consumption, and the formulation of cultural citizenship. It also brings one to think about the relationship between the remakes of *Fetih* and *Kara Murat*, their portrayal of Ottoman-Islamic heritage which was always under the

radar of the secularist regime, and the ideas of citizenship they may generate in today's socio-political environment.

Sharing Stevenson's view, Toby Miller also stresses the close relationship between commercial culture and citizenship. In *Technologies of Truth: Cultural Citizenship and the Popular Media*, Miller argues that various genres of popular media constitute routine practices through which truth is established and the "public is formed and reformed" (1998, p. 5). As he notes, "[radio], for example, has developed genres and themes for stations to organize their audiences, increased transmission and reproduction, and mobilized new spaces of reception" (Miller, 1998, p. 5). According to him, radio is one of such technologies of truth that by devoting different time slots for particular genres and themes of broadcast, it addresses different segments of the audience whom it sees as the public having a consensus of taste, lifestyle, history, etc. As Miller notes, "[when] these technologies [of truth] congeal to forge loyalty to the sovereign state through custom or art, they do so through the cultural citizen" (1998, p. 4). A cultural citizen in this regard is not defined by his or her constitutional rights, but by his or her own participation in the cultural arena as a consumer, producer, media regulator, etc.

In this respect, the popular film genre of Ottoman epics is not simply a medium through which the notion of citizenship is articulated and negotiated. It can be understood as a governing technology seeking to promulgate certain facts and mobilize certain ethics of conduct. Like public radio, films also have developed a variety of genres so that the industry can categorize their viewers, develop taste and

consensus, and produce products for niche markets. In light of this view, film genre is not merely concerned with categorizing films on the basis of their style of filmmaking or narrative structure. It is concerned with defining the public, the audience, the consumer, and the cultural citizen, who in turn take part in keeping the circuit of truth going. As Miller points out, “the audience” is always a construct of the marketing companies, ratings, and media production processes (1998, p. 26). Hence, one can argue that for one to have control over the production of a genre, it means to have control over the consensus of (at least a segment) of the public.

5.2. Turkish cinema, neoliberal governance of culture, and cultural citizenship

This section discusses the management of Turkish film industry in line with neoliberal rationality and its implications on the conception of cultural citizenship. An analysis of the developments of Turkish film industry through the lens of governmentality enables us to see the ways in which culture, in this case cinema, is integrated into governing processes. Although cinema has operated as an independent industry in Turkey, it has never ceased being a target of the government of culture. During the early republic, cinema was considered as a mechanism for promulgating the state’s nation-building and modernization projects. The first legislation on the Regulation Regarding Control of Films and Film Scripts introduced in 1939 therefore is an indication of the state’s direct intervention in cinema. This regulation allowed the government to oversee the process and content of national film productions. Cultural elements that challenged

the homogeneity of Turkish national identity were subjected to censorship and state's suppression (Aksoy & Robins, 2000). According to Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy, Turkish cinema was preoccupied with producing and maintaining the knowledge of 'the nation' where a "modern Turkish nation and identity" was constructed (Aksoy & Robins, 2000, p. 204). Nonetheless, this conception of cinema as a vanguard of the state's nation-building and modernization projects has changed since the early 2000s. By placing cinema under the governance of the Law no. 5224 on Evaluation, Classification, and Support of Cinema Films (hereafter the 'cinema law') in 2004 and the General Directorate of Cinema within the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the AKP administration undertakes the task of managing cinema as a resource for nation branding and social transformation. Now cinema is regarded as an instrument and a form of enterprise for Turkey to integrate with the world economically. It is also a technique for redefining and maintaining the national cultural boundaries which are increasingly challenged by the processes of cultural globalization and transnationalism. The practices concerning cultural governance, and in particular cinema, are therefore organized to meet this end. The means that are deployed to revitalize and integrate Turkish cinema with the global film industry also have constituted a market-based understanding of citizenship.

5.2.1. Aligning Turkish cinema with neoliberal rationality

According to Turkey's current cultural policy, cinema has taken a neoliberal turn. This entails that cinema at current stage is no longer a state enterprise, but a

social resource to be more efficiently managed in accordance with market mentality. Cinema's role as a social resource serves the purpose of branding to promote Turkey on global platforms. As is the case for the television series and Ottoman history museums discussed in the previous chapters, cinema is considered as a source of income on both local and national levels. As Turkey's current cultural policy states, "[the] productions enabling the Turkish cinema to be a brand recognized worldwide will be popularized and the sector's contribution to exports will be expanded and enhanced" ("Cultural Policy in Turkey--National Report," 2013, p. 9). The General Directorate of Cinema within the Ministry of Culture and Tourism also states that its mission is to "put the Turkish cinema industry in a position of worldwide acknowledgement and elevating our country [Turkey] to a degree as one of the major film production locations."¹⁶ These official statements hence declare that the fundamental aim of developing Turkish film industry is branding—a process through which Turkey is to be promoted as a competent player in the global market and a desirable location for foreign investment.

The alliance of cinema with neoliberal rationality is evident in the recent developments of the film industry. For instance, the Municipality of Büyükçekmece in Istanbul has recently invested in the construction of a film studio complex, Midwood, which will be completed in 2018 and will become the largest film production site in Europe. According to Hasan Akgün, the mayor of

¹⁶ See official website of the General Director of Cinema at <http://sinema.kulturturizm.gov.tr/EN,144066/our-mission-and-vision.html>

Büyükçekmece, the five-year construction plan of Midwood is expected to provide the technologies and infrastructure necessary for the development of both Turkish film industry and the city. As Akgün states,

We are talking about a large project that could compete with Hollywood and Bollywood here. I believe when this project [Midwood] is completed, Turkey will become a self-proclaimed country in the global film sector. In terms of location, it is very close to the airports in Istanbul. This project will provide at least 10,000 job opportunities in the area. This is very important for us (“İstanbul’a dev film platosu,” 2016; my translation).

Akgün’s statement resonates with the fundamental aims of Turkey’s current cultural policy and the mission of the General Directorate of Cinema to convert Turkish cinema into a national brand, a major source of income, and an asset for global competition. By investing in the 150 million-dollar project of Midwood, the Municipality of Büyükçekmece seeks to create a trademark of Turkish cinema, attract local and foreign investors, generate flow of capital into the city, and ultimately contribute to Turkey’s economic growth. The promotional video of Büyükçekmece on the official website of the Midwood project hence presents the city as an ideal location for both national and international film productions.¹⁷ It also reveals the role of cinema, among other forms of arts and culture, as an instrument for urban developments in Turkey.

¹⁷ See the promotion video of Büyükçekmece on the official website of the Midwood project: <http://midwood.com.tr/uploads/buyukcekmece.php>

There also have been other developments demonstrating the ongoing effort of branding Turkey and boosting national economy with cinema. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has established incentives to encourage foreign film productions in Turkey. The Turkish Film Commission in association with the Ministry acts as a key moderator promoting such popular tourism destinations as Istanbul, Cappadocia, and Antakya as ideal locations for filming. Turkey's cultural heritage, including tangible historical structures and such intangible cultural heritage as the coexistence of different ethnicities, faiths, etc., is therefore considered as an asset for attracting potential investors. For example, Istanbul has become a popular site for international filmmaking in recent years. Such international blockbusters as the James Bond movie *Skyfall*, *Inferno*, *Argo*, and *Taken* were shot in the city of Istanbul during the 2010s. These Hollywood productions and high-profile stars including Daniel Craig and Tom Hanks who participate in the films have contributed to the increasing recognition of Turkish film and tourism industries. The examples provided here illustrate the neoliberal mindset of Turkey's current cultural governance which redefines cinema's role as an instrument for branding, promotion, and income.

Another indicator of a neoliberal turn in Turkish cinema is the establishment of funding mechanism seeking to facilitate private investment in the film industry. In order to create a brand of Turkish cinema recognized worldwide, public funding has been reinstated in 2004 through the implementation of the cinema law no. 5224 (Kanzler, 2014, p. 18). After Turkish cinema experienced a major decline between the 1980s and 1990s and was affected by the economic

crisis in the early 2000s, the reinstatement of public funding in 2004 has considerably contributed to the growth in film productions (Kanzler, 2014, p. 18). According to Martin Kanzler's report on recent developments of Turkish film industry, "[on] a cumulative level the Ministry [of Culture and Tourism] supported 282 out of 587, i.e. 50% of all Turkish feature film productions between 2005 and 2013" (2014, p. 18). The 2000s and 2010s is considered as a period of renaissance of Turkish film industry in both terms of production and consumption of Turkish films. "The rapid growth and development of the film industry in Turkey can clearly be seen in the rapid rise in the number of cinema-goers, from under 10 million in the 1990s to more than 41 million by 2010" (Enlil et al., 2011, p. 240). These data collected by researchers of Turkish film industry and cultural policy not only illustrate the outcome of ministerial support for the development of film industry, but also reveal the ongoing effort of the government in creating the environment that would encourage active participations of entrepreneurs, film practitioners, and consumers in the development of Turkish film industry.

What the discussion above intends to illustrate is the neoliberal governmentality that has shaped cinema as a tool for urban development, nation branding, and economic growth in Turkey today. The institutional practices including the national cultural policy, the new cinema law, the funding program provided by the General Directorate of Cinema within the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the mediation the Turkish Film Commission are therefore crucial for understanding the ongoing development and changing social function of Turkish film industry. More importantly, these governing practices also provide a portal for

the inquiry about the relation between cinema and the constitution of cultural citizenship. The subsequent section will examine the ways in which the concept of cultural citizenship is formulated.

5.2.2. The film industry as a technology of cultural citizenship

The governing practices of managing culture in accordance with neoliberal rationality have not only transformed the role of cinema, but also forged a subject of citizens based on their active participation in the cultural field. Nikolas Rose calls this type of citizen in the neoliberal style of government the “active citizen” (1999, p. 164). As he notes, unlike the “passive” citizens of the republic who are expected to perform their duties and obligations in public affairs, the active citizen is responsible for enacting their rights in the market as entrepreneurs, employees, consumers, etc. According to Rose, “[citizenship] is no longer primarily realized in a relation with the state, or in a single ‘public sphere’, but in a variety of private, corporate and quasi-public practices from working to shopping” (Rose, 1999, p. 166). Rose’s description of the active citizen is similar to what Miller refers as the cultural citizen whose relation to society is established through his or her engagement in the activities of cultural production, regulation, and consumption. In light of this perspective, the cultural citizen in the context of this study is an “active agent” who invests in the film industry, advocates in integrating Turkish cinema with the global market, and consumes in the film industry. Hence the marketplace is the realm wherein the social responsibilities of the cultural citizens are

determined and fulfilled. And it is in congruence with the ethics of the market, rather than the formal framework of the Constitution, that the cultural citizens shall carry out their actions.

As I have discussed throughout this study, an important aspect of the neoliberal style of government of culture is the prioritization of civil society and private initiatives. Turkey's current model of managing such cultural resources as cinema hence adopts the key principle of privatization as a strategy for achieving the aim of cultural governance, which is to convert culture into an assembly of emerging markets and an asset for branding, promotion, and sales. The prioritization of private actors in the development of the film industry is clearly stated in Turkey's current cultural policy prescribing the regulations and responsibilities of local authorities, civil society, and private sector. As the *Cultural Policy in Turkey—National Report* declares,

The role of local administrations, private and civil initiatives will be increased in the scope of development and promotion of cultural and artistic activities, notably audio-visual and performing arts [...] The incentive mechanism will be created to handle the basic elements of our culture and values of the Turkish film industry ("Cultural Policy in Turkey--National Report," 2013, p. 9).

According to this statement, such actors as the Municipality of Büyükçekmece, the contractor of the Midwood film studio complex project, the Turkish Film Commission in charge of promoting foreign film productions in Turkey, and the filmmakers receiving public funding are active agents in the growing Turkish film

industry. These actors play an important role in actualizing the aim of cultural governance based on market mentality as they develop the Turkish film industry.

The institutional practices that are deployed to transform Turkish cinema based on neoliberal imperatives pose various questions concerning the formation of citizenship outside the formality of the Constitution. For instance, Turkey's current cultural policy not only sets the agenda and strategies for the development of the cultural field, but also assigns various actors with different roles and tasks with the aim to enhance cultural governance. When being called upon as the "fundamental actors" in cultural policy, local administrators, civil society, and private organizations become responsiblized to carry on the mission of transforming culture into a national brand and profitable asset. Therefore, as the Büyükçekmece Municipality and the private contractor engage in the project of Midwood film studio complex, they are enacting their roles as active citizens responsible for managing the film industry as a social resource for urban development and national economy.

In addition, the cinema funding program provided by the General Directorate of Cinema in association with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism also can be considered as a technology of cultural citizenship. The funding program of the General Directorate of Cinema is an incentive mechanism aiming to encourage active participation of private citizens in the film industry as filmmakers, sponsors, etc. It is also an incentive to support cinematic works that would create a positive brand image of Turkey. By complying with the framework of cultural policy and the new cinema law enacted in 2004, which determines the criteria for the

evaluation, classification, and support for cinematic works, the funding program also has a regulatory function in directing conduct in the film industry. In order to receive this public funding, film productions shall adhere to the criteria of the funding program and the agenda of cultural policy in the preservation and promotion of ‘Turkish culture’. Henceforth, the process of evaluation and selection, as well as elimination, of cinematic works for the funding program also entails the formation of cultural citizenship. In this respect, the cultural citizen is expected to conduct their activities in the film industry based on not only the imperatives of the market, but also the envisioned ‘Turkish culture’ prescribed by the cultural institutions.

The shift towards neoliberal governing rationality in the Turkish film sector since the early 2000s hence reveals a corresponding change in the way the citizenship is conceptualized. The governing practices of the cultural institutions entail significant impacts on the way individuals are informed of their roles and responsibilities in society as entrepreneurs, film producers, and consumers as their relation with society is no longer merely bound by their formal civic rights, i.e. voting and welfare, but increasingly defined by their self-interest in the growing film industry. Nevertheless, institutional practices pertaining to the transformation of the film industry in line with neoliberal governmentality contributes to only part of the formation of cultural citizenship. As this study has attempted to illustrate, Turkey’s current model of neoliberal governance of culture cannot be sufficiently understood without also taking into account the force of neo-Ottomanism. While the neoliberal mode of cultural governance has fostered the conception of

citizenship based on market mentality, neo-Ottoman governing rationality relies on the established market mechanisms for regulating the film industry to mobilize its vision of truth and ethics of social conduct. As the following section will discuss, when examined in the context of the recent development of Turkey's film industry, the renewed genre of Ottoman epic film during the 2000s and 2010s to some extent has an impact on the formation of cultural citizenship.

5.3. The Ottoman epic genre, popular memory, and cultural citizenship

The genre of historical epic films in Turkish cinema has a long tradition of narrating the nation, memory, and identity (Dönmez-Colin, 2008; Suner, 2010). The (sub-) genre of Ottoman epics is particularly worth noting, as it has played a significant role in producing contesting narratives and imageries of the Turkish nation and national subjects through its different cycles. For instance, the first cycle of the epic genre during the 1950s and 1970s, including such films as *Istanbul'un Fethi* (*The Conquest of Istanbul*; 1954) and Cüneyt Arkin's sequels of *Kara Murat* in the 1970s, sought to portray a unitary modern secular Turkish identity by eliminating elements of Islam and ethnic diversity in the films' narratives and visual images. Whereas the second cycle in the 2010s, marked by the box-office success of *Fatih 1453* (2012) and *Fatih'in Fedaisi Kara Murat* (2014), adopts a revisionist approach to the Ottoman past by reasserting symbolisms of Islam and Ottomanism.

The contrasting modes of remembering the Ottoman past in the two cycles of Ottoman epic films have constituted different versions of popular memory as well as different ways of conceptualizing citizenship. In order to understand the relationship between these differences, it is essential to investigate how discourses of the Ottoman-Islamic past are woven into the texts and presented as facts. As Miller argues, popular media genres play an important role in government for addressing contemporary issues in society. Genres provide certain formula for telling and interpreting truth about such “cultural problems [as] masculinity, nationalism, citizenship, and incarceration” (1998, p. 12). According to him, by examining truth statements in texts of popular genres, one can begin to understand their functions in constituting self-governing subjects. Grieveson in “On Governmentality and Screens” shares a similar view and suggests that mainstream cinema can be considered as a technology of the self. As he remarks,

Conceptual work on the production of liberal subjects might [...] inform a rethinking of longstanding questions in classical [mainstream] cinema, which may be repositioned as modeling aspects of liberal selfhood [...] In turn, specific films, cycles and genres may be conceptualized as symbolic spaces for the articulation of ideas about conduct, government and the liberal subject (2009, p. 187).

In light of this perspective, the Ottoman epic genre is understood here as a particular style of truth-telling, a particular mode of remembrance of the Ottoman past, and a technology of the self. Through a cross-examination of the textual forms of the two cycles of this popular genre, this section aims to understand the different versions of popular memory of the Ottoman past and the ways in which they inform

different conceptions of citizenship. For the aim and scope of the study, *Istanbul'un Fethi (The Conquest of Istanbul; 1954)* and Cüneyt Arkın's series of *Kara Murat* in the 1970s are selected for the discussion of the first cycle of Ottoman epic genre in relation to the conception of republican citizenship promulgated by the state elites' nation-building and modernization projects. *Fetih 1453* (2012) and *Fatih'in Fedaisi Kara Murat* (2014) are considered as the recent cycle constituting part of the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble and popularizing what Svetlana Boym terms as "restorative nostalgia"—a mode of remembrance that sees itself as the absolute truth (2002, p. xviii). The study contends that the restorative mode of remembrance of the Ottoman past in the recent cycle of epic genre fosters a notion of cultural citizenship which understands Islam as the uniting force transcending ethnic differences. It also entails a conception of cultural citizenship beyond the limits of national borders by generating a sense of belonging among Turkish communities in other countries, especially those in Europe, based their common Muslim identity.

5.3.1. A reformed popular memory

[If] one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles [...] There's a real fight going on [...] over what we can roughly describe as popular memory (Foucault, 1975, p. 25).

Although the two cycles of Ottoman epic films seem to follow a similar set of genre conventions, their compositions of the Ottoman past are rather distinct. As

mentioned earlier, since cinema was considered as part of the state enterprise prior to the late 1980s, it served as a tool for furthering the state's missions of nation-building and modernization. Robins and Aksoy suggest that a "void effect has certainly been apparent in Turkish cinema" as it was preoccupied with instituting a homogeneous national identity and memory void of ethno-religious differences. Cinema therefore was to create a form of collective cultural expression through film genres as they provide standard formats for demarcating the specificities of Turkishness. The first cycle of Ottoman epic genre, which took off in the early 1950s and maintained its popularity through the golden period of Turkish cinema (1950-1974), was developed based on the conventions of narrating the Ottoman past in line with the historiography of the Kemalist establishment. As Dönmez-Colin observes, the historical films produced during this period were generally consistent with the official narrative which glorified the army of Turks in memorable combats. As she states,

The past was evoked through charismatic imaginary wars winning victories over the bad Byzantines, Chinese or Hungarians and created history by showing Europe who they were. The battle scenes were grandly choreographed to reinforce a sense of national unity. It is interesting that the official Turkish history written with the approval of Kemal Ataturk glorifies the Ottoman period up to and including the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, lionizing his conquests [...] The feats of the Ottoman are measured only through the success of the army (2008, p. 34).

In the first cycle of historical films, the consistency between the film narrative and the official account on the Ottoman past is evident in Cüneyt Arkın's famous series of *Kara Murat* and *Malkoçoğlu*. Fusing fiction with historical figures and events,

Cüneyt Arkın's films created an iconic image of the "invincible Turk" (Yedidal, 2009: 188). Set in the period of Ottoman Empire, his characters in such films as *Kara Murat Fatih'in Fedaisi* (1972) and *Malkoçoğlu Kara Korsan* (1968) "served to produce a "modern, western, secular national identity, identifying its ties with the community and the past through Turkism, instead of Ottomanism and Islam" (Yedidal, 2009, p. 189). The idea of the modern secular Turk was built on a set of cultural specificities and repetitively depicted through the genre's narrative conventions (Yedidal, 2009). The conventions can be observed as follows.

First, although the epic films were typically inspired by the centuries-old Christian-Muslim conflict, the historical backgrounds of the depicted battles were often obscure. There are few references indicating the significance of the historical periods where the stories take place. In each series the protagonist Kara Murat launches onto a new journey for a new mission. The mission usually involves combating the Byzantine Christians who have inflicted injustice upon people and the woman he loves. Each time after defeating the enemies and saving the victims, the lone fighter Kara Murat returns. The same narrative structure is reiterated in each series where the sequence of time is intentionally ignored to avoid closure at the end and to allow each series to begin and repeat the same scheme over and over again (Gürata, 2003). As such, the "timeless form" of this popular genre to some extent served to reinforce the official historiography where the imperial past is systemically forgotten.

Second, although the films were set in the Ottoman imperial period, signs of Ottomanism, imperialism, and Islam were absent. Instead, such modern concepts as

“nation” (*millet*) and “country” (*ülke*) which only emerged in the 19th century were used anachronistically to convey the battles against the Byzantine Christians as national struggles. For instance, in *Istanbul’un Fethi* the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul is depicted as a turning point where the Turks, not Ottomans, declared their victory and a nation was born. Similarly, in the films *Fatih’in Fedaisi Kara Murat* and *Kara Murat Devler Savaşıyor*, the legendary fighter is committed to the integrity of the nation, rather than the Empire. References to Islam in these films were trivial and implicit. Only the sign of Christian cross was noticeably used on the costumes of the Byzantines to mark the distinction between us vs. them. One can argue that the refusal to associate with the Ottoman Empire and Islamic religiosity in this cycle of historical films contributed to rationalizing the conception of a modern secular Turkish nation. It is also worth noting that the epic genre generated nationalist sentiments at a time of tension after Turkey launched its troops in Cyprus in 1974 (Yedidal, 2009, p. 194).

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the protagonist Kara Murat in this cycle of epic films embodied the qualities of an ideal modern subject which the republican elites sought to construct. Kara Murat in the series is a free-spirited lone fighter devoted to the ruler and determined to fight against injustice. Like all super heroes, he is always on the side of the good and fights for a good cause. In each series, he sets out on an adventure to rescue people, often involving women, suffering under captivity and oppressive rule of the Byzantine Christians. The audience is given little knowledge about his origins other than that he is an ethnic Turk. According to Ahmet Gürata (2014) and Yedidal (2009), Kara Murat in the films is a carefully

crafted character possessing the specificities of a modern secular masculine Turkish identity. The lack of intelligibility or stereotypically negative portrayal of other ethno-religious groups, such as the Byzantine Christians, in the films therefore contributed to underpinning the qualities of Turkishness void of ambiguities of other cultural elements.

The genre conventions of the first cycle of Ottoman epics hence can be understood as a standard format for narrating the Ottoman past based on a selective view of the past, especially when it comes to the imperial history and Islam. The Ottoman past in these films perhaps can also be considered as what Nick Danforth describes as a “thorough Kemalist appropriation of Ottoman history” where the republican elites did not entirely dismiss Turkey’s imperial past as a sign of backwardness, but chose to glorify “the empire’s golden age, like Fatih Sultan Mehmet II [...] for their military might and supposedly self-evident Turkishness” (Danforth, 2014, p. 655). By retelling the Ottoman glories over and again through a standard narrative structure, the genre takes part in mobilizing a popular memory that is reduced to stories about the evil Byzantine Christians vs. the “invincible Turk”. And by associating Turkishness with justice and other ethnicities and religions with animosity and oppression, the genre further reinforces the Kemalist conception of Turkish citizenship which is defined by one’s duties and obligations to protect the unitary Turkish identity.

After the Turkish film industry experienced two decades of decline between the mid-1970s and mid-1990s due to economic and political instabilities, the epic genre has witnessed a revival since the 2000s (Gürata, 2014). The blockbusters

Fetih 1453 (2012) and *Kara Murat Fatih'in Fedaisi* (2014; *Kara Murat hereafter*) are part of this new cycle of films celebrating the heroism of the *good old days* of Ottoman past. Although the films generally follow the genre conventions, in this time around the narrative of Ottoman history and visual image of the great heroes are rather different from those of the previous cycle during the 1950s and 1970s. The recent cycle of epic films evokes what Svetlana Boym calls a “restorative nostalgia”—a mode of remembrance seeking to restore the ‘authenticity’ of the past. As she remarks,

Restorative nostalgia [...] attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. [It] does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition [...] [It] protects the absolute truth [...] [It] is at the core of recent national and religious revivals; it knows two main plots—the return to origins and the conspiracy (2002, p. xviii).

Boym’s notion of restorative nostalgia is useful for assessing the renewed genre of Ottoman epics where a new popular memory of the Ottoman past is produced.

Before *Fetih* conquered the big screen in 2012, according to Tanıl Bora, the agenda of reconquering Istanbul was already put forward by the conservative nationalists in 1953 at the 500th anniversary of Ottoman’s conquest (1999, p. 48). Since then a nostalgic discourse of Istanbul, which sees Istanbul as an Islamic city and center of world civilizations, has been popularized by the conservative nationalists. As Bora states:

Istanbul is *the* Islamic city, the jewel of the Islamic universe... [It] is also believed to be lost, divorced of its true essence because of

its experience of westernization... Istanbul thus attains holiness, both because the prophet predicted its conquest and because it served as the capital of Islamic Ottoman Empire... the theme of 'waiting for a generation that will reconquer Istanbul' was constantly on the agenda (1999, p. 48).

The nostalgic discourse of Istanbul continues to have its significance in Turkey today under the AKP's rule. As President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated at the 564th anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul in 2017,

The conquest of Istanbul is known as one of the most important turning points in world history having social, cultural, and political impacts. It signifies victory for us and the entire humanities. Since the establishment [conquest] of Istanbul, the city has been the capital of different governments and cultures. Under Fatih Sultan Mehmet Han's rule of justice, Istanbul has become a center of tolerance, solidarity, and peaceful coexistence ("İstanbul'un Fethi'nin yıldönümü," 2017).

When examined within the context of the nostalgic discourse of Istanbul, the recent cycle of epic genre can be understood as a technology of truth as it draws upon the core ideas of this discourse for the construction of its narrative. The genre's conventions, which can be observed not only in this cycle of epic films, but also television dramas, hence take part in iterating the narrative of the conquest as a popularly accepted fact. The most identifiable traits that distinguish the recent epic films from its previous cycle are the explicit references to Islam and Ottomanism. For example, *Fetih 1453* depicts the conquest of Istanbul as God's will to bring justice and order to those who suffered from the Byzantine Christians' ruthless rule. It conveys a strong message that the conquest has laid the foundation for a tolerant and multicultural society.

Unprecedented in Turkish mainstream cinema before the 2000s where symbolisms of Islam and Ottomanism were elided in order to maintain the image of a unitary Turkish identity, the recent cycle of epics contain explicit references to Islam as a basis for legitimate rule and a source of tolerance and justice for a diverse society. The connection between the conquest of Istanbul, Islam, and Ottomanism is established in the films of *Fetih 1453* and *Kara Murat* through successions of scenes. For example, in the opening scene of *Fetih 1453*, the viewers are invited to look through the Prophet Mohammed's eyes, through a point-of-view shot, as he addresses a group of his followers. The Prophet is not seen on screen, but it is through his eyes (the camera lens) that the audience perceives his action. Neither is his voice heard, but his words are iterated by one of the followers: Our Prophet said: "Constantinople will definitely be conquered one day. The commander who conquers it is a blessed commander. His soldiers are blessed". The connection between Islam and the conquest of Istanbul is buttressed in subsequent scenes throughout the film, where a chronological story about the battle is told. Before the battle began, the conqueror Mehmet II and his army performed a ritual prayer for victory. After declaring victory in the last scene of the film, the conqueror's joyful encounter with the Christians who take shelter inside Hagia Sophia conveys a powerful message of Istanbul as the foundation of a tolerant and harmonious city where different religions and cultures peacefully coexist. Explicit association of Islam with the conquest as a means to establish a just rule is also evident in the film *Kara Murat*. For example, before the Ottoman army launched battle against the Byzantine force, Mehmet II declared to his troop: "I am here as

the sultan [...] the commander [...] and a mujahideen (*mücahid*)¹⁸ in the name of Islam and this nation (*vatan*). My God! [...] Be our guidance and help us to defeat the enemy!”. Responding to their commander’s call to unite and fight, the Ottoman army shouts: “God is great! (*Allahu Akbar!*)”. The presence of the holy Koran is also incorporated into the film to justify the conquest as a holy war against unjust forces. The films’ overt reference to Islam is symbolic because signs of Islamic religiosity had for decades been restricted in the public life of Turkish society including the popular media. Their association of Islam and nation hence corresponds to the Islamist nostalgic discourse seeking to uncover the lost ‘truth’ about the Ottoman past. The truth of the conquest hence is built upon the popular notion of Islam and Ottoman pluralism as the rule of justice established since the conquest.

In addition, while the historical backdrops were often made obscure in the earlier cycle of epic films for the purpose of conveying the notion of modern nation, the recent cycle tends to emphasize the significance of the historical period(s) it represents. For instance, the opening scenes of *Fetih 1453* and *Kara Murat* unequivocally indicates the historical moment where the conquest of Istanbul took place. In particular, *Fetih 1453* contains a detailed chronological account of the conquest where the events are documented according to their dates. Presenting in minute details the techniques and strategies of the Ottoman army, *Fetih 1453* has a function similar to those of the history textbook and the exhibitory

¹⁸ The Turkish word *mücahid* means someone who is willing to fight and die for religion.

displays at the Panorama History Museum (see Chapter 3) as technologies for truth-telling and reproducing the neo-Ottomanist knowledge. The genre convention of such popular media as film and television therefore has established a standard format for presenting Ottoman history, which allows only one dimension of the past and dismisses critical views about it.

The above comparison of the two cycles of Ottoman epic films hence reveals that the genre's conventions have contributed to the reproduction of different versions of popular memory about the Ottoman past. The different memories were mobilized through the mainstream cinema in different socio-political contexts as a means to govern the (un)intelligibility of Ottoman history and Islam in the public life of Turkish society. In each case, the different modes of remembrance of the Islamic imperial past adopted in the film narratives also have defined the specificities of Turkishness base on which the conception of cultural citizenship is formulated.

5.3.2. The Ottoman epic genre as a technology of cultural citizenship

What role does the Ottoman epic genre play in the governmentality of culture and diversity that this study has set out to address? And how does the renewed popular memory of the Ottoman-Islamic past influence the conceptualization of citizenship? As I have stressed throughout this study, the various forms of popular culture including history museums, television series, and films which have constituted parts of the emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble

do not merely *represent* the ideologies or policies of the ruling government. When examined through the lens of governmentality, these cultural sites can themselves be understood as new apparatuses functioning to rationalize political discourses and governing practices and to constitute governable subjects. By considering mainstream cinema in light of governmentality, it enables investigation of the intertwined relationship between governing rationalities and cinema. As Grieveson states, “films and cycles arguably [...] form part of the structures of knowledge and power, and enact models of selfhood and conduct that participate in the production of liberal subjects” (2009, p. 187). In this respect, the Ottoman epic genre can be considered as such an apparatus where a new edifice of knowledge and power as well as a new subject of cultural citizen is formed. And this is done through subjectifying the audience as consumers within an array of emergent apparatuses, such as genre conventions, including narrative structure and image, and cinema as a new form of consumption habit and lifestyle.

Film genre is not simply a way of categorizing texts, but a means of organizing the audience, their interpretation, and their pattern of consumption. As Miller points out, “the audience is never available in pristine form,” but is always a construct for such purposes and through such techniques as rating, marketing, or forming consensus (1998, p. 26). Based on Miller’s view, the audience of the Ottoman epic genre is not a given, but is constructed through such techniques as genre conventions and distribution strategies. For instance, the reformed vision of the recent cycle of Ottoman epic films has cultivated a new mode of seeing the Ottoman past that was unprecedented prior to the 2000s. Their explicit visuality of

Islam and Ottomanism is deliberately fashioned in order to recover the authenticity, the truth, of history. As Fatih Usta the producer of *Kara Murat* (2014) states, the film's choreography, lines, and cinematography are deployed to enable "the viewers to see the Ottoman state as Ottomans" / "*Izleyiciler Osmanlı Devleti'ni Osmanlı gibi görecek*" ("Kara Murat," 2014). *Fetih 1453* in a similar fashion also aims to recreate the battle scenes so that the viewers can *experience* the conquest through visual effects. As the film critic Mehmet Nedim Hazar commented, the film's "glorious and breathtaking scenes of war" have generated "excitement of resurrection" of the Ottoman past and "an opportunity to praise our values" (Gülerce, 2012). He further remarked, the visual effects of *Fetih 1453* have also enabled "a movement and campaign to become 'us' again by subscribing to our past and roots" (Gülerce, 2012). According to Hazar, the film's imagery of the conquest of Istanbul is an effective means to restore the essence of history that had been denied under the rule of the secular republic. One can argue that the reformed vision of the Ottoman epic genre, which endeavors to reconstruct historical facts and to recover the authenticity of the Ottoman-Islamic past, has created a new apparatus through which the audience is expected to "subscribe" him or herself as a member of the political effort seeking to restore the lost virtues of the past. The audience is therefore brought into the community sharing common values and belief of the Ottoman-Islamic past by the reformed vision of the epic genre.

For another instance, by adopting transnational production and distribution strategies, the recent cycle of Ottoman epic genre targets not only domestic, but also international audience, especially the large population of Turkish immigrants

residing in Europe. For the conservative elites, such films as *Fetih 1453* and *Kara Murat* are ideal products which serve the purpose to construct a conservative nationalist identity beyond national borders. As mentioned above, the process of globalization and increasing mobility of population have to some extent challenged the conception of citizenship based on the traditional framework of nation state. In order to reaffirm the significance of the state in the age of economic and cultural globalization, the political rationality of neo-Ottomanism has initiated innovative strategies for maintaining the boundaries of national culture and the elements of Turkish citizenship. Turkish cinema as a nation branding technique and newly developed space of cultural consumption is therefore one of such strategies for reorienting the aspects of Turkish citizenship in the realm of the market and new spaces of consumerism. What defines Turkishness today is becoming increasingly connected to one's active participation in the maintenance of that national cultural boundary as a consumer. Turkish emigrants who seek constitutional rights and (dual) citizenship in other countries may no longer consider their Turkish citizenship as their primary identity. However, as consumer citizens, they actively "subscribe" themselves as members of the community bound by their common history and memory of the Ottoman-Islamic legacy. As Rose points out, the "proliferation of new apparatuses, devices and mechanisms for the government of conduct and forms of life" in the neoliberal style of governmentality is a field where the citizen is to become a self-interest subject (Rose, 1999, p. 164). The growing Turkish cinema industry, the recent cycle of Ottoman epic films, and the reformed cinematic imagery of the Ottoman-Islamic past hence comprise parts of

the complex governing apparatuses, devices, and mechanisms for re-establishing the boundaries that define citizenship.

By looking through the perspective of Ottomentality, the popularization of the Ottoman epic genre in Turkish cinema is not so much a phenomenon in its own right, but an object and instrument of the government of culture. The institutional practices pertaining to managing cinema based on neoliberal imperatives reveals the government's effort to administer this particular cultural form as a social resource, which requires active engagement of various actors at ministerial, municipal, and individual levels. Such techniques as nation branding through cinema and the public funding program for both national and international film production hence serve as crucial initiatives encouraging private investments in the industry. The growing Turkish film industry and establishment of new market mechanisms are a necessary precondition where the Ottoman epic genre is revived and attains social new social meanings and functions. By following familiar genre conventions with a twist of restorative nostalgia, the recent cycle of Ottoman epics establishes itself as a medium for framing a new truth, a popular memory, and a technology of the self.

Such films as *Fetih 1453* and *Kara Murat* are therefore not isolated events and must be examined within the context of the emergent neo-Ottoman culture ensemble. They diagnose the problem of a population disconnected from its Ottoman-Islamic past and moral consensus; therefore, by reasserting the symbolisms of Islam and Ottomanism, these popular texts seek to restore citizens' the lost virtues. This complex assemblage of institutional practices and textual

forms of the recent cycle of Ottoman epic genre hence illustrate some of the governing technologies that formulate a notion of Turkish citizenship beyond the formalities of constitution and traditional framework of nationhood. What we have today is a cultural citizenship defined by one's self-interest in becoming a member of the community through his or her own conduct in the realm of the market.

CONCLUSION

Culture as conceptualized in this study is an integral part of governing process which entails a whole range of thoughts and activities aiming to shape the behaviors of a population. This conception of culture draws upon the scholarship of cultural studies incorporating the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality. Conducting cultural studies through the analytical lens of governmentality therefore is to seek answers to the central question about the relationship between culture, government, and society. It is to understand how various knowledges, techniques, and apparatuses are linked to the technologies of power acting on individuals in their day-to-day lives at innumerable disparate sites. It is also to raise critical inquiries through empirical cases about the styles of thought, their diagnoses of the cultural problems (i.e. diversity, citizenship, history, popular memory, and morality) of society, and their efforts to resolve them. As Tony Bennett argues, culture in this respect is both an object of government and an instrument by which the social is governed. It is from this perspective that this study wishes to shed light on Turkey's latest phase of neo-Ottomanism, which over the last decade has formed a peculiar alliance with the ethos of neoliberalism and generated new modalities of

governance seeking to mobilize a cultural renewal through individuals' everyday practices. This alliance is what I call Ottomentality.

This study has warned against the oversimplified view of neo-Ottomanism as an Islamist ideology and diplomatic strategy and the interpretation of Turkey's emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble as merely an ideological machinery of the neo-Ottomanist hegemons. Such a view fails to acknowledge the complex processes by which neo-Ottomanism is reconfigured over time to respond to the various problematics of government. And it tends to overlook the centrality of culture in government, hence it may run the risk of underestimating the implications of this particular cultural formation on the social. By taking the step towards governmentality, this study therefore formulates a conceptual shift from neo-Ottomanism to Ottomentality in order to develop a framework which would enable us to look beyond the trajectories that confine our understanding about Turkey's renewed Ottoman motto and its socio-political significance.

Understanding neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism as interdependent forms of governmentality, this study ultimately is in search of a more adequate tool for thinking about some of the cultural and political questions that Turkish citizens encounter today. What have we become? How do we make sense of the logics that are embedded in the institutional and everyday practices acting upon us as citizens inhabiting a society where a market mentality and moral-religious norms constitute the guiding principles of our conducts? How do we understand ourselves as citizens of a society which is increasingly indifferent to rational thinking and critical reasoning? And where do we begin to tackle the (illiberal) governing techniques of

neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism that shape, and divide, us as individual citizens? Where are those governing techniques located, and how do they operate? As this study intends to illustrate, the perspective of governmentality would equip us with the analytical tools for answering these questions. It is by investigating the interconnecting discourses, policies, and strategies which are deployed in the processes of knowledge production and subjectification that we can then begin to assess the role of culture in government, the conditions where culture is woven into different arts of government, and the ways individuals come to govern themselves with culture. Turkey's emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble is one of the sites where the different styles of government can be located. Such recent cultural formations as the Panorama 1453 History Museum, the Ottoman-themed television series and children's programs, and the genre of Ottoman-epic films as discussed in this study hence are the specific locales where what Foucault describes as a double movement between the technologies for exercising power over the others and those of the self takes place.

The analysis of Turkey's emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble through the lens of Ottomentality reveals that culture under the AKP's administration is governmentalized through discursive processes of knowledge production and subjectification. The findings of the study also suggest that these governing processes are intrinsically grounded in privatized, market-oriented, and society-based conditions. As the case of the Panorama 1453 History Museum discussed in Chapter 3 indicates, the reproduction of the neo-Ottomanist knowledge central to the government of culture and diversity hinges upon the strategy of privatization,

market mechanisms, and civil society's involvement. The newly established culture market and sites of cultural consumption, such as the Panorama 1453 History Museum, provide the necessary spaces for materializing neo-Ottomanist knowledge, which had always existed before but was strictly restrained in public life. This knowledge is fundamental to the government of culture and diversity as it promulgates a popularly accepted logic of a social order based on Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and pluralism. It is also vital for further rationalizing the governing discourses and practices aiming at democratization—a political project of the AKP administration which claims to enhance individual rights and freedoms in Turkey by blending Ottoman-Islam-based norms and values with EU standards. The ongoing processes of globalization, EU negotiation, urban renewal of Istanbul, and the promotion of Istanbul as the European Capital of Culture 2010 at the time served as prerequisite conditions to formulate democratization discourse. By utilizing the EU negotiation and urban development projects, the construction of the Panorama 1453 History Museum was introduced to advance Istanbul and Turkey in global competition. Nonetheless, the market mentality of utilizing culture as a means for promoting Turkey also entails societal implications. When the neo-Ottomanist knowledge is converted into a marketable commodity at the museum and consumed in the form of theme park entertainment, its principal idea of “multicultural democracy” inspired by the universalism of Ottoman-Islamic tolerance and pluralism becomes depoliticized in the private realm of the market. And yet, it is the market that plays an essential role in mobilizing this knowledge.

In addition, the process of subjectification where individuals are guided to act upon themselves as self-reliant citizens is also contingent to the regulatory practices of the market. As illustrated in Chapter 4, the current Turkish cultural policy, media legislation, and government incentives serve as dividing practices aiming at shaping individual conduct based on prescribed sets of rules. By rewarding desirable actions and disciplining undesirable ones, such techniques divide the subjects into categories of the moral and the degenerate, the pious and the secular, the Sunni Muslims and the ethno-religious *other*, or simply put, the good and bad citizens. By exercising their rights and freedom in the media market, the active citizens become subjugated to not only the ethos of the market, but also neoconservative ethical codes. For instance, television series and children's programs that contribute to the government's agenda of promoting Turkey and preserving traditional Turkish culture are rewarded in the forms of tax reduction and public funds. And as the controversy of the popular series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* reminds us, those who do not comply with the norm of conduct are cast as deviants and therefore subjected to legal actions and public denunciation. This process of subjectification therefore has produced a citizenry whose actions are simultaneously shaped by the ethics of the market and neoconservative values.

Furthermore, the process of subjectification embedded in the market regulatory practices has fostered a subject of cultural citizen. As the analysis of the Turkish film industry in Chapter 5 suggests, the institutional practices pertaining to integrate the Turkish film industry into the global market have contributed to the formulation of cultural citizenship defined by individuals' active roles in society as

entrepreneurs and consumers. Unlike the republican citizenship that is conceived of within the legal framework determining one's rights and duties, cultural citizenship is based upon one's own action in the private space of the free market. The notion of cultural citizenship is further reinforced by such film practices as the renewed genre of Ottoman epics which has gained a momentum in the revived Turkish film industry. As the genre's textual form provides a formula for truth-telling and resetting the popular memory of the Ottoman-Islamic past, the cultural specificities of Turkishness is reconfigured and consumed through this particular form of commodity. Unlike the notion of republican citizenship promulgated by the state's nation-building and modernization projects in the past, cultural citizenship in this context is very much built upon a new regime of truth seeing the Ottoman-Islamic past as the bonding element for a community based on shared history and belief.

Although the concept of Ottomentality is deployed in this study to analyze Turkey's emergent neo-Ottoman cultural ensemble, the concept may also shed light on studies seeking to comprehend other areas of government where neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism collide. As mentioned, what neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism have in common is their pursuit of cultural reform in society. For that change to happen, the reformer must come up with innovative ways of re-establishing the truth regimes where knowledges of conduct and the subjects of self-reliant agents are produced. As Mitchell Dean stresses, the reform is cultural "because what is at issue are the values and rules of conduct that have been developed in the course of the evolution of spontaneous social orders" (Dean, 2009: 190). Hence, the understanding of culture must not be limited to the domain of arts

and culture. This study calls for an inclusive understanding of culture that its governmentalization may also take place in such areas as politics, family and health care, education, and urban development. The conditions and ways in which neoliberalism and neo-Ottomanism converge, what knowledges, expertise, and strategies they draw from, and what type of subjects they seek to produce in these areas of government therefore demand further studies.

One final note to conclude, the observations on which this study has conducted mainly took place between 2012 and 2016, during which time Turkey has undergone drastic social and political changes. As observers of Turkey would most likely agree, one of the challenges in conducting social science studies on Turkey is to keep up with its fast-paced transformations and the complexities that are involved in this ongoing process. Since Turkey is still currently experiencing the aftermath of the July 15 attempted military coup which happened just over a year ago, the impacts of this particular event on the country's development will require still more new methodologies and theorization in order to sufficiently comprehend the ever changing relationship between culture, government, and society under evolving circumstances. This study therefore is intended to invite further debates about how different thoughts, rationalities, knowledges, and strategies may intersect and simultaneously weave culture into the governing processes. The perspective of governmentality, far from a totalizing approach, hence could be a useful tool for generating investigative inquiries about culture, government, and society in contemporary Turkey.

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