

SECULARISM AS A LIFE STYLE IN THE 2000S IN URBAN TURKEY: THE
FORMATION AND PERFORMANCE OF SECULAR WAY OF LIFE AMONG
LOWER-MIDDLE CLASSES IN ANKARA, A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

SECULARISM AS A LIFE STYLE IN THE 2000S IN URBAN TURKEY: THE FORMATION AND PERFORMANCE OF SECULAR WAY OF LIFE AMONG LOWER-MIDDLE CLASSES IN ANKARA, A CASE STUDY

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This study is an exploration of the secular lifestyle and cultural values of lower-middle-class families in Batıkent, Ankara, Turkey. Focusing on a group who identify as secular, the thesis examines how they negotiate diverse religious and cultural influences in their Daily lives. Through an 8-month ethnographic fieldwork, I observed that these families, while embracing secularism, also are not indifference to religious beliefs. Challenging the stereotype of secularism as an elite phenomenon perpetuated by the political discourse on the secular-religious divide, this study reveals its prevalence among various social classes in Turkey. These families, rooted in Atatürkist values, define secularism as a safeguard for their religious practices. They emphasize a modern mindset, education, and gender equality as key components of their secular lifestyle which I call as lower-middle class secular habitus. By constructing identities intertwined with Atatürkism and secularism, these individuals form a significant counter-narrative within Turkish society. This research contributes

to a deeper understanding of secularism in Turkey, demonstrating its complex and multifaceted nature, especially among the lower-middle class.

Keywords: secularism, lower-middle classes, lifestyle, Batıkent, Ankara

ÖZ

2000'LERDE KENTSEL TÜRKİYE'DE BİR YAŞAM TARZI OLARAK LAİKLİK:
ANKARA'DAKİ ALT-ORTA SINIFLAR ARASINDA LAİK YAŞAM TARZININ
OLUŞUMU VE PERFORMANSI, BİR VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

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Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin Ankara ilinin alt-orta sınıf mahallelerinden biri olan Batıkent'te kendini laik olarak tanımlayan ailelerin yaşam tarzlarını ve kültürel değerlerini incelemektedir. Kendilerini laik olarak tanımlayan alt-orta sınıf ailelere odaklanan bu çalışma, günlük yaşamlarında farklı dini ve kültürel değerlerle olan ilişkilerini ve müzakere yöntemlerini araştırmaktadır. 8 aylık bir etnografik saha çalışması aracılığıyla, bu ailelerin laikliği benimsemelerine rağmen dini inançlara da kayıtsız olmadıkları gözlemlenmiştir. Siyasi söylemin din ve laikliği iki ayrı kutup olarak sunması sonucu laikliğin elit bir fenomen olarak algılanmasına karşı çıkarak, bu çalışma laikliğin Türkiye'deki çeşitli sosyal sınıflar arasındaki yaygınlığını ortaya koymaktadır. Yaşam tarzlarını Atatürkçü değerler ekseninde tanımlayan bu aileler laikliği dini pratiklerinin bir güvencesi olarak tanımlamaktadır. Atatürkçü değerler olarak modern bir zihniyeti, eğitimi ve cinsiyet eşitliğini seküler yaşam tarzlarının ana bileşenleri olarak vurgulamaktadırlar ki ben buna alt-orta sınıf seküler habitusu

diyorum. Atatürkçülük ve laiklikle iç içe geçmiş kimlikler oluşturarak, bu bireyler Türkiye toplumu içinde önemli bir karşı anlatı oluşturuyorlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: laiklik, alt-orta sınıflar, yaşam tarzı, Batıkent, Ankara

For my beloved father

Muharrem Güneş

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to explore the lifestyles and cultural values of a group of lower-middle class families defining themselves as secular and residing in close neighborhoods who experience diverse religious and cultural values as a way of life in Ankara, *Batıkent* neighborhood in Turkey, after 2000s. The study endeavors to understand how the principle of secularism in a specific lower-middle class neighborhood in Turkey interacts with various social, cultural, and religious values and how this interaction shapes the lifestyles and worldviews of individuals. Accordingly, the focal point of this study is to understand how individuals with diverse religious and cultural affiliations embody the implications of secularism as a political doctrine in their everyday lives.

The prevalence of what is termed "rising religious movements" in Western literature, often exemplified by the Iranian Revolution (1979) or sectarian conflicts in various countries around the world has drawn attention to studies of secularism. In conjunction with its long-standing political and social history, secularism remains a controversial issue in Turkey in the first quarter of the 21st century, much like in the rest of the world. This debate spans a wide range of areas, from the political sphere and media to the demands and critiques of religious communities, as well as among atheist citizens. The issue of why this topic remains so current and debated in Turkey is one of the primary reasons that motivated me to undertake this study.

Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP, Justice and Development Party) won the elections in 2002 and became the ruling party. The subsequent years of its governmental policies regarding education, law, and public sphere politics –such as constraints on the

freedom of expression, control over alcohol sales, violations of women's reproductive rights, the content of compulsory religious courses in the primary schools, the appointment of religious authorities under the title of spiritual counselors to state institutions and the debates surrounding the termination of the Istanbul Convention¹—raised concerns about intervention in citizens' lifestyles in an authoritarian manner.² Although the government interpreted its policies within the discourse of health, public safety, or democracy, none of the strategies produced in these areas have dispelled suspicions about the ongoing threat of political Islam, which remains an old yet persistent dilemma.³ The increasing conservatism in everyday life was perceived as a threat by the secular segments of society, including ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey.⁴ On the other hand, AKP government's attempts in contemporary Turkey to categorize individuals from different religions and beliefs through a polarizing discourse has led to a pejorative representation of the secular-religious divide in the public sphere, often using insulting terms like "laikçi" or "laikçi auntie" (secular aunt).

In Turkey, the issue is debated within the terminology of laicism. Despite its French origins being less known or less frequently brought up, both political (right and left wing) and academic circles perceive it as a tool of the state to control over citizens. Therefore, debates revolve around the necessity to change or relaxed it. In this context,

¹ The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers and opened for signature in Istanbul on 11 May 2011. The Convention entered into force on 1 August 2014, and recognizes gender-based violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination. See. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/council-of-europe-convention-on-preventing-and-combating-violence-against-women-and-domestic-violence>.

Turkey officially declared its intention to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, which it played an active role in preparing, was the first signatory of, and took its name from the city of Istanbul where it was opened for signature, through a Presidential Decision on March 20, 2021. In essence, with this decision, Turkey became the first and only country in the world to withdraw from an international human rights treaty that it had signed and ratified. See. <https://istanbulsozlesmesi.org/istanbul-sozlesmesinden-cekilme-girisimi-ve-sonrasinda-yasananlar/>

² Ayşe Betül Çelik, Rezarta Bilali, and Yeshim Iqbal, "Patterns of 'Othering' in Turkey: A Study of Ethnic, Ideological, and Sectarian Polarisation," *South Europe Society and Politics* 22, no 2 (2017): 221.

³ Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, "The AKP, sectarianism, and the Alevis' struggle for equal rights in Turkey," *National Identities* 20, no. 1 (2017): 1.

⁴ See. Mustafa Şen, "Transformation of Turkish Islamism and the Rise of the Justice and Development Party," *Turkish Studies* 11, no. 1 (2010).

laicism is portrayed in Turkey as a concept detached from the public, representing only the lifestyle of a specific elite group. This creates an impression that a balance between religion and secularism cannot be achieved due to the rigidity of secular groups and their exclusionary nature towards "true Muslims" or the "people" ignoring the polarizing politics and discourses of the AKP government.

It is argued that "in the contemporary social milieu, the rise of new forms of religious politics has worried many who cherish the equality and freedom of secular society and its political institutions."⁵ Supporters of Turkish secularism, encompassing various segments of society, share a similar concern stemming from the conservative discourse and policies of the government. For example, the research on religion, society and politics in Turkey indicates that Turkish society is polarizing along lines of lifestyle, ethnic groups, religiosity, and conservatism.⁶ In a similar manner, recent theoretical discussions on secularity indicate the necessity of studying lifestyles, which is a deficient part of the studies on secularism and secularization. For instance, it has been argued by Franzmann (2016) that:

More scholars should engage systematically in empirically reconstructing secularized forms of individual belief and life-conduct because of most of the controversies about secularization concern the individual level that has remained an under-researched puzzle.⁷

The polarizing discourse of politics has relegated the secular segments of society to a category associated with atheism and values that are often seen as alien to the general population. It tends to exclude individuals who identify as secular but belong to different social classes in Turkey, including the lower-middle classes. Although they

⁵ Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9.

⁶ Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak, *Değişen Türkiye'de Din, Toplum ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2006). <http://tese.org.tr/tr/yayin/degisen-turkiyede-din-toplum-ve-siyaset/>.

⁷ Manuel Franzmann, "From "Atheism" to "Religious Indifference": Suggestions for Future Research on Secularization," *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion: Sociology of Atheism* 7, (2016): 11.

have religious affiliations and practices and maintain non-conflicting relationships with both tradition and modernity, they are confined to a specific elitist camp in the secular-religious divide of the politics and represented as alien to the general population.

In this study, I argue that these individuals constitute a significant segment of society in Turkey. The secular lifestyle cannot be attributed solely to a specific segment of society. Instead, it has become rooted in the daily lives of various social classes. Rather than conflicting with religious practices, secularism is internalized and experienced as a guardian of these religious identities and practices. Therefore, I aim to understand the secular identity of the lower-middle classes, their religious affiliations, and their relationships with modern life in a more nuanced manner. Although secularism is often discussed as a political and state principle, in Turkey, it has created patterns of thought and behavior that can be practiced in specific areas of daily life, reflecting lifestyles of the social classes to which individuals belong.

The principle of secularism, constitutionally safeguarded through the constitutional principle on February 5, 1937, in Turkey not only serves as a guarantee for freedom of religion, conscience, and worship but also fundamentally emphasizes the supremacy of reason, science, and law. Although commonly characterized as the separation of religion and state in its simplest terms, it has been implemented in various aspects of life, including politics, culture, education, and law, wherein the state assumes control over religion, particularly in conjunction with the process of secularization. In a similar vein, Ferdinand Buisson (2019) argues that secularism rests on the process of secularization, signifying institutional differentiation and modernization at its most fundamental level. Consequently, it has infiltrated into our behaviors, habits and traditions.⁸ In a similar vein, Niyazi Berkes (1998), instead of secularism, which underscores the separation of religion and state, believes that the term “secularization”

⁸ Jean Bauberot, *Laiklik: Tutku ile Akıl Arasında 1905-2005* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2019), 8-9.

is much more comprehensive in terms of explaining the differentiation and process of modernization.⁹

Previous studies have primarily focused on the political history of secularism in Turkey and its reflections in the public sphere in the scope of secular/religious divide. These studies have generally treated secularism as an ideology or a political doctrine, often discussing it from a conflict perspective and employing the discourse of a "top-down revolution." The prevailing literature on this subject has interpreted the role of the reforms initiated by the Republican Revolution in the transformation of society solely from a state-centered perspective. Here, society is viewed as passive masses subjected to these reforms.¹⁰ These perspectives have particularly led the dominant literature in subsequent studies to focus on the reasons and practices of certain segments of society's resistance to these reforms. These studies have shaped the discourse to focus solely on resistance at the societal level and to discuss secularism as a concept foreign to society in the context of a political principle. Recent works have effectively addressed the necessity of examining the issue from a societal perspective. These studies generally focus on the early republican period and consider society as composed of active subjects that produce meaning rather than passive receivers.¹¹

My research, in alignment with the recent studies, draws on the theory of multiple secularities to conceptualize secularity as a meaning-generative system in everyday life, examining how this meaning shapes social relations. I also attempted to utilize some of Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual frameworks and research techniques, particularly concepts such as habitus and types of capital. These concepts provide useful tools for understanding individuals' social practices and their positions withing

⁹ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst&Company, 1998).

¹⁰ See: Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus* 102, (1973), 169-190; Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (North HumberSide: Eothen Press, 1985).

¹¹ See: Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey 1923-1945* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016); İlbey C. N. Özdemirci, *Fötr Şapkalı Şih: Cumhuriyet Sekülerleşmesi ve Taşra* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2022).

the social structure. Thus, in this study, I aim to focus on social integration rather than conflict. Correspondingly, the aim of my thesis is to focus on an inquiry that investigates what has been termed as ‘a secular lifestyle’, as an addition to the studies that predominantly focus on Islamic and conservative lifestyles in Turkey. Islamic and conservative lifestyles were explored in studies that defined their formation under Turkey’s secular political regime.¹² Specifically, for the studies on women, Navaro-Yashin (2002) argues that in the middle of the 1990s, urban women who did not cover their heads were not seen as subjects of social science research. Like the narratives of Islamist, elite Kemalist, Alevi or rural women, most of the women’s studies in Turkey have ignored the lives of lower-middle class, working class, and non-religious urban Sunni women.¹³

To achieve the objectives of my study, I conducted an 8-month field study at Batıkent, one of the lower-middle class neighborhoods of Ankara. Batıkent encompasses religious and cultural diversity due to its Alevi and Sunni populations. Established in 1979 under the leadership of the Ankara Municipality and Association of Housing Cooperatives (Kent-Koop), Batıkent is a project neighborhood known for its unique characteristics. One of the project's notable features is its cooperative-based approach to incorporating professional dimensions into the influx of migrants to Ankara. By this way, it has deterred the formation of communal structures within the city based solely on living together of migrants with specific religious and cultural affiliations. Instead, it has fostered a sense of belonging through professions. This facilitates the observation of diverse aspects such as professional, religious and cultural diversity withing the lower-middle class lifestyle. During fieldwork interviews conducted with individuals self-identifying as secular, the study explores dynamics that enable to see the reflections of secularism as a political doctrine on the lower-middle class lifestyle.

¹² See: Ayşe Saktanber, *Living Islam: Women, Religion & The Politicization of Culture in Turkey* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002); Aksu Akçaoğlu, *Zarif ve Dinen Makbul: Muhafazakar Üst-Orta Sınıf Habitusu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019).

¹³ Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 67.

As the significance of my study, I would argue that it could serve as both complementary and explanatory contribution to the literature on everyday life conduct and lifestyles of lower-middle class women and men who identify as secular. It complements the understanding of establishing a secular way of life in the face of Islamic/conservative lifestyles within the context of Turkey's authoritarian governmental policies.

In essence, an exploration of the secular way of life could support related literature in three ways. First, it could unveil how secular values shape the daily practices of urban individuals identifying as secular in a society increasingly polarized by conservative/authoritarian governmental policies. Second, it could enrich discussions on secularism by examining them within the context of Turkey's unique history of modernization. Lastly, it might offer fresh perspectives on the dichotomies of modern/traditional or secular/Islamic by delineating how citizenship parameters in Turkey, reflected in cultural patterns and lifestyles, illustrate diverse codes and practices within society. As such, it could elucidate various forms of secularity by focusing on a specific urban context of post-2000s in Turkey.

The thesis, although its primary concern to focus on lower-middle classes, will include how individuals express their religious affiliations. Therefore, terms like Sunni or Alevi will be included in Appendix section to acknowledge individuals' cultural backgrounds and religious socialization. Within families practicing Sunni or Alevi beliefs and rituals, some individuals identify as atheist, culturally Sunni and Alevi, or highly religious. These statements have shaped how this thesis conceptualize secularity. I will not equate secular way of life with irreligiosity or atheism alone but stemming entirely from fieldwork and molded by its observations. In this study, I aim to explore secular lifestyles which encompass a spectrum, and how individuals reference secular, religious and traditional elements in their daily life practices as well as how frequently they do so, and how they shape their lives accordingly. I believe this approach will also enable me to interpret the classical secularization thesis – that is, the idea that as societies progress, the importance of religion decreases – from a different perspective.

Davison (1998) argues that change does not lead to the replacement of the old with the new, but to a series of specific formations in which the old and the new integrated into each other in a complex way, all of which experience change.¹⁴ Similarly, rather than focusing on whether the importance of religion decreases or not, I will try to demonstrate how people's ways of relating to religion have changed. De Certeau (1984) claims that strategies do not apply to principles, or rules. Instead, they create their repertoire by selecting from among these principles or rules what they can use in their operations.¹⁵

In my study I focused on how individuals I have examined define secularism and the influence of societal structures shaping this definition. I particularly tried to explore the significance of the presence of Atatürk and secularism in the formal education system of the Turkish Republic, and how these concepts penetrate people's mental landscapes which have shaped a generation with a specific perspective on Atatürk and Republic reforms. The generation that, I believe, is committed to Atatürk's modernization reforms and their repertoire accordingly has formed a proper subject of study to assess the secular segments in Turkey beyond a homogenizing perspective. These secular segments of Turkey, whom I studied, attempts to redefine secularism in Turkey based on their personal histories and everyday experiences alongside the influences of Turkey's formal education system on them. These ideas are shaped by their daily life experiences, which they perceive as detrimental to secularism in Turkey. These concerns remind the depictions of the public sphere as a "secular hive," as Yael Navaro Yashin aptly describes the discourse during the Refah Partisi (Welfare Party) rule in the 1990s.¹⁶ It might be beneficial to acknowledge the validity of these concerns, especially regarding gender and education, instead of perpetuating the stereotype of a secular public sphere as a hegemonic force.

¹⁴ Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration* (New Haven&London: Yale University Press, 1998), 40.

¹⁵ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (London: University of California Press, 1984), 54.

¹⁶ Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, 17-42.

Among all these discussions, I considered it important to understand how people from a lower-middle-class neighborhood, who have various religious and cultural affiliations – cannot be described as 'elite secularists' – perceive, experience, and advocate laicism through their lifestyles. These individuals view laicism as a sphere of liberation, the opportunities it creates for women, its power to facilitate social mobilization through education, and as being modern and Atatürkist. Additionally, they do not perceive the principle of secularism as irreligiosity; on the contrary, they see it as the most important protector of their religious beliefs and reject living their beliefs according to different religious or institutional authorities. In this sense, they form a significant oppositional group through the identities they construct around Atatürkism and secularism. What my thesis aims to demonstrate is precisely that this identity is not an exception, or a group detached from or excluding society, but rather the existence of a large and significant segment of Turkish society.

1.1. Plan of the Thesis

In the following Chapter 2, I discuss the theoretical perspectives on secularization, secularism and secularity. I start with the rising interest on the studies of secularism in the sociology of religion. I continue by discussing how sectarian and religious conflicts, as well as social movements termed religious revivalism, have accelerated research on secularism worldwide. I then delve into discussions on classical secularization theory, the theory of multiple secularities, and on post-secularity. Finally, after briefly touching upon the history of secularism in Turkey, I explain how debates on secularism and religion, particularly revitalized during the AKP era, have once again become prominent and debated especially by the secular segments of society.

In Chapter 3, I present the methodology of the study. I start with introducing the research object, techniques and content of the in-depth interviews that I conducted with lower-middle class participants who define themselves as secular. I continue by explaining the background and reasons for studying with these interviewees as well as in a lower-middle-class neighborhood, which is Batıkent, Ankara. Later, I try to

approach the emergence story of a neighborhood, Batikent, together with the founding story of Ankara. I aim to illustrate how Ankara's socio-spatial transformation is linked to the urban planning initiatives for Batikent. I describe my entry into the field and the development of this process by explaining the background of in-depth interviews conducted with lower-middle families. Finally, I share information about the demographic profiles of the families I interviewed.

In Chapter 4, I examine the reflections of secular lifestyle in everyday life by examining gender and marriage dynamics, child-rearing practices, including the official and religious educational choices for children, religious practices and tastes in social and cultural practices such as activities they engage in, clothing styles, home decorations, or consumption patterns. Following the conceptual tools of Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology such as habitus and types of capitals, I determine the commonalities of the interviewees that I would call as lower-middle class secular habitus.

In Chapter 5, I explain how lower-middle class families, identifying themselves as secular and coming from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, express their differences during interactions with each other and in encounters with different beliefs and identities. Specifically, I explore the influence of discursive biases and stereotypes on their perceptions of worship styles, religious identities across different faiths such as in how worship time is allocated in working settings. I also examined how these groups respond to criticism related to these biases and stereotypes, and how they position themselves against such distinctions. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of religious field as a domain of power, I discuss how interviewees who define themselves as secular are excluded from the religious field politically. Lastly, I discuss their perspectives on creating spaces for resistance against their exclusion.

In Chapter 6, which is the Conclusion Chapter, after explaining why I chose to discuss such a topic and under which political conditions in Turkey, as well as describing the characteristics of the field and the people I studied and why they are suitable for the

thesis topic. I will provide a summary of the data collected throughout the fieldwork and present my arguments.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SECULARIZATION, SECULARISM AND SECULARITY

The role of religion in social and political spheres stands as one of the most contentious themes in sociological debate on secularism. Severe religious/sectarian conflicts in Middle Eastern countries¹⁷ and various forms of religious fundamentalism in Africa, Southeast Asia and in the Indian subcontinent¹⁸ intensified discussions on religion in the world. Moreover, the resurgence of religion and its heightened public presence in secularized, prosperous societies in Europe, as well as in countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand¹⁹, have led to the emergence of new perspectives on secularization in contrast to the classical secularization thesis. Peter Berger, one of the leading proponents of the classical secularization thesis, briefly defines secularization as “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domain of religious institutions and symbol.”²⁰ Hence, the classical secularization thesis proposed that the importance of religion would diminish with the modernization of societies. However, it fell short in providing a sufficient explanation for the resurgence of religion in modern and secular nations.²¹

¹⁷ Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1.

¹⁹ Michele Dillon, “Can Post-Secular Society Tolerate Religious Differences?” *Sociology of Religion* 71, no. 2 (2010): 142.

²⁰ Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 113.

²¹ Dillon, “Can Post-Secular,” 142.

As Talal Asad clearly articulated in his examination of the powers of the modern nation-state, the secularization thesis fails to convince us, as it has for some time now, since politics and religion mutually influence each other deeply. Consequently, secularism cannot exist independently of the concept of religion.²² Correspondingly, there is a growing interest in both the apparent religious revival and secularism itself. This necessitates the increasing acceptance of the fact that the categories of religious and secular should be critically studied thereby the worldwide analysis of international politics and social change will not be limited.²³

Theories of de-secularization, post-secularization, or multiple secularities are prominent examples that aim to address various explanations concerning the relationship between secularism and religion. Arising from the shortcomings of the classical secularization thesis, the post-secularism theory conceptualized by Jürgen Habermas emerged as a new perspective aimed at readdressing the issue of secularism. Habermas revisits his previous works and reimagines his concept that the public sphere should be entirely secular, ensuring full access for all citizens.²⁴ From a new perspective, he aims to explore the potential for religion and secularism to coexist and be expressed together in the public sphere. Accordingly, Habermas argues that secular citizens or individuals with different religious beliefs can benefit from the contributions of religion under specific circumstances.²⁵ He admits the role that religion can play in public sphere but tries to maintain a secular understanding of the state.²⁶ Concisely, post-secularism theory recommends that religious and non-religious spheres, as well as religious and secularist people, must find a way out to reconciliation rather than excluding each other.²⁷

²² Talal Asad, "Religion, Nation-State, Secularism," in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, ed. P. van der Veer and H. Lehmann (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 192.

²³ Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen, "Introduction," 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁷ Dillon, "Can Post-Secular," 153.

On the other hand, inspired by the logic of the multiple modernities theory,²⁸ the perspective of multiple secularities pays attention to the uniqueness of socio-historical structures within regions, societies, and nations on their path to secularization. In this sense, the perspective of multiple secularities develops a much more inclusive approach to the study of secularism. It has been argued that although the terms related to secularism share a common linguistic root, they provide different conceptual frameworks due to diverse backgrounds.²⁹

The multiple secularities theory initially describes a separation among the concepts of secularization –as a process of differentiation and distinction between religious and non-religious spaces–, secularism –the separation of state and religion– and secularity. Multiple secularities perspective focuses on cultures of secularity.³⁰ According to Casanova, secular has evolved into a central modern epistemic category, utilized to construct, codify, comprehend, and experience a space of or reality distinct from the religious. There exist numerous ways to experience the secular –and, indeed, to embody secularism– and the challenge for social science is to explore and comprehend these diverse forms of secularity.³¹

Within the framework of multiple secularities, secularity serves as an analytical term employed to comprehend the significance attributed to institutions, practices, and discourses of differentiation concerning religion within a specific social, cultural, and political context.³² Through these lenses, the term secularity analytically discerns

²⁸ Multiple modernities theory suggests that modern societies do not follow a common pattern towards modernity. “The idea of multiple modernities presumes that the best way to understand the contemporary world... is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs.” Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, “Latin America and the Problem of Multiple Modernities,” in *Shifting Frontiers of Citizenship: The Latin American Experience*, ed. Mario Sznajder, Luis Roniger and Carlos A. Forment (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013), 47.

²⁹ Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen, “Introduction,” 5-6.

³⁰ Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt, “Multiple Secularities: Toward a Cultural Sociology of Secular Modernities,” *Comparative Sociology* 11, no. 6 (2012): 881.

³¹ Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, and VanAntwerpen, “Introduction,” 21.

³² Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, “Multiple Secularities,” 884.

various pathways to secularism originating from distinct social and historical characteristics inherent to specific regions or nation-states.

To analyze the development of secularism in various regions or nation-states, the multiple secularities perspective employs ideal types. These ideal types, following the Weberian sense of the term, are analytical abstractions crafted by contextualizing secularisms within their specific frameworks. Additionally, the multiple secularities perspective assumes that distinct secularities emerge to address specific societal issues, often referred to as the reference problem. When attempting to address a reference problem, several guiding ideas accompany the formation of secularism.³³ Using this analytical framework, certain countries are classified based on their reference problems and the guiding ideas shaping their way of secularization. For instance, Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt define the reference problem of Indian secularity as the pursuit of a solution for religious diversity. Indian secularity adopted principles of toleration, respect, and non-interference as guiding ideas to accommodate and balance religious diversity in the process of secularization. On the other hand, the United States identified individual liberties as its reference problem, adopting principles of freedom and individuality as guiding ideas.³⁴

The culmination of these discussions on secularism highlights how specific social, political, and historical processes give rise to distinct secular regimes. Exploring these particular secularisms allows a deeper comprehension of the relationship between religion and secularism. Talal Asad (1999) emphasizes this by stating that:

The concept of “the secular” today is part of a doctrine called secularism. Secularism does not simply insist that religious practice and belief be confined to a space where they cannot threaten political stability or the liberties “free-thinking” citizens. Secularism builds on a particular conception of the world (“natural and social”) and of the problems generated by that world.³⁵

³³ Ibid., 886-891.

³⁴ Ibid., 889-890.

³⁵ Asad, “Religion, Nation-State,” 185.

In this sense, secularism cannot be discussed simply in terms of differentiation between the religious and non-religious spheres. In non-Western societies, the widespread complaint is that Western distinction between politics and religion should not be exported to other regions without being criticized.³⁶ Given its reference to a specific worldview, it is crucial to enhance the understanding of secularism to unveil its implications and expressions withing a particular socio-historical context.

2.1. Turkey's Place in Secularization Debate

Among different types of secularities, Turkey occupies a place its own. Within the multiple secularities' perspective, Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen (2011) defines Turkey's reference problem as national/social integration and development.³⁷ In the latter of the 19th century, numerous non-Western nations endeavored to pursue a path toward secularism in line with the spread of modernization, a concept described by Charles Taylor as a grand narrative.³⁸ At the start of the 19th century, Ottoman bureaucrats aimed to modernize the Ottoman Empire by initiating certain secular administrative and economic reforms. However, it was not until the establishment of the Turkish Republic that the principle of laicism³⁹ became the cornerstone of constitutional theory and political life. This occurred following the reforms of the 1920s and 1930s led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic.⁴⁰ As elaborated by Mardin (1981), laicisim, originating from French constitutional practices in the 19th century, referred to the principle that the state should not provide support to any particular religion. This principle was fully realized in France by 1905 with the formal separation of Church and State. In Turkey, however, laicism went beyond merely separating religion from the state. Unlike France, where religion and

³⁶ Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen, "Introduction," 5.

³⁷ Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, "Multiple Secularities," 900-901.

³⁸ Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen, "Introduction," 6.

³⁹ Şerif Mardin, "Religion and Secularism in Turkey," In *Atatürk: The Founder of a Modern State*, ed. Ergun Özbudun and Ali Kazancıgil (London: C. Hurst, 1981), 191.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 347-351.

state operated in separate institutional spheres, Turkey faced a different challenge. In Turkey, Muslims lacked an autonomous religious institution like the Catholic Church, which would function independently of the state. Consequently, when Turkey adopted laicism as state policy, it was akin to removing a vital part of the state apparatus. This deep and comprehensive shift is why Turkish secularization is seen as a significant achievement. Reforms of Turkish secularization aimed to reshape society in accordance with a specific worldview.

The abolition of the Sultanate, proclamation of the Republic, abolition of the Caliphate, state monopoly on education, closure of *medrese* (religious schools), establishment of Religious Affairs under the office of the Prime Minister, abolition of religious courts, adoption of the Swiss Civil Code, and the Latin alphabet were among numerous reforms aimed to establish a principle of social cohesion in Turkish society and foster a societal consciousness grounded in the guiding principle of science.⁴¹ In essence, the impetus behind Turkey's secularization process is depicted as a response to national and social integration and development. To achieve this, Turkey's specific form of secularization process embraced progress and modernity as its guiding principles and ideals.⁴²

Yet, it is also argued that secularization processes entail inherent structural paradoxes, marked by conflicting responses stemming from their socio-historical particularities.⁴³ Following the extensive history of state-led modernization initiatives, as Kandiyoti (2012) pointed out, debates on secularism in Turkey have predominantly revolved around two main pillars. One face of the discussion involves the Islamists' response to Turkey's adoption of secular values stemming from Western culture, while the other

⁴¹ Ibid., 365.

⁴² Scholars who work on the history of Turkish modernization defined the principles of progress and modernity as guiding ideas of the Turkish laicism: Niyazi Berkes, Şerif Mardin, Bernard Lewis, Eric Zürcher, Feroz Ahmad.

⁴³ Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, "Multiple Secularities," 887.

involves the adaptation of the Kemalist state elite and secularists to these secular values.⁴⁴

The secularization of Turkey was not solely about the separation of state and religion but also encompassed a comprehensive reform across all facets of social life. Islamists' response to these efforts contends that the secular Kemalist state elite dismantled Islam and its institutions, relegating religion to the private sphere. Consequently, they argue that this imposition has compelled society to adopt a lifestyle based on unfamiliar cultural norms and practices. This, in turn, marginalized traditional Muslim society, placing them on the periphery of the new-state relations. On the other hand, secularism became the defining trait of the bureaucratic-military elite known as Kemalist/secularists, serving as its primary proponents. As a result, there is an argument suggesting that the new state-society relations delineated the social divisions within the emerging Republic.⁴⁵

With the transition to the multiparty system in 1946, the primary accusation against the one-party regime, represented by the CHP, was that it restricted Muslims from practicing their traditional way of life and freely worshipping. Hence, political parties (such as the Milli Kalkınma Partisi (1945-1958), Sosyal Adalet Partisi (1946-1952), Çiftçi ve Köylü Partisi (1946-1946), Arıtma Koruma Partisi (1946-1947), İslam Koruma Partisi (1946-1946), Türk Muhafazakar Partisi (1947-1952)) established during this period were predominantly rooted in Islamic ideology. These parties brought discussions on religion and tradition to the political forefront.⁴⁶

Cengiz, Küçükural and Gür (2021) have divided the process of secularization in Turkey into specific periods and argued that when popular politics gained momentum with the preparations for the re-establishment of a multi-party system, starting from 1946, it became evident that the prevailing form of radical secularism could not be

⁴⁴ Deniz Kandiyoti, "The travails of the secular: puzzle and paradox in Turkey," *Economy and Society* 41, no. 4 (2012): 515.

⁴⁵ Mardin, "Center-Periphery," 169-190.

⁴⁶ Şerif Mardin, "Modern Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset," in *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset*, ed. Mümtazer Türköne and Tuncay Önder (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991), 130.

sustained under these conditions. Consequently, this political approach was replaced by a more flexible understanding of religion, leading to the suggestion that the period between 1946 and the 1980 military coup can be characterized as a period of moderate secularization.⁴⁷

In 1950, Demokrat Parti (DP, Democrat Party) came into power. According to Keyder (2017), two pivotal pillars of opposition during the period from 1946 to 1950 were economic liberalism advocating for a free market, opposing state intervention, and the defense of freedom of religion against the oppressive central ideology of the state.⁴⁸ In the initial years of its governance, as stated by Eroğul (1998), the DP was cautious in preserving the secular character of the Turkish Republic. However, in later years of its rule, a series of policies, identified by the Turkish military as a threat to the principle of secularism, ultimately led to the May 27, 1960 military coup. These policies ranged from the adoption of the Arabic form of the *ezan* (call to prayer), lifting the ban on radio channels broadcasting religious programs, public celebrations of religious days, the Introduction of religious classes in secondary schools, to a significant increase in the construction of new mosques.⁴⁹

In the following years, Turkish politics continued to experience military interventions. These interventions were justified as efforts to safeguard the secular nature of Republican reforms and the unified integrity of Turkish society. The March 27, 1971 military memorandum and the military coup of September 12, 1980 were justified due to political instability, economic disruption, currency devaluation, student protests and university conflicts, labor union strikes, and ethnic tensions and the threat of religious fundamentalism (*irtica*). These interventions were seen as responses to the evolving societal and economic structures brought about by rapid population growth and

⁴⁷ Kurtuluş Cengiz, Önder Küçükural and Hande Gür, *Türkiyede Spiritüel Arayışlar: Deizm, Yoga, Budizm, Meditasyon, Reiki vb.* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2021), 89-90. For a periodical account of the debates on secularism in Turkey see: Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

⁴⁸ Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 147-151.

⁴⁹ See: Cem Eroğul, *Demokrat Parti: Tarihi ve İdeolojisi* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1998).

urbanization in the 1970s⁵⁰ as well as in the face of the danger of religious fundamentalism (*irtica*). On the other hand, the predecessors of the AKP, which were closed down by military coups, Milli Görüş Hareketi (MGH, National Outlook Movement), and its affiliated political parties in Turkish political history, collectively known as the Milli Görüş Partileri (MGP, National Outlook Parties) –such as the Milli Nizam Partisi (MNP, National Order Party,1970-1971), Milli Selamet Partisi (MSP, National Salvation Party,1972-1981), Refah Partisi (RP, Welfare Party,1983-1998), Fazilet Partisi (FP, Virtue Party,1997-2001)– can be considered an ideological movement shaped by Islamist values.

Ahmet Yıldız (2003) argues that the MGP, particularly the RP of the 1990s, established themselves within the context of modernism. They evaluated this modernism as limited to scientific and technological progress and did not include cultural or religious transformations. RP held the idea that religion serves as the guiding motif for development and progress.⁵¹ In line with this political atmosphere, a military intervention known as the February 28 process of 1997 was introduced into the political sphere following the electoral success of the RP in the 1995 elections, which resulted in the formation of a coalition government called the Refahyol Hükümeti (Refahyol Government) consisting of the RP and the Doğru Yol Partisi (DYP, True Path Party), a center-right party. The aim of this intervention was to prevent Islamist reactions and safeguard Turkish secularism.⁵²

In these circumstances, one might argue that the classical secularization thesis, which suggests the decreasing significance of religion alongside the modernization of societies, warrants critical examination within the specific context of the history of modernization and secularization in the Turkish Republic. The argument has been made that the position of religion in social life should be consistently redefined, as the

⁵⁰ See: Çağlar Keyder, “Türkiye Demokrasininin Ekonomi Politikası,” in *Geçiş Sürecinde Türkiye*, ed. Irvin C. Shink and E. Ahmet Tonak (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2013), 38-75.

⁵¹ Ahmet Yıldız, “Politico-Religious Discourse of Political Islam in Turkey: The Parties of National Outlook,” *The Muslim World* 93, no. 2 (2003): 189.

⁵² Feriha Perekli, “The Ideological Framing of the National Outlook Parties in Turkey,” *New Middle Eastern Studies* 2, (2012): 20.

continual reproduction of secular life consistently impacts the clear definition of that role.⁵³ Hence, the connection between secularism and religion in Turkey, shaped by its unique socio-historical structure, must be understood in light of the realization that the conception of Turkey's particular secularism emerged in response to this socio-historical framework.

As a result of this socio-historical framework, debates about secularism revolves around the secular segments of society and the political Islam. As an argument that is still valid, Kandiyoti (2012) identifies the situation where segments of society, who embody secularism as a way of life, express their concerns about the future of secularism in Turkey in response to the perceived Islamist threat.⁵⁴ In this sense, one could argue that Turkey's pursuit of secularism reflects a conflicting framework, within which the establishment of lifestyles as an expression or preservation of different beliefs and values –such as Islamist/traditional or secular/modern– emerges as an exploration of the paradoxes within secularism. Hence, this framework implies a complex interplay of meanings concerning the institutional differentiation and delineation of religion in relation to the state and public life within Turkey's history of secularization. This thesis will delve into this subject, specifically focusing on urban citizens residing in a particular lower-middle class neighborhood in Ankara, Turkey.

2.2. Secularization as a Dividing Line for Ideological Polarization: AKP and the Problem of Secularization

In its initial years of governance, the AKP defined its identity as conservative democrats. Akdoğan (2004) conceptualizes this identity as a reference to the Turkish tradition of thought, asserting that the AKP aims to uphold and propagate the native and deeply rooted value system in alignment with the universal standards of

⁵³ Asad, "Religion, Nation-State," 192.

⁵⁴ Kandiyoti, "The travails of the secular," 515-516.

conservative politics.⁵⁵ This identity was advantageous in two ways: Firstly, it facilitated participation in European Union (EU) processes due to its emphasis on democracy. Secondly, conservative democracy implied that the AKP's members had moved away from their former MG identity and its Islamist ideology. Despite the government interpreting its policies within the discourse of health, public safety, or democracy, none of the policies in these areas have alleviated suspicions regarding the ongoing dilemma of the perceived threat of political Islam –an old yet persistent concern.⁵⁶ The rise of conservatism in everyday life was perceived as a threat by the secular segments of society, including ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey.⁵⁷

One of the most prominent displays of dissatisfaction with the AKP government was manifested in the form of massive demonstrations, known as the Cumhuriyet Mitingleri (Republic Rallies), held in April and May 2007 across three major cities in Turkey: Ankara, İstanbul, and İzmir. The participants in these demonstrations protested against the potential presidential candidacy of Abdullah Gül, who was the Vice Prime Minister, as well as his wife, who wore a headscarf. They also opposed the potential candidacy of any politician with a MG ideology, fearing that it would jeopardize the secular character of the Turkish Republic.⁵⁸

At the end of May 2013, another widespread protest against the government erupted in Turkey, known as the Gezi Movement. Initially, it began as a small-scale environmentalist demonstration aimed at protecting the trees in Gezi Park, situated in Taksim, İstanbul, against the government's plans to build a shopping mall in that area. Nevertheless, when violent police intervention against protestors was shared on social media, it sparked one of the largest demonstrations in Turkish history. The protests evolved into demonstrations against the government and spread to cities, primarily Ankara, İzmir, and other parts of Turkey. It comprised a diverse array of people from

⁵⁵ Yalçın Akdoğan, *AK Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi* (İstanbul: ALFA, 2004), 12.

⁵⁶ Karakaya-Stump, "The AKP, sectarianism," 1.

⁵⁷ See: Şen, "Transformation of Turkish Islamism".

⁵⁸ Paul de BERNARD, "One million Turks rally against government," 2007, retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-president/one-million-turks-rally-against-government-idUSL2910950920070429>.

various political, cultural, and class backgrounds, including young men and women, wage laborers, proletarians, small retailers, the unemployed, housewives, individuals wearing or not wearing a headscarf, people from all generations, members of the LGBTQ+ community, students from both high schools and universities, and sections representing different philosophical and political viewpoints. These included neo-nationalists, liberals, socialists, social democrats, Kemalists, anarchists, atheists, Muslims (including both Alevi and Sunni Muslims), and more.⁵⁹

Tuğal (2013), among numerous other interpretations of the Gezi movement, discusses that the primary motive for participants from various segments of society was dissatisfaction with the government's authoritarian and neo-liberal policies.⁶⁰ However, it was when the government placed the movement within a conflict-driven framework, criminalizing and marginalizing the protestors in the eyes of AKP supporters that religious discussions began to dominate the discourse surrounding the Gezi movement. After reports indicated that a significant number of Alevi participants were involved in the Gezi movement and that all six protestors who died during the events were Alevis, coupled with claims of alleged attacks on mosques and women in headscarves by Gezi protestors, the AKP government attempted to polarize society along religious lines despite the inclusion of citizens from various segments of society. Erdoğan, the Prime Minister then, targeted the Gezi protestors and the CHP, portraying the Gezi movement as a continuation of what he referred to as the CHP mentality. With this statement, he addressed the one-party regime of the CHP between 1923-1945 as a context of a secular, westernized elite that suppressed religious, conservative citizens. Additionally, he developed a sectarian discourse targeting Alevi citizens. Despite the protestors' attempts to steer the movement away from the government's polarizing religious discourse –such as announcing that alcohol should not be consumed in the

⁵⁹ Selma Gürkan, “Bu Daha Başlangıç, Mücadeleye Devam,” in *Gezi, İsyân, Özgürlük: Sokağın Şenlikli Muhalefeti*, ed. Kemal İnal (İstanbul, Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2013), 125.

⁶⁰ Cihan Tuğal, “‘Resistance everywhere’: The Gezi revolt in global perspective,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 49, (2013); Çağrı Özdemir, “What’s left of Turkey’s Gezi protest movement?” 2017, retrieved from <http://www.dw.com/en/whats-left-of-turkeys-gezi-protest-movement/a-39049440>; Emre Azizlerli, “Gezi Park: Turkey’s new opposition movement,” 2013, retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-23795857>.

demonstration area during *Miraç Kandili* (a Muslim holiday commemorating the prophet's ascent to heaven) to demonstrate respect for believers in the protest– the government persisted in portraying Gezi as an anti-religious movement.⁶¹

Even these two impressive protests illustrate that the relationship between secularism and religion still occupies a substantial area of discussion in today's Turkish society. Turkish secularism not only aimed to control religion by separating it from the state but also sought to transform society through new cultural codes and values guided by the notions of progress and modernity. Hence, it established a realm where paradoxical relations between modern/traditional or Islamist/secular consistently remain in conflict with political forms attempting to polarize Turkish society along these divisions to seek support. Supporters of Turkish secularism share a concern stemming from the conservative discourse and policies of the government.

Among them, Alevis, an ethno-religious minority comprising a significant portion of the population after Sunni Muslims⁶², have raised concerns regarding the preservation of their identity in light of discriminatory and conservative government policies. Having a specific religious affiliation, Alevis are associated with the secular values of the Turkish Republic, viewing secular principles as essential for ensuring their equal citizenship rights and preserving their identity.⁶³ Hence, it could be asserted that Alevis represent a significant segment of Turkey's population, striving to uphold the secular and modern values of the Turkish Republic amidst the discriminatory and conservative policies implemented by the government. To address the concerns raised by Alevis, the government launched an Alevi Opening initiative in 2007-2008.⁶⁴ While the government presented this initiative within the context of democratization, there have

⁶¹ See: Erdem Yörük, "The Long Summer of Turkey: The Gezi Uprising and Its Historical Roots," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 113, no. 2 (2014); "Occupy Gezi, beyond the religious-secular cleavage" 2013, retrieved from <https://tif.ssrc.org/2013/06/10/occupy-gezi-beyond-the-religious-secular-cleavage/>.

⁶² Karakaya-Stump, "The AKP, sectarianism," 54.

⁶³ See: Mehmet Ertan, *Aleviliğin Politikleşme Süreci: Kimlik Siyasetinin Kısıtlılıkları ve İmkanları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017).

⁶⁴ Ceren Lord, "Rethinking the Justice and Development Party's 'Alevi openings,'" *Turkish Studies* 18, no. 2 (2017): 278-296.

been arguments suggesting that it was an effort to reframe Alevism within a Turkish-Islamic framework in order to marginalize its visibility.⁶⁵ Throughout the Opening, Alevi concerns were predominantly categorized into four main groups by Alevi organizations, despite internal divergences in interpreting Alevism –whether as an esoteric interpretation of Islam or as a distinct and separate religion.⁶⁶

The primary demand was the elimination of mandatory religion classes from secondary school curricula, which predominantly reflect the principles of Sunni Islam.⁶⁷ This demand was taken to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), argued within the context of secular and egalitarian rights in education. The ECHR acknowledged the demands of Alevism; however, the AKP government did not heed the ECHR's decision. The second demand called for the restructuring or abolition of the functions of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. They emphasized that the Directorate should ensure the state's impartiality towards all faith groups, refraining from acting as an agent for conservative-Islamic political and social transformation. The third issue pertained to the legal recognition of *cemevleri* (cem houses), which serve as places of prayer and worship for Alevism. The final demand was to prevent compulsory construction of mosques in Alevi villages.⁶⁸ These processes reveal Alevism's endeavor to assert their identity as equal citizens within Turkish society, where the majority of the population is composed of Sunni Muslims. To better comprehend the concerns of Alevism, one might consider Talal Asad's comment, which states:

Besides, the secularists accept that in modern society the political increasingly penetrates the personal. At any rate, they accept that politics, through the law, has profound consequences for life in the private sphere. So why the fear of religious intrusion into private life? This partially may be explained by the doctrine that while

⁶⁵ Ibid., 281.

⁶⁶ Karakaya-Stump, "The AKP, sectarianism," 5.

⁶⁷ Mandatory religion classes were introduced into education system following the military coup of 1980 within the framework of the culturally conservative ideology of Turkish-Islamic synthesis. For a detailed analysis on Turkish-Islamic synthesis: See: Şen, "Transformation of Turkish Islamism".

⁶⁸ Karakaya-Stump, "The AKP, sectarianism," 57-59.

secular law permits the essential self to make and defend itself (“our rights constitute us as modern subjects”), religious prescriptions only confine and dominate it.⁶⁹ Asad’s statement could be interpreted by Alevi to suggest that, despite being an ethno-religious community with a distinct religious affiliation, their rights to equal citizenship and the freedom to express their identity are safeguarded by secular principles which are put forward within a secular regime. This protection serves as a barrier against the dominance of a singular religion or religious sect, such as the Sunni interpretation of Islam, within Turkey.⁷⁰ In this regard, the relationship that Alevi establish with secularism could also serve as an indication to comprehend the specific type of secularism inherent in Turkish modernization. Hence, it could be argued that the relationship between Alevism and secularism is intrinsic to the social and political circumstances shaped by Turkey’s specific historical processes and the unique experience of Alevi within it. Across much of the literature, Alevi are often associated with a secular lifestyle despite their internal differences. These differences can be attributed to three main areas of discussion: the heterodox and synthetic cosmology of Alevi belief, the ethnic diversity within the Alevi community, and their varied geographical distribution across Turkey.⁷¹

When defining Alevism, two primary interpretations emerge. One defines Alevism as an esoteric interpretation of Islam and as a cultural identity, while the other perspective views it as an entirely separate religion. The ideological representations of these frameworks are exemplified by two Alevi organizations. *Cem Vakfi*⁷² represents the first perspective, aiming to have Alevism acknowledged within the state apparatus under the existing religion-state framework. On the other hand, the *Pir Sultan Abdal*

⁶⁹ Asad, “Religion, Nation-State,” 181.

⁷⁰ Ali Çarkoğlu and Nazlı Çağın Bilgili, “Alevi in Turkish Politics,” in *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, ed. Anne Sofie Roald and Anh Nga Longva (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 290.

⁷¹ Ertan, *Aleviliğin Politikleşme Süreci*, 18; Aykan Erdemir, “Tradition and Modernity: Alevi’s Ambiguous Terms and Turkey’s Ambivalent Subjects,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 6 (2005), 940.

⁷² Cem Vakfi: Established in 1995. The foundation describes its aim as to sustain values of Alevi Islamic understanding, mold public opinion and find solutions through dialogue to injustices that Alevi go through for years by informing political parties, democratic mass organizations, universities etc. about these injustices. Retrieved from: <http://www.cemvakfi.org/pages/kurumsal/3/tarihcemiz>

*Kültür Derneği*⁷³ (PSAKD, Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association) aligns with the second viewpoint, advocating for a transformation in the religion-state relationship in Turkey. The ethnic diversity among Alevis constitutes another internal difference that, to a certain extent, shapes their approach to the early Republican policies. Roughly, two-thirds of Alevis speak Turkish, while the remaining third speak either the Kurdish Kurmanci dialect or Zazaki as their mother tongue.⁷⁴

The connection between Alevis and secularism can be comprehended within the context of the history of modernization in the Turkish Republic. It can be argued that in this process, Alevis positioned themselves distinct from Sunni Islam and aligned themselves with the secular values of modern Turkey.⁷⁵ Two historical processes might illuminate this relationship. One of these is urbanization, through which Alevis gained public visibility due to the dissolution of traditional Alevism. The other is systematic massacres. Urbanization among Alevis, marked by their migration to cities, can be traced back to the period between the 1960s and 1980s, a time when Turkey experienced significant social and economic transformations.⁷⁶ The most significant aspect of Alevi urbanization was the disintegration of traditional Alevism. In traditional Alevism, the interaction with the external world is kept at a minimum level, operating within its own social mechanisms. Within this system, the *dede* assumes a central role, serving as the authority figure on religious, political and juridical matters. Urbanization for Alevis signifies the dissolution of this traditional structure, involving the establishment of a political connection with modern state mechanisms and forging socio-economic ties within urban spaces.⁷⁷

⁷³ Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği: Established in 1988. Ertan describes the position of this association as to function in order to re-establish the relation of religion and state in Turkey. The association holds the idea that inclusion of Alevis into existing religion-state relationship is not a solution; the solution is to restructure this relationship. Ertan, *Aleviliğin Politikleşme Süreci*, 197.

⁷⁴ Markus Dressler, "Religio-Secular Metamorphoses: The Re-Making of Turkish Alevism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, no. 2 (2008): 281.

⁷⁵ See: Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türk Süfiliğine Bakışlar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996); Tahire Erman and Emrah Göker, "Alevi Politics in Contemporary Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 4 (2000): 99-118; David Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition* (London & New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

⁷⁶ Ertan, *Aleviliğin Politikleşme Süreci*, 82-92.

⁷⁷ Dressler, "Religio-Secular Metamorphoses," 296-297.

On the other hand, massacres are historical moments that have shaped the collective memory of Alevis and, to some extent, influenced their political orientations. In modern Turkey, Alevis were subjected to massacres in cities such as Malatya, Sivas, Maraş, and Çorum during the 1970s, a period that coincided with the urbanization and increased public visibility of Alevis. Prior to that, during the early Republican period between 1937 and 1938, there was a government-led attack in Dersim, Tunceli, which significantly influenced the state-society relations of Alevis for the following years. Dersim was inhabited by predominantly Kurdish and Alevi communities. The motives behind this event have been interpreted in two contrasting ways. Some literature views this massacre as an attempt by the early Republic to assimilate the region under the guise of Turkish nationalism.

Another perspective suggests that the military operation was deemed necessary to eliminate the dominance of feudal clan leaders in the area.⁷⁸ In July 1993, the PSAKD organized a festival. The Madımak Hotel, where the participants staying, was set on fire by fundamental Islamists, resulting in the deaths of 33 writers, the majority of whom were Alevis, along with 2 hotel employees. These events were followed by the Gazi Mahallesi attacks in 1995, which targeted a district in İstanbul predominantly inhabited by Alevis. As the attackers were political Islamists, Alevis began to lean more towards embracing secularism than before. The PSAKD interpreted these attacks as not only aimed at Alevis but also as an assault on the secular Republic of Turkey.⁷⁹ Theoretical discussions regarding difference and diversity in literature, influenced by postmodernism, found their way to Turkish politics in the 1990s. During this period, ethnic, religious, or linguistic differences became integral to politics, with the ascent of political Islam and the Kurdish question taking center stage in the political agenda.⁸⁰ In such a political climate, the primary discourse surrounding the Alevi revivalism within the realm of identity politics revolves around conceptualizing the relationship

⁷⁸ Ertan, *Aleviliğin Politikleşme Süreci*, 139; 158.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁸⁰ Çarkoğlu and Toprak, *Değişen Türkiye'de Din*.

between Alevis, modernity, and tradition.⁸¹ With the heightened presence and visibility of Alevis in the Turkish political sphere, the emphasis was placed on Alevis becoming the focal point of political, social, and cultural mobilization.⁸² Beyond the politics of identity, the Alevi movement largely gravitated towards embracing universal concepts like secularism and citizenship. This positioning aimed to integrate them into social life and political processes on an equal footing with individuals who are not Alevis.⁸³ In this sense, one might argue that Alevis are associated with a secular lifestyle as they align with the values of Turkish secularism, contrasting the authoritarian discourse of the government that aims to pave the way for a conservative way of life in present-day Turkey.

Returning to the discussions surrounding the Gezi Park protests, the AKP government, by polarizing society through appeals to religious values or by portraying the movement as a continuation of the CHP's mentality, has successfully entrenched an authoritarian discourse among its supporters. The government has stereotyped the secular segments of society as upper-class elites, as perpetuating the single-party mentality of the CHP, and as individuals with values alien to the people (*millet*). By homogenizing the diverse political views and lifestyles of individuals from various religious, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds who participated in the protests, the government has sought to shape the everyday language of its electorate through pejorative terms such as 'elitists', 'laicists', and even caricatured old women who are secular and vote for CHP as 'laicist aunties'. According to Güralp (2018), in discussions within our country, there is also a common distinction made between "laicism" and "laicist." According to this distinction, "laicism" is considered to be a more tolerant approach towards religion, while "laicist" is seen as a stricter stance. However, this differentiation is also meaningless. If we are speaking of laicism as a political principle, then laicism can simply be defined as an attitude that supports this

⁸¹ Erdemir, "Tradition and Modernity," 940.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 940.

⁸³ Ertan, *Aleviliğin Politikleşme Süreci*, 16.

principle. Perhaps a more accurate term would be “pro-secularism.”⁸⁴ However, the pejorative usage of the term occupies the language of the government in its authoritarian politics towards different segments of the society, segments who do not vote for it.

Studies on religiosity and secularism in Turkey⁸⁵ are increasingly growing with robust field research. With the perspective that I believe will contribute to the relevant literature, I aimed to understand how social position shapes the secular lifestyle practices of individuals in a lower-middle class neighborhood. I sought to demonstrate that secular identity cannot be confined to categories such as elitism, upper-middle class status, or Alevism in Turkey. Instead, it has deep roots visible across all segments of society and is internalized to the extent that it shapes individuals’ perceptions and daily life practices.

2.3. Expression of Secular Affiliation: The Literal Meaning or the “Feeling About It”

Formal definition of secularism and being secular and the discussions surrounding it revolves around classical dichotomies that have persisted both before and after the AKP era in Turkish political history. These debates, characterized by classical dualities such as modern/traditional, secular/Islamist, progressive/conservative, and progress along lines familiar to many scholars engaged in the sociology of religion and politics in Turkey. Specifically, the discourse intensifies in a domain that can be characterized as notably distinct from previous periods, focusing on the increased intervention of religion into the public sphere and the visibility of religious orders, particularly within the context of the AKP. I noticed the place of this terminology in people's daily lives

⁸⁴ Haldun Güllalp, *Laiklik, Vatandaşlık Demokrasi: Türkiye'nin Siyasal Kültürü Üzerine Çalışmalar* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2018), 96.

⁸⁵ For a comprehensive study: Bahattin Akşit, Recep Şentürk, Önder Küçükural and Kurtuluş Cengiz, *Türkiye’de Dindarlık: Sosyal Gerilimler Ekseninde İnanç ve Yaşam Biçimleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012).

when I observed during my interviews how they initially attempted to define the concept.⁸⁶

Although I began to see and understand the interviewees' subjective experiences as I delved into detailed inquiries about their life practices in the later stages of the interviews, the persistent inclination of the interviewees to recount their personal experiences after clinging to textbook definitions indicated the influence of the principles instilled by the secular education system on the internalization of these principles by the interviewees.

The interviewees primarily articulated their definitions through themes such as religious freedom, freedom of conscious, non-interference in others' lifestyles, and the importance of being respectful. While the definitions and categories I contemplated in initially diverged, ultimately, they converged on common ground, particularly in terms of government policies, the increasing visibility of religion in the public sphere, and the culmination of the relationship between religious orders and politics and economy. Despite their differing starting points, lifestyles, religious affiliation, or definitions, the themes and activities they imply and exemplify for secularism reveal a shared understanding of how the principle of secularism has become ingrained in the mental landscapes and life practices of individuals in Turkey. It becomes evident that they converge on the notion of how secularism is internalized in Turkey and the potential threats it faces.

For example, the initial response I typically received to the question of whether they define themselves as secular or not, which I often pose at the beginning of my fieldwork, was generally along with the question of should they provide a formal definition of the concept, or should they describe what they feel about it. Is it the formal

⁸⁶ Throughout the study, the term we used with the interviewees was laicism. When I asked them for their views on being secular, they would pause, but when I referred to 'I mean laicism'; they responded with a better grasp of the topic. However, throughout the thesis, I preferred to use 'secularism' or 'being secular', as I believed it would expedite the writing process. This choice is solely for technical reasons, and as the author of this thesis, I also believe that the term laicism is more accurate for the Turkish context.

or literary definition, or is it the meaning it holds in their lives? These moments of hesitations signify a lot. Accordingly, the concepts of religious freedom, freedom of conscience or respect for other beliefs and similar expressions are often taken for granted in our everyday language, used frequently without much scrutiny. However, I argue that for a sociological study to establish meaningful connections with these expressions, it is crucial to understand the areas of individuals' lives from which they draw examples when using these terms. Moreover, it is important to grasp, perhaps even inadvertently, how these expressions are utilized based on their relationship with various societal institutions.

Uncovering these unnoticed deployments of expressions enables an insight into the material realities of these implicit worlds of meaning. To comprehend areas where various dynamics such as age, gender, ethnicity, and class converge and manifest themselves, the examination of the life practices constructed upon these meanings becomes imperative. This process, often referred to as intersectionality, involves recognizing the layered life practices that form the basis for understanding spaces where multiple dynamics intersect and express themselves which is often ignored in the secularism debates.

While there was a desire to obtain responses regarding individuals' subjective experiences, life practices, and worldviews in defining secularism, interviewees persisted in responding by constructing their own categorizations around certain themes which are well known in Turkish political history. In this context, I observed that their perspectives on secularism and the definitions they put forth were shaped by concepts associated with separating religion and state affairs, state, state institutions, political parties, especially AKP and *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP, Republican People's Party), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, by terms aligned with a predominantly secular humanistic standpoint. The central themes of efforts to define around the state and politics encompassed Atatürkism, the government's stance towards various belief and lifestyles, the escalating relationship between religious orders and politics/economy, inquiries into meritocracy, and particularly, by Alevis, questioning whether there is an official religion of the state, which is Sunni Islam.

I embarked upon this thesis by attempting to perceive the place of secularism, an explicitly constitutional principle, within the everyday flow of life. This perspective prompted me to view the everyday life, often referred to by many writers as the “obvious unknown”, not as confined to two distinct realms –private and public– but rather as an exhibition space of intertwining and occasionally knotted differences. People who define themselves as secular frequently express their feelings about secularism as a reflection of what they understand from the concept. Therefore, I claim that the inclination of secularism as a political doctrine to the lives of individuals as a meaning system, should be a part of the literature on secularism.

Understanding how individuals who advocate for secularism perceives this concept in their daily lives, and specifically how lower-middle class families who identify as secular comprehend and experience secularism, will provide a significant contribution to theoretical studies on secularism. Unlike approaches such as multiple secularities, which focus primarily on state and political regimes, this study will offer a unique perspective by exploring how secularism is interpreted at the individual level in daily life and identifying which actions are perceived as indicators of a secular life. The action repertoires, which are behavioral patterns and practices, that embody a secular life constitute the central issue of my study. The lifestyles that emerge as a reflection of the families’ lower-middle class status and associated social positions are manifested in the action repertoires that I term as lower-middle class secular habitus. Understanding how secularism is perceived at the individual level and within the context of daily life in Turkey, and the feelings it evokes in individuals, has been one of the key elements shaping the theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY AND THE BACKGROUND OF THE FIELDWORK

3.1. Research Object, Techniques and the Content of Interviews

In this thesis, I employed qualitative methodology to deeply explore the evolution of knowledge pertaining to secularism and the adoption of a secular way of life in Ankara among lower-middle class families, in Turkey, in the post-2000s. My focus centered on analyzing the cultural patterns and lifestyles of urban residents in Ankara, *Batıkent* neighborhood, with lower-middle class families who identify themselves as secular.

Similar to Franzmann's (2016) observation that only a small number of researchers have actively worked on methodically reconstructing secularized patterns of belief and behavior at the personal level,⁸⁷ by concentrating on these cultural facets, my aim was to unveil the underlying significance individuals attribute to their practices, particularly in adopting a secular way of life. This examination aimed to elucidate the interplay between cultural patterns, lifestyles, and the diverse interpretations of this subject. In his study on Bourdieusian cultural sociology Pekka Sulkunen (1982) argued that:

The meanings that people attach to their practices are not always objectively correct, however, and it is exactly the (critical) task of sociology to reveal the contradictions between the subjective meanings (which usually are those professed by the 'official' society) and the implicit objective meanings that structure the lifestyle of different social groups and explain their inherent 'logic'.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Franzmann, "From "Atheism" to "Religious Indifference," 11.

⁸⁸ Pekka Sulkunen, "Society Made Visible: On the Cultural Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu," *Acta Sociologica* 25, no. 2 (1982): 104.

In a similar vein, culture for Bourdieu (1995) refers to “the resources or the material, the codes and frames that people use in building and articulating their own worldviews, their attitudes to life and social status.⁸⁹ Correspondingly, the cultural patterns and lifestyles of urban dwellers constitute a significant aspect of this thesis as they may unveil the implicit, objective meanings attributed to the principle of secularism by these individuals. In this context, rather than solely defining secularism as a constitutional principle or a political ideology, its practical perception in everyday conduct becomes paramount. As has been argued that each of us can support secularism to some extent, but our individual notions are influenced by historical legacies and varied practical concessions.⁹⁰

Accordingly, qualitative research delves into the realm of culture and elucidates meaningful actions.⁹¹ It scrutinizes social processes within their contextual frameworks and studies interpretations or meanings within distinct socio-cultural settings.⁹² To unveil the implicit subjective meanings that urban citizens in Turkey associate with secularism and the patterns of its daily practice, I intended to utilize qualitative research methods and conduct fieldwork.

In line with qualitative methodology, my research involved a combination of primary and secondary sources, including methods such as observation, interviewing, questionnaire, documents and publications. Initially, I utilized a survey questionnaire⁹³ to gather demographic data, encompassing information on age, gender, income, place

⁸⁹ Pertti Alasuutari, *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies* (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), 26.

⁹⁰ Tariq Modood, “Muslims, Religious Equality and Secularism,” in *Secularism, Religion, and Multicultural Citizenship*, ed. Geoffrey Brahm Levey and Tariq Modood (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 179.

⁹¹ Alasuutari, *Researching Culture*, 2.

⁹² W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Essex: Pearson, 2014), 176.

⁹³ Survey questionnaire as well as research techniques and methods have been used which were applied by Ayşe Saktanber (2002) in *Living Islam: Women, Religion & The Politicization of Culture in Turkey*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002) such as in-depth interview technique, questionnaire form, and the way she conducted participant observation.

of origin, and occupation of the participants. Subsequently, I conducted in-depth interviews⁹⁴ that will incorporate questions aligned with the sub-categories of the research inquiry. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the families I interviewed, instead of specific locations and activities, I conducted participant observation in various places that I realized could be meaningful for my work. These included attending a newborn's traditional Islamic prayer (*mevli*), the official opening ceremony of the Pir Sultan Cemevi in Batikent, celebrating International Women's Day with women who are members of a village association founded by people whose families are from the same village, and participating in a wood painting course for women organized by the Batikent municipality along with one of my interviewees. Additionally, I spent several days in an election tent with a woman who was running for neighborhood's head (*muhtar*).

My research involved families comprising a wife, husband, and child/children that of nuclear family type with two exceptions that two grandmothers living with their children's houses because they are too old and need care. I chose the family as a unit of analysis because I believed they have distinct experiences when it comes to establishing occupational/educational relationships, interactions/experiences in public/private spaces, or engaging in various recreational activities. By using the family as the unit of analysis, I aimed to gain insights into the intergenerational transmission of religious/secular values and practices. I particularly focused on collecting data from spouses because I believed it would provide more information for comparing different perspectives within the context of gender roles in public and private spheres and would be more complementary in terms of comparing their way of elaboration of secular way of life in certain areas of daily life. Additionally, I thought it would be useful for identifying points of tension between spouses in terms of gender roles. I chose participants through snowball sampling because it allowed me to enter the field through individuals who would potentially build trust with households.

⁹⁴ See: Appendix B for details about survey form and questionnaire.

I conducted interviews with 20 families. 13 of these families identify as Alevi, while the other 7 identify as Sunni and 5 of these families have intermarriages which are between Alevi and Sunni individuals. In-depth interviews covered various aspects such as the family's cultural background and history, internal family dynamics and values including marriage, gender roles, child raising, health, and family planning. It also delved into educational and professional aspects of life. Additionally, it explored religious beliefs and practices, encompassing ceremonies, traditions, freedom of belief, tolerance, and the perspectives of the interviewees on secular humanism. Social connections and community relations, including interactions with diverse belief systems, discussions about equality, discrimination, and freedom of expression, were parts of the conversation. Furthermore, the interviews touched upon cultural activities, interests, consumption patterns, as well as viewpoints concerning politics and economics. Interviews were held face to face with families, and with a few exceptions, they took place in the homes of the families. The duration of each interview extended approximately between 2-3 hours.

My in-depth interview topics and questions were shaped by the literature on secularism and lifestyle studies both within Turkey and internationally. In this context, I sought to operationalize the literature specifically for Turkey by framing questions with examples from daily life. For instance, I framed questions to understand how families might react if their children chose a belief different from their own, or how they perceive atheists, based on Charles Taylor's argument of 'belief as an option'⁹⁵. Additionally, I aimed to test texts in the literature that present religion and secularism as two distinct and irreconcilable poles by asking interviewees about stereotypical expressions such as 'secularism is drinking alcohol' or 'secularism is atheism', which contribute to the perception of religion and secularism as separate extremes in Turkey. Overall, I endeavored to understand how secularism is crystallized through lifestyle choices and preferences in a lower-middle-class neighborhood.

⁹⁵ Charles Taylor (2007) argues that the most important feature of the secular age we live in is that belief is an option in Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

These interviews contributed to the development of the sections in my thesis. During my 2-3 hour interviews, I used a voice recorder with the participants' consent. However, one female interviewee, who was a candidate for village head, declined to have her conversations recorded due to her sensitivity as a politician. For her interviews, I took brief and reminder notes and, upon returning home, transcribed my impressions and key points of the discussions into the fieldwork diary I kept to avoid forgetting them. I then worked on transcribing the audio recordings into detailed texts. Listening to these recordings later allowed me to better identify pauses, anxieties, or prominent topics that I had initially overlooked due to the excitement of fieldwork and the embarrassment of visiting people's homes. I read the written texts repeatedly, attempting to identify prejudices, stereotypes, repetitive phrases, or expressions related to political parties and leaders. I aimed to discern how my interviewees expressed themselves regarding recurring debates in the literature on secularism in Turkey. When revisiting the texts, it became easier to recognize consistent patterns on specific topics. The themes that emerged as sections of my thesis included: education, Kemalism, gender equality, the expression of modernity as respect for other beliefs despite conflicts, and the damage caused by the AKP's use of religion in politics to the deeply rooted principle of secularism in Turkey and the social status of citizens who have integrated this principle into their lives. Therefore, I wanted to focus on and limit by thesis titles to these topics.

Clifford Geertz's (1973) concept of 'thick description'⁹⁶ –akin to his approach of understanding culture within a web of meanings – inspired me to start working in a region where I believe its qualities reflect to comprehend what a secular life is through daily practices of individuals in a constitutionally secular country. For this objective, empirical data was gathered from one of the lower-middle class neighborhoods of Ankara, which is Batikent neighborhood between November 2023 and June 2024.

⁹⁶“The concept of culture I espouse, and whose utility the essays below attempt to demonstrate, is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical. But this pronouncement, a doctrine in a clause, demands itself some explication.” Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973), 5.

I have detailed my reasons for choosing the Batikent neighborhood for my fieldwork within the specific characteristics of Batikent in the section below. However, I would first like to point out that Batikent shares significant similarities with many lower-middle-class or middle-class neighborhoods in Ankara and even throughout Turkey, in terms of having a secular population. There are many neighborhoods in Ankara, such as Dikmen or Tuzluçayır, that embody a similar lifestyle, where Alevi and Sunni communities live together and share common spaces. In this sense, Batikent is not a unique neighborhood; there are numerous neighborhoods with similar characteristics across Ankara and other Turkish cities⁹⁷ where people of different beliefs or ethnic backgrounds coexist. The primary reason for choosing Batikent for my fieldwork is that it serves as a representative example of such neighborhoods and is more accessible given my technical resources. I believe it is crucial to highlight this point for my research. What is important to me is that this neighborhood is characterized by being lower-middle-class and inhabited by individuals who identify as secular.

3.2. A Lower-Middle Class Neighborhood of Ankara: Batikent

After the submission of my thesis proposal, I started working on determining a specific area for conducting fieldwork. Following preliminary investigations including literature review, personal observations, and experiences within the district, it was deemed appropriate to undertake fieldwork and gather empirical data from the district of *Yenimahalle* in Ankara. Subsequently, a particular neighborhood within this district, namely *Batikent*, was chosen. Prior to delineating the data influencing this selection in subsequent sections of this paper, I aim to provide a summary of some personal experiences.

The primary fact that behind my choice of study this area is the fact that *Batikent* neighborhood has been my residence for nearly a decade. Therefore, although there are similar neighborhoods in terms of having a lower-middle class population with

⁹⁷ See: İrfan Özet, *İzmir Duvarı: Laik Mahallede İktidar ve Kültür Savaşı* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2022); Fulya Doğruel, “İnsaniyetleri Benzer”: *Hatay’da Çoketnili Ortak Yaşam Kültürü* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2023).

diverse religious and cultural backgrounds live together for years, I focused on studying in *Batıktent*. Upon entering university and moving from İstanbul to Ankara, I initially resided in *Keçiören* neighborhood for four years, which is particularly known as a place where people residing there mostly live an Islamic conservative lifestyle.⁹⁸ However, upon relocating to *Batıktent*, I began contemplating the reasons for feeling more at ease here. I considered this area to be one of the exemplary manifestations of successful neighborhood projects of Ankara due to its spatial layout primarily organized as cooperative sites named with professional occupational groups,⁹⁹ single-story homes with gardens, and expansive open spaces designed as parks and walking paths. Additionally, its inclusion of both mosques and *cemevi* (Alevi worship house), parks and cultural centers named after prominent intellectuals and renowned Republican politicians within Turkey's, alongside its predominantly civil servant population, left me with the impression of being in a neighborhood where I could comfortably live with people who respect diversity and differences.¹⁰⁰ Personally, trying to understand the reasons behind this sense of comfort without much contemplation actually ran in close parallel with the research of this thesis. The dynamics that automatically attracted a family to this neighborhood, apart from the initial setting families, should possess characteristics that facilitate their lifestyles, religious affiliations, and everyday behaviors.

The establishment of *Batıktent* neighborhood is linked to Ankara's layered social and spatial transformation process. As a consequence of this historical process, it emerged

⁹⁸For a recent study about the Islamic conservatism of Keçiören, see: Esra Can Mollaer, "Questioning Islamic Conservatism: Social Space, Class, and Gender in the Everyday of Keçiören." (PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, 2023).

⁹⁹ For example, some of the cooperative sites' names are as follows: Siyasal Sitesi (a cooperative composed of graduates of Ankara University, the Department of Political Science), Haritacılar Sitesi (Cartographers Site) ODTÜLÜLER Sitesi (a cooperative composed of graduates of ODTÜ), Mimarlar Sitesi (Architectures Site), Bankacılar Sitesi (Bankers Site).

¹⁰⁰ There are two cemevis, three churches and several mosques in Batıktent. The names of some parks, cultural centers and streets are: Vedat Dalokay Park (a politician affiliated with the CHP), Murat Karayalçın Square (the founder of Batıktent), Aşık Veysel Park (Turkish folk poet), Ahmet Taner Kışlalı Cultural Center (Turkish political scientist, politician, former Minister of Culture, writer and lecturer). Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği (ADD, Atatürkist Thought Association), Uğur Mumcu street (Turkish journalist, researcher and writer).

as a residential area founded as a solution project, particularly in light of demographic shifts such as migration that altered the population structure. Following the transformation experienced by Ankara as a model city, the role of *Batıkent* in this historical process holds significance in terms of developing an understanding of both the spatial aspect and the lower-middle class residents residing there. After discussing the establishment and the socio-spatial transformation experienced by the city of Ankara, it would be more meaningful to explore how *Batıkent* as a suburban area project serves as a model not only for Ankara but also for Turkey as a whole within the context of my thesis study. The following features of Ankara were influential in my decision to choose it as a field site: Firstly, as the capital city of the Republic of Turkey it holds historical and symbolic importance in the Turkish history of modernization. Secondly, the underlying meaning attached to its public spaces was envisioned to represent the modern secular lifestyle of the new Republic. Lastly, it holds significant political power, providing the data necessary to understand the cultural patterns and lifestyles of urban citizens who identify as secular. The significance of Ankara as a city holds historical and symbolic weight due to its status as the capital of Turkey. It prominently embodies the modernization ideals of the early Republican period. The pioneers of the Republic aimed to shape a modern society and envisioned Ankara as a complete model of urban development, symbolizing the nation's pursuit of a contemporary, secular lifestyle. In March 1925, in the south of the urban settlement in Ankara, the empty area beyond the railway was expropriated, and the first step was taken to build the *Yenişehir* –the new city– by German planner Carl Christoph Lörcher (**Fig.1**). As the focal point of the capital, *Yenişehir* will represent the aspirations and ideals of the young nation, and it would serve as the hub for a novel form of administration, elite residences, and a modern lifestyle. Meanwhile, the *old Citadel* –old city center– remained as the locus for market activities of local people.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Bülent Batuman, “Cumhuriyet' in Kamusal Mekânı Olarak Kızılay Meydanı” in *Başkent Üzerine Mekan-Politik Tezler: Ankara'nın Kamusal Yüzleri*, ed. Güven Arif Sargın (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 43.



Figure 1: The Lörcher Plan (Source: Batuman, 2012)

Following a city planning competition, a different plan was implemented, with the winning project crafted by German architect Herman Jansen. His design aimed to address the challenge posed by uncontrolled rapid growth and incoming migration to the city. In this plan, the *old Citadel* retained its central role, while *Yenişehir* was designated to embrace a new, modern lifestyle (Fig.2).



Figure 2: The Jansen Plan (Source: Batuman, 2012)

However, the most striking aspect of Jansen’s plan was that it divided the city into functionally specialized zones. The first zone included the Citadel and its environment as the representation of traditional/pre-modern Ankara, and another region represented

the modern/new city.¹⁰² However, due to rapid demographic growth, the urban space of Ankara underwent substantial transformation. Focusing on the new areas around *Yenişehir* and *Çankaya*, Ankara began to expand beyond the limits set by the Jansen plan.¹⁰³

The systematic and functionally organized approach to city planning, along with the construction of social and cultural gathering places supporting modern urban life, marked this period in Ankara. It is argued that:

Within this structure, a public realm and modern ways of life were expected to flourish by the creation of public spaces such as large boulevards, squares, recreation areas, and the organization of specialized administrative, residential and industrial areas. As a result of these planning activities, Ankara began to reflect a modern city image from the 1930s.¹⁰⁴

It could be argued that from the inception of the Republic's history, the inherent purpose assigned to public spaces in Ankara was to symbolize modern urbanity and foster the development of a secular lifestyle. However, the influx of migrants to major cities like Ankara, İstanbul, and İzmir from various regions of Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s¹⁰⁵ altered the socio-spatial fabric of these cities. The period following the 1950s saw Ankara evolve into a city with dual centers, driven by the development of social stratification within the city and its neighborhoods. In the 1970s, northern zone –*Ulus* (**Fig.3.**), while protecting its importance as the old city center, accommodated the lower income groups and squatter housing while the southern zone –*Kızılay* (**Fig.4.**) as the newly emerged business district started to accommodate middle and upper-middle classes.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Sinem Türkoğlu Önge, "Spatial Representation of Power: Making the Urban Space of Ankara in the Early Republican Period," in *Power and Culture: Identity, Ideology, Representation* (Pisa: Plus-Pisa University, 2007), 77.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 80-86.

¹⁰⁵ See. Bülent Batuman, "City Profile: Ankara," *Cities* 31, (2013): 578-590.

¹⁰⁶ Ali Türel, "Ankara Kent Formunda Konut Alanlarının Gelir Gruplarına Göre Farklılaşması," in *Ankara 1985'ten 2015'e* (Ankara: Ankara Büyükşehir Belediyesi EGO Genel Müd., 1987): 163-169.



Figure 3: Ulus 1970 (Source: Bir Zamanlar Ankara, 2013)

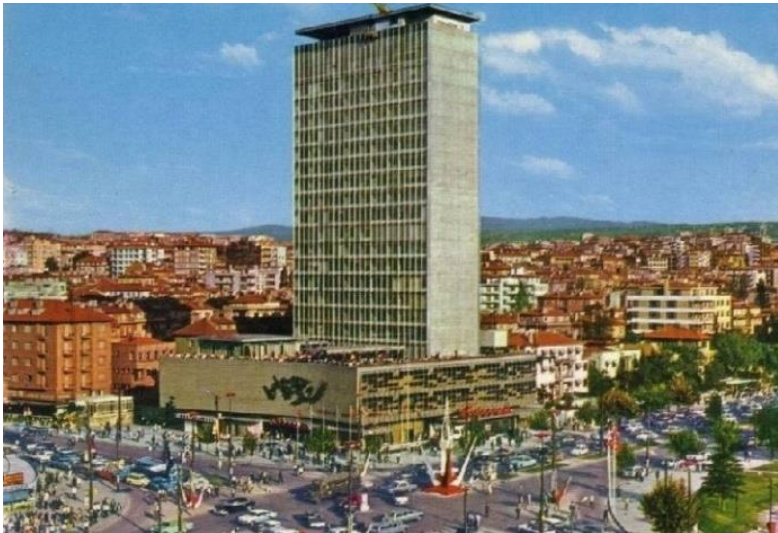


Figure 4: Kızılay 1975 (Source: Bir Zamanlar Ankara, 2013)

For instance, a study conducted in 1970¹⁰⁷ shows the average household incomes categorized by regions (See Appendix A, Table 1), while another study¹⁰⁸ conducted in 1980 illustrates income groups across mapped areas (See Appendix B, Map 1). According to the income averages, the highest income groups were concentrated in

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 163-169.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 163-169.

Çankaya, with *Yenimahalle* falling into the third highest income category. These studies, encompassing also the district selected for my fieldwork, *Yenimahalle*, highlight the emergence of a distinct city profile in Ankara since the 1950s, characterized by varying income levels and settlement preferences.

One might argue that the structural and socioeconomic differentiation of Ankara, aligned with the founding principles of modernity and secular lifestyle ideals of the Republic, renders it a valuable source for my study. The history of modernity in Turkey becomes evident through the interactions and experiences of its residents from diverse backgrounds with the codes and symbols of a modern and secular Turkey. In light of this historical background, I opted for a specific district which is *Yenimahalle*, *Batıkent* neighborhood in Ankara. Having with 644.543 population, *Yenimahalle* has squatter neighborhoods, as well as suburban areas of high-income groups and income per capita, can be considered as in the middle group (**Fig.5**).

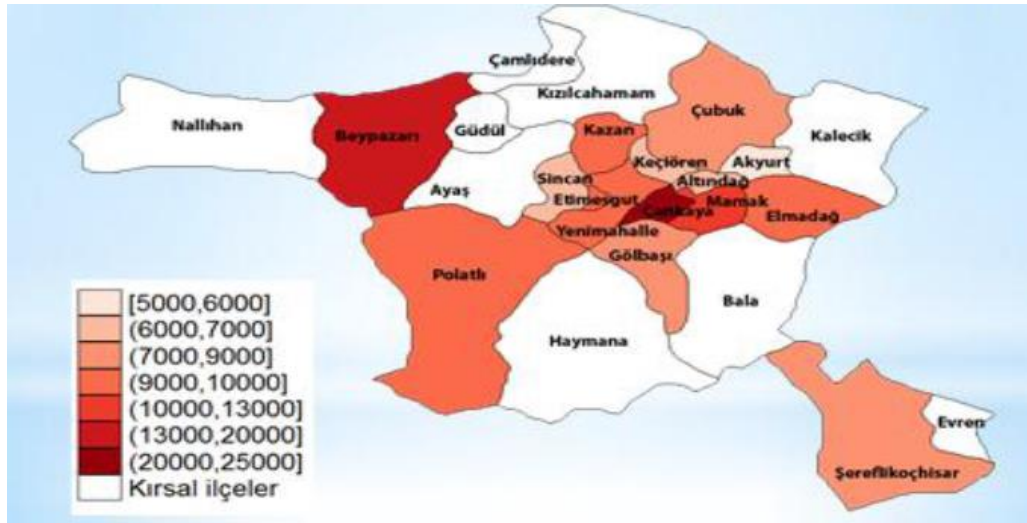


Figure 5: The income per capita of districts of Ankara in 2012 (Source: Ankara'nın Kentsel Yoksulluk Haritası)

Given my interest in observing the cultural patterns and lifestyles of urban citizens who identify themselves as secular and their comprehension of secularism, my initial

step involved examining the June 24, 2018 and the latest Turkish presidential elections which was held on May 14-28 (two rounds), 2023 results in various districts of Ankara. This comparative analysis aimed to understand their distinct political orientations. Various studies have been conducted to apprehend the political behavior in Turkey and attempted to depict several determinants of political party preferences of citizens ranging from religious, ethnic, ideological, and socioeconomic factors.¹⁰⁹ These studies highlight the religious/secular dimension as one of the most significant factors influencing party preferences. Within the secular dimension, a majority of citizens prioritizing the principle of secularism tend to vote for the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP, Republican People's Party) over other political parties. Researchers show that the most critical factor that determines the party preferences of the CHP voters is that they perceive CHP as representing/defending the principle of secularism and the founding values of the Turkish Republic.¹¹⁰ However, the religious/secular dimension should not be considered as a strict duality referring to the idea that CHP voters are unbelievers or ignore religious values. They might be unbelievers as well as citizens who are "willing to reconcile their faith with the opportunities that modernity and largely secular, i.e., worldly lifestyles offer."¹¹¹

However, this did not solely imply researching families affiliated with the CHP. Looking at the regions where the AKP did not prevail automatically led to the conclusion that voters supporting the AKP were not secular. Therefore, I considered that focusing not only regions where the CHP performed well but also on parties whose party programs and rhetoric align with secular principles would be consistent with the

¹⁰⁹ See: Mardin, "Center-Periphery," 169-190; Ali Çarkoglu and J. Hinich Melvin, "A Spatial Analysis of Turkish Party Preferences," *Electoral Studies* 25, no. 2 (2006): 369-392; Zeki Sarigil, "Curbing Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism in Turkey: an Empirical Assessment of Pro-Islamic and Socio-Economic Approaches," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 3 (2010): 533-53; İlder Turan, "Religion and Political Culture in Turkey," in *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*, ed. Richard Tapper (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991), 31-55.

¹¹⁰ Sevinç Doğan, "Konda Seçmen Kümeleri: CHP Seçmenleri," retrieved from http://konda.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/KONDA_SecmenKumeleri_CHP_Secmenleri_Mayis2018.pdf, 67.

¹¹¹ Murat Somer, "Moderate Islam and secularist opposition in Turkey: implications for the world, Muslims and secular democracy," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 7 (2007): 1277.

argument that this thesis does not confine secularity to a singular belief, disbelief, specific sect, or profile.

As a result, I decided to investigate presidential election results by focusing on districts where the CHP, along with other parties prioritizing secular principles in their political agendas, received the highest votes. This approach aims to reliably reach people who identify as secular, irrespective of their religion, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. The June 24, 2018 and May 14-28, 2023 presidential elections were held to elect both the head of the state and the head of the government. I assumed that analyzing these results could help me comprehend the diverse facets of secularity. By focusing on the support for the principle of secularism as a unifying factor in the voting preferences of urban citizens in Ankara, despite potential differences in their religious, ethnic, or socioeconomic statuses, I aimed to gain a deeper understanding. Essentially, my aim was to establish a sort of template that would serve as a starting point for commencing the study. Through this template, my intention was to utilize my personal experiences and observations as a resident of *Batıkent* neighborhood to craft tools that could, in fact, render a region I am familiar with as the subject of a scientific inquiry. This endeavor sought to create instruments capable of shaping my work based on empirical data and insights, thereby elevating it into the realm of scholarly investigation.

In this context, I actually needed a measuring instrument for secularity. In contrast to the academic literature in international studies that attempts to comprehend the level of secularity through the decline in religious beliefs, participation, and affiliation – aligned with the classical secularization thesis, which emphasize the diminishing importance of religion– I found it more fitting to measure this through political secularism perspective¹¹², which aligns better with Turkey’s distinctive history of modernity and secularization. Rather than examining religious affiliation, beliefs, and practices as antithetical to secular principles, I believed it was more accurate to work from the perspective that they are not opposites for within the history of Turkish

¹¹² Kai Arzheimer, “A Short Scale for Measuring Political Secularism,” *Politics and Religion* 15, no. 4 (2022): 827-840.

modernization, the dynamics of secularization have not led to the elimination of religion from the societal life; rather, they have confined and controlled it within certain boundaries.

Therefore, I endeavored to identify locations where voters, first on a national scale and subsequently on a regional level, tend not to favor the influence of religion in politics. Despite having a prior understanding of this from my everyday political knowledge, I deemed it beneficial to document this statistically. Initially, I examined the position of Ankara among cities where the vote share for the AKP was low across Turkey, and later, I delved into the voting rates of Ankara's districts. Within these statistical data, I observed that *Batıkent* exhibited a lower voting rate for the AKP¹¹³ in line with the theory of political secularism, indicating a higher inclination toward parties that do not contradict the principle of secularism in their political party programs and rhetoric.

Additionally, I would like to mention that I approach the relationship between voter behavior and secularism and/or being secular from a perspective that incorporates voters who do not prefer the influence of religion in politics. Consequently, I do not presume a direct relationship among concepts such as secularism, secular conduct, and being secular. In the subsequent sections of this thesis, I aim to elucidate and comprehend this relationship by exploring how a secular lifestyle is adopted and practiced. As indicated in the introduction, this thesis, rather than constraining a secular lifestyle to a specific religion, belief, or disbelief, seeks to perceive it as a domain where diversity is shared and differences are sustained within a certain framework, diverging from evaluating it through prevalent dichotomies such as secular/Islamist, modern/traditional, present in the relevant literature.

¹¹³ YSK, Seçmen Kütüğü Genel Müdürlüğü, Seçim İstatistikleri (2009-2019) https://www.ysk.gov.tr/doc/dosyalar/docs/2023_%C4%B0STAT%C4%B0ST%C4%B0K_K%C4%B0TABI.pdf; YSK, Seçmen Kütüğü Genel Müdürlüğü, 14 Mayıs 2023 Cumhurbaşkan ve 28. Dönem Milletvekili Genel Seçimleri, Seçim İstatistikleri Bülteni, <https://www.ysk.gov.tr/doc/dosyalar/docs/14Mayis2023CBSecimIstatistik.pdf>

Following a brief overview of the history of Ankara, my study on the election results, and personal experiences and intuitions, it would be beneficial to provide a brief overview of *Batikent*, the locality I have chosen to conduct my fieldwork in. In this context, as a neighborhood within *Yenimahalle* district, *Batikent* was designed as a cooperative-housing project by Kent-Koop (Union of Batikent Housing Construction Cooperative) as a solution to housing and air pollution in 1970s. Situated as a suburban area in an expanse of 1000 hectares, 11 kilometers northwest of Ankara along the Istanbul Road, adjacent to the E-5 Highway, the project was implemented through municipal acquisition (**Fig.6**).

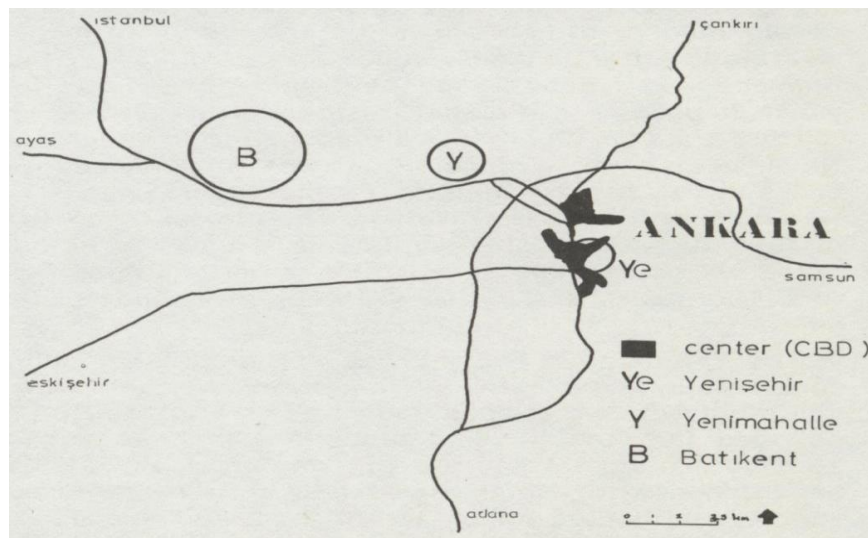


Figure 6: The Batikent new settlement project in relation to Ankara and the “western corridor.” (Source, Karayalçın, 1987)

Managed during this period by the CHP mayors Vedat Dalokay (1973-1977) and Ali Dinçer (1977-1980), the pioneering of the ‘*Uydu Kent*’ (Satellite Town) project was led by Murat Karayalçın. It received the United Nations’ (UN) World Habitat Award in 1987. Initially named ‘*Akkondu*’¹¹⁴ in 1977, the project was later renamed *Batikent*.

¹¹⁴ The selection of the name *Akkondu* for this newly established neighborhood is not actually coincidental. Particularly as a result of the intense migration waves to cities, makeshift houses built on the outskirts of the city without obtaining building permits and often erected overnight are referred to as ‘*gecekondu*’ in Turkish. The name *Akkondu*, where ‘*ak*’ means white in Turkish, could be contemplated as a symbol of legitimacy, juxtaposing the concept of ‘*gece*’ (night) in *gecekondu*.

The housing distribution in the area includes 35,000 multi-story properties and 18,500 units arranged in semi-detached and duplex styles, totaling 50,500 private properties, along with 4,500 rental units.¹¹⁵ The resident of *Batıkent* constitute a unique case within Turkey's urbanization process, as they cover the costs of housing construction based on the allocated land's square meterage, marking a pioneering approach in urbanism. For example, one of the interviewees shared how they organized their household income for the cooperative housing unit they purchased in *Batıkent*:

My family is from Hacettepe, and I'm actually a native of Kurtuluş. We lived there from childhood to adolescence. Later on, came Karayalçın's famous cooperatives and satellite city project. My mom used to work at Halk Bank back then. Bankers were getting involved in this cooperative process. When that phase ended, my mom and dad were like, 'Okay, Kurtuluş is a poor neighborhood'. It's like a typical government employee area, but my mom's government salary was basically going straight to rent. Dad's salary, on the other hand, covered the cooperative's expenses and the house's coal (**Oktay, 40**).¹¹⁶

Mass settlement initiatives began around 1990. Another distinguishing feature of *Batıkent*, as Karayalçın states (1987)¹¹⁷ apart from other neighborhoods, lies in the profiles of the families. Families who migrate to new cities typically settle in neighborhoods composed of families who are from the same origins or the region they come from. However, in *Batıkent*, settlement patterns have been structured according to societal identities such as laborers, artisans, and civil servants. Presently, it remains a neighborhood predominantly inhabited by lower-middle class families, primarily comprising civil servants and retired civil servants (**Fig.7**).

For one of the studies that includes a comprehensive fieldwork on Batıkent neighborhood see: Fatma Umut Beşpınar, "The Lower-Middle Class Neighborhood in the Metropolitan Context: The case of Batıkent (Ankara)" (Master Thesis, METU, 2001).

¹¹⁵ Murat Karayalçın, "Batıkent Projesi," in *Türkiye'nin 1980'li Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2023), 971-979.

¹¹⁶ Original version of the quote is provided at the end of the thesis.

¹¹⁷ Murat Karayalçın, "Batıkent: A new settlement Project in Ankara, Turkey," *Ekistics* 54, (1987): 292-299.

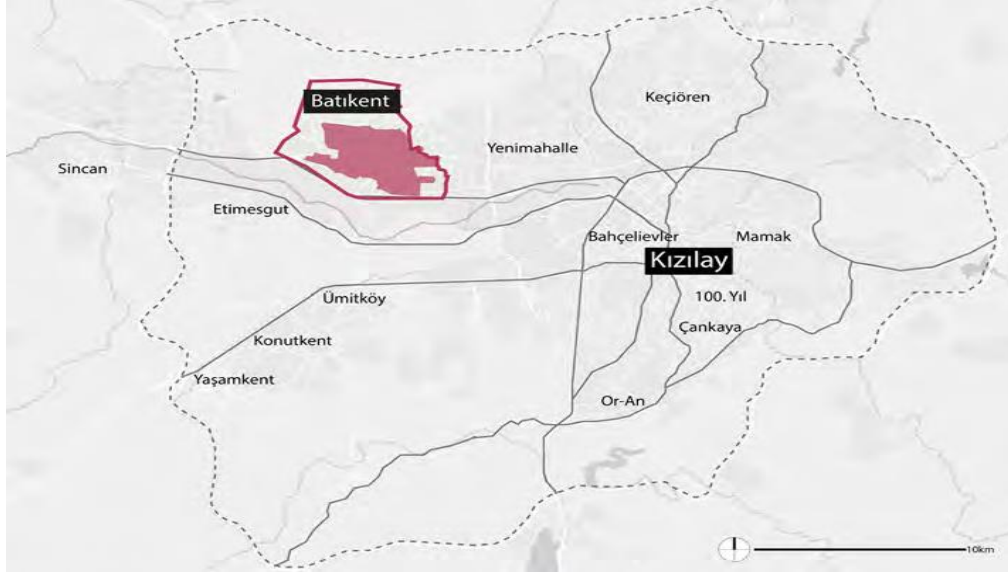


Figure 7: Batıkent’s location and size on an urban scale (Source: Küreli-Gülpınar, 2021).

Batıkent is characterized by its relatively low housing prices compared to more developed areas of the city, primarily due to its distance from the central districts of Ankara. Despite being an older neighborhood, Batıkent has gradually acquired the comforts and social facilities associated with more modern areas, rather than experiencing a sudden transformation, largely due to the influx of middle-class capital, similar to the development seen in neighborhoods like Çukurambar.

In addition to the housing prices, the demographic composition of Batıkent is predominantly made up of what they describe as middle-income or low-income families. Lower-income families are often found living in cooperatives, some of which are named after the unions associated with their respective industries. These cooperatives are generally older contrasting with the newer, higher-quality housing and modern structures in the northern parts of the neighborhood.

In recent years, Batıkent’s growing population has begun to include more middle-class families, particularly in Turgut Özal—a relatively newer part of Batıkent compared to other neighborhoods. This increase in population is accompanied by a rise in luxury housing, which typically starts from 1+1 apartments and includes larger units,

characterized by their luxurious interior designs and spacious living areas. These luxury apartments differ from Batıkent's older single-story houses with gardens, apartment buildings, and cooperatives, particularly through their modern looking designs such as American-style kitchens.

Nevertheless, these newer developments are particularly favored by families who own cars or have multiple drivers (spouses), due to the availability of larger plots of land surrounding these residences. Real estate listings for these homes often highlight views of open spaces, but there is also a noticeable increase in the development of environment such as markets, children's parks, and walking paths in alignment with these new residential areas.

Despite these developments, Batıkent continues to retain its identity as a lower-middle-class neighborhood. The initial residents and later arrivals, who generally share similar socio-economic profiles, are predominantly lower-middle class families working in professions such as civil service, teaching, and other public sector roles, including retirees from these fields. Owning a home and a car represents the fundamental assets for these families, which are often acquired through long-term savings and installments. It is also common for retirees to have used their savings accumulated during their working years to purchase a vacation home.

The reasons behind the preference of *Batıkent* as the settling neighborhood for interviewees are, in fact, closely linked to the founding story of *Batıkent* itself. More precisely, families residing in *Batıkent* for many years consist of civil servants who either joined the cooperative during the Karayalçın era's renowned cooperatives and satellite city projects, or purchased houses with gardens located throughout *Batıkent*. The names of the cooperatives in *Batıkent* originate from the professional groups that participated in the formation process of these cooperatives. Given that *Batıkent*, in addition to its initial population during its establishment phase, still serves as a neighborhood where some families prefer to live densely and relocate, is noteworthy.

Among the prominent reasons for families who later chose *Batıkent* as their place of residence is the perception that schools in *Batıkent* offer quality education, often explained by the predominance of Atatürkist teachers in the educational system.

In 1993, we came here. My dad came here after joining the cooperative upon retirement. He bought two apartments in Keçiören. However, my dad didn't like the apartment. He was a man who had moved from a shantytown and preferred a house with a garden. So, at that time, he joined the cooperative in Batıkent, which Karayalçın was trying to establish, and bought a house there. Around that time, there were acquaintances. Later, when my mom and dad passed away, my siblings said, "Mom's will says you should live in that house". At first, I didn't really want to, but came for the sake of the boy's education. The school had very good teachers, who were staunch Atatürk supporters. They laid a solid foundation for him (Aytan, 66).¹¹⁸

During the pandemic, one of the prevailing explanations revolves around families who no longer wish to reside in apartment units due to extended periods of closure, preferring instead residences with gardens and homes of their own which are quite common in *Batıkent* (Fig.8-9).



Figure 8: Batıkent new settlement project, Ankara - Duplex houses with small gardens on 100 sq.m plot (Source, Karayalçın, 1987).

¹¹⁸ Original version of the quote is provided at the end of the thesis.



Figure 9: Batıkent new settlement project, Ankara - Main pedestrian road and playgrounds in a settled area (Source, Karayalçın, 1987).

Batıkent is described by late comer families as a neighborhood where more enlightened individuals reside compared to their previous settlements, and it is highlighted as a more suitable place in terms of lifestyle.

Now, I can't say this about Batıkent, but when we used to live in Keçiören, it was kind of restrictive, you know. Our neighbors were like that; they would restrict us. Back then, of course, I would pray and all, but, for example, I didn't want this: my neighbor across the street is fasting, and the moment the fast is broken, I want to be on the balcony, but I can't. It used to bother me a lot; can you understand? In those places, during Ramadan, I couldn't do it; it was suffocating me. Even now, for example, no matter how many prayers I perform, when it's time to break the fast, I sit on the balcony and smoke my cigarette. I have to do it, you know. I do it here, for example. I feel comfortable here. I don't like feeling restricted. Keçiören used to restrict us. Even Sema paid attention to her clothing, you know. I don't like that kind of thing, you know **(Onur, 53)**.¹¹⁹

We fled from the bigots. You know, let's say you have a daughter, for instance? The thing that bothered my husband the most was when Ela, who was in seventh grade and 12 years old, went to the grocery store in shorts. When they came back, steam was practically coming out of my husband's ears. An old man had been looking at Ela's legs, and that's not acceptable, you know. Did he say anything? He didn't go into that part, probably didn't argue in front of my daughter, but he was really angry. We moved shortly after that, not even a few months had passed. We moved in October, and this incident happened in June. That's when we decided to move. That's why we went to

¹¹⁹ Original version of the quote is provided at the end of the thesis.

Batkent. There are people there too, yes, people we think are narrow-minded, but unfortunately, or fortunately, but unfortunately, I say because they are in the minority, they can't intervene. On the other side, we were the minority. I think we were afraid there, but here they can't intervene. Because where I live in Batkent, I don't know much about the rest of Batkent, but in general, I think it's a place where we feel comfortable (Serpil, 46).¹²⁰

In addition to professional diversity, *Batkent* is one of the neighborhoods where Sunni and Alevi families coexist densely. I have observed this situation not only due to the presence of active *cemevis* (Alevi houses of worship) but also through my personal experiences and observations over the years. Consequently, in my study, I chose to prefer interviewing families, half of whom are Sunni and the other half Alevi –I employed the snowball technique since I could not directly ask people whether they are Sunni or Alevi–. I believed that this choice may facilitate gaining insights into how a secular lifestyle is experienced in among diverse beliefs, how neighborly relations are established, and discussions concerning the secularity of Alevi communities, serving as a subheading.

3.3. Sociocultural Dynamics in a Lower-Middle Class Neighborhood: Engaging with Families Who Identify as Secular

The first of the pilot studies I conducted took place in a cooperative site of *Batkent* where I had previously resided. During the fieldwork, being introduced to the residents as a student pursuing a doctorate at Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi (ODTÜ), along with having lived there before and my family being recognized within that community, observably established a sense of trust from the outset. Therefore, at the initial stages, when I intended to conduct fieldwork, particularly a pilot study, I had thought that conducting the fieldwork would be relatively straightforward. Specifically, my pursuit of a doctorate at one of Turkey's leading universities led to being perceived by many families living in *Batkent* not only as an example for their children but also as a member of a scholarly structure that is compatible with enlightened, modern values and had also embraced left-wing political movements in the past. In fact, during our

¹²⁰ Original version of the quote is provided at the end of the thesis.

conversations, families who perceived themselves as leading lives aligned with modern values continuously sought my confirmation by asking, “isn’t that so?”

They were confident that we unequivocally stood on the same ground in preserving the Republic and its values even though I did not express my own opinions and approach interview topics with a certain degree of distance. There were moments, especially during discussions about politics, where I felt I became a companion who listened to and shared the problems, complaints and thoughts they experienced during the AKP era, turning into a sympathizer who accompanied and endorsed their concerns. Unfortunately, I could not proceed with pilot study because of the pandemic. In *Batıkent*, there exists a broad area shared by both Sunni and Alevi communities. However, my focus was on the secular lifestyle of the lower middle classes, so Alevism and Sunnism served merely as subheadings to illustrate the diversity of beliefs and commonalities. The most crucial aspect of my study was the character of lower middle-class families. This is because, drawing on Bourdieu's perspective, I aimed to explore how the social position of these families reflects in their lifestyles and to define the habitus of the lower middle classes as an indicator of a secular way of life.

While evaluating this common space, I endeavored to address the topic of overlaps from a broader perspective, avoiding constraints solely within the frameworks of Alevism or Kemalism. I recognized the necessity of identifying different social points of intersection. The focal point I intend to emphasize is whether a secular way of life can be discussed despite the existing differences, and in which realms of life this secularity manifests.

One of my hesitations arose from the question of how to determine in advance whether the families I intended to interview were secular and how I would reach them. In this regard, I actually found a solution that emerged within the field itself. The first Alevi family I interviewed suggested families for my study, describing them as “very modern”, directing me to families that were “like us”, “they are Alevi too”, or Sunni families, characterizing them as “similar to us” and “very democratic, modern families.” Sunni families, on the other hand, when referring me to other families, stated, “they are just like us,” or mentioned, “they are actually a very modern family,

but also deeply religious; they pray and fast. I am uncertain whether this would be beneficial for you.” These expressions, in fact, held significant implications for my research. Consequently, I was able to increase the number of interviews conducted and easily reach out families I intended to interview.

Initially, I engaged with an Alevi and Kurdish family. This interview took place during a period when I could only mention the subject of my thesis and my ability to pose questions had not fully developed. At this juncture, I observed that individuals conveyed the concept of secularism solely through a political perspective, discussing their family lives and everyday practices without delving deeply into them. I listened to shared narratives shaped by the existing political climate, religious beliefs, and discriminatory language towards Alevis. Specifically, by acknowledging classical dichotomies (modern/traditional, secular/Islamist, Alevi/Sunni), I discerned the existence of a language that perpetuates these distinctions; however, the use of contradictory expressions within this discourse led me to recognize that daily practices extend far beyond this rote language. For instance, she mentioned that the women in the apartment did not eat the Ashura¹²¹ she made because she is Alevi. This is something particularly well-known among Alevi communities. She stated “They say what is cooked by the flame is inedible,” and they still continue to adhere to this belief. She was already narrating her experiences with a group for which she had previously fortified herself against because at the beginning of the conversation, she referred to women in the apartment as “foreigners”¹²². This was the most sensitive issue to focus on for me in the subsequent meetings.

I directed my attention towards strategies for managing daily life shaped within discourses of the media, politics, and pivotal events in Turkey’s socio-political history, such as coup d’états, massacres targeting Alevis, and the polarizing and authoritarian

¹²¹ Alevis fast during the month of Muharram, sharing Ashura they cook annually with their neighbors, abstaining from the consumption of meat for 12 days. However, it is not unique to Alevis. Muslims in Turkey and Balkans cook Ashura in the month of Muharram.

¹²² Alevis, most of them, refer to non-Alevi people, especially those who are Sunni Muslims, as ‘foreigner’.

rhetoric during the AKP era. Despite these events and political discourse, my interest lay in comprehending the thoughts and behaviors that enable individuals of diverse beliefs and ethnic background to coexist. Rather than seeking to construct a unifying language, my goal was to attempt to identify commonalities beyond distinctions, to perceive areas internalized in Turkey's history of modernization and secularization, and to understand how these areas as strong points of resistance and potential sources of opposition within society.

The frequent association of Alevism with secularism in Turkey, particularly debates that emerged in the 1990s suggesting that Alevism constitutes the social foundation of secularism, primarily led me to consider the necessity of studying the relationship between Alevis and secularism. However, I decided that the examination of this relationship should constitute just one of the focal points in this thesis, as especially during the AKP era, secularism has evolved into a political terrain where it is assessed not only in terms of Alevis but also within a political discourse that distinguishes voters based on their support or lack thereof for the AKP (we are barely keeping fifty percent at home).¹²³

On the other hand, the inclusion of religious symbols in the reference points used by Alevis to express their secularity, which of course cannot be limited to this aspect alone, demonstrated that the foundation of the secular sphere in Turkey extends beyond mere religious elements. In addition, this study did not categorize anything non-Sunni as secular. Instead, it focused on segments of society advocating secularism from a political standpoint, including a diversity in beliefs, ethnicity, gender and class. For instance, it examined how the relationship is established between Alevis and their neighbors, emphasizing a nuanced exploration beyond religious categorizations. Because there were intertwining practices and intermediate regions, and people were quite aware of this through their everyday practices as the fieldwork suggests. I

¹²³After stating that the incidents in Gezi Park were not related to the park but rather an action organized by extremists, the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan remarked, by referring to his party's vote base, "Currently, at least 50% of the citizens in this country, whom we forcibly keep in their homes, exist. We advise them, 'be patient and do not fall for these games.'"

<https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/erdogan-turkiyenin-yuzde-50sini-zor-tutuyoruz-1717873>

attempted to perceive this from a perspective encompassing various aspects of life, such as the daily practices of child rearing to the gender roles within the lower-middle class in Turkey, in order to define areas where secular way of practicing is established. Alevism was considered here as a sub-issue, a variation within this framework.

In fact, I sought to comprehend how a particular lifestyle or perspective has become established in Turkey, considering factors such as Alevi-Sunni distinctions or political differences or similarities. This endeavor was prompted by the recognition that in Turkey, religion and secularism are often approached as a dichotomy. In essence, I endeavored to navigate within the boundaries of this distinction. I tried to understand how the mental landscapes of individuals who perform Sunni rituals without elevating them to a point of life demarcation, or individuals who identify as Alevi and engage in certain symbols and rituals without making them a focal point in life, shape and are shaped by these everyday practices.

In light of the data provided by the fieldwork, the proliferation of activities such as religious orders or the imposition of a particular religious ideology within the official education system, especially in primary and secondary educational institutions, posed a problem for approximately everyone. At this juncture, Bourdieu's¹²⁴ proposition that religion constitutes a field of power, and how the symbolic determinants of this field of power, namely sacred/secular distinction, are presented through a political discourse to control the field of religion, while simultaneously being negated by the mental landscapes and practices of individuals in their everyday lives, essentially form the main argument of this thesis. In other words, the attitudes and practices of families in their everyday lives challenge sacred/secular dichotomy and have the power to negate the political discourse elevated upon these tools of symbolic and ideological control of the religious field.

¹²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, "Genesis and the Structure of the Religious Field," *Comparative Social Research* 13, 1-44.

3.4. Demographic Profiles of the Interviewees

In this section of my study, I aimed to provide more comprehensive information about the demographic profiles of the lower-middle class families I interviewed during my field research. I examined aspects of family structure, marriage dynamics, educational background, professional life, the profile of children, and the regions in Turkey where these families were born or migrated from, I intended to offer insights into the socio-cultural dynamics of the lower-middle class habitus. The characteristics of the families I examined in this section are presented in detailed tables under the Appendix C heading at the end of the thesis.

3.4.1. Family and Marriage

Almost all the families I interviewed consisted of a nuclear family type, which includes a mother, father and children. Among twenty families, only two families had one of the spouses' elderly mothers living with them, as they required care. These two elderly women had closed their homes in their hometowns and moved in with their children. One of the elderly women was the mother of the female spouse and stayed in the house continuously. The other was the mother of the male spouse, and his siblings took turns caring for her.

All the families I interviewed were legally married. In Turkey, where official marriage is a legal requirement, families viewed it as a priority. They considered religious marriages without official registration to be wrong and highlighted the social harms of such arrangements, particularly regarding women's rights. Among the twenty families I interviewed with, nine had religious marriages in addition to their official ones. This was generally seen as a traditional practice, often done to please their families. Five of these families had interfaith marriages, with one spouse being Alevi and the other Sunni. Among these five families, two reported that although the woman was Alevi, their in-laws were very religious, and they accepted the religious marriage (*imam nikahı*) to satisfy them. In contrast, the Alevi religious marriage, known as *dede nikahı*, occurred only in families where both partners were Alevi.

In families where both spouses had work experience, especially when both partners were teachers or public servants, it was quite common for them to meet and marry at their workplace. However, one retired female teacher shared that she actually married her husband through an arranged marriage. She mentioned that, what she described as a somewhat late age in her 30s compared to her generation, she was introduced to someone from her hometown who was similarly educated at. Over time, they got to know each other and decided to marry.

In families where both spouses were Alevi, this shared identity has also served as a means of connection. An Alevi woman working in a supermarket mentioned that while she wouldn't label it as an arranged marriage, those who provided information about her husband told that he was Alevi, and they were of the same age with similar education levels. They suggested that perhaps it would be good for them to meet.

Overall, among the twenty families, only two marriages could be categorized as arranged. Additionally, being from the same hometown, along with shared religious identities and families' cultural similarities, were frequently mentioned as important factors in strengthening the relationships between spouses.

I only encountered cousin marriages in two families. These families explained that although their spouses were relatives, they lived in different cities and hadn't seen each other until adulthood, which made them feel like they were meeting for the first time. Therefore, they didn't perceive each other as relatives. They also mentioned that the stories of how their families moved from their villages to the cities were quite different, leading to a lack of local ties between them. As a result, they felt as if they were meeting strangers. Additionally, both families identified as Alevi and noted that in the past, their families were very strict about marriages across different sects, which made cousin marriages quite common. However, they no longer viewed this as acceptable and expressed that they now give their children the freedom to choose their spouse.

The age of marriage did not differ significantly between male and female respondents. The average age of the women I interviewed was 54, while for the men it was 57.

Marriages typically occurred in the early twenties, so there wasn't a significant generational gap between spouses. There were some exceptions; in four out of the twenty families, the age difference was due to the man being older (maximum age difference of ten years), which was considered quite normal in marriages. I did not come across any examples of marriages where the woman was older. One female respondent even shared, with a laugh, that her grandmother was five years older than her grandfather, and that in those times, it was common for families in villages to register their children late in the population records, so they only learned about the age difference much later. While marriages with older women were not opposed, they were often seen as a topic of humor or something noteworthy, subtly perceived as stepping outside socially accepted norms.

The average duration of marriage was about twenty years. Among these couples, only one woman had entered a second marriage. She mentioned that she had wasted many years waiting for her husband to fix the problems they lived because of him. With great pride, she shared how supportive her family had been regarding her decision to divorce. Compared to families that considered practices like breaking engagements or divorcing as forbidden or sinful, her family was very understanding and protective. Generally, families held positive views on divorce. For both men and women, divorce was seen as a preferable option rather than continuing a harmful relationship. However, they noted that divorces have significantly increased in recent times, and they felt that the younger generation is less resilient and more intolerant. In this context, they believed their own generation was more understanding, patient, and viewed marriage as a significant commitment. Women frequently pointed out that the current generation could not endure the economic hardships they faced or the issues with their mothers-in-law. Meanwhile, men, drawing comparisons to their own youth, remarked that the new generation of men is fragile in the workplaces particularly when they feel at the slightest sign of a discipline.

3.4.2. Education

There is not a significant difference in education levels between spouses. Among twenty women, thirteen have a university degree, four have a high school diploma, and three have completed middle school. Among men, there are twelve university graduates, six high school graduates, and two completed secondary school.

When looking at the schools attended by the respondents, a distinct separation is evident among the women. Their high school education was mostly from girls' institutes and girls' vocational schools. They speak of graduating from these institutions with great pride, as they believe they gained both professional skills and social competencies that they feel are lacking in today's education system. These skills include hygiene practices, social etiquette for a cultured and educated woman, sewing, and music education. Additionally, both female and male respondents often take pride in having learned from teachers they consider Atatürkist and of high quality. They describe these former teachers as disciplined, knowledgeable, competent, and highly trained professionals in their fields.

Among the women who graduated from girls' institutes, those who continued to university typically studied in teacher training programs or social sciences. One woman, who can be considered younger than the others, attended an Anatolian High School and later graduated from medical school to become a medical doctor. For men, education also tends to focus on teaching, but unlike the women, they studied in fundamental sciences such as physics, chemistry, and mathematics. Those who only graduated from high school mentioned that, during their generation, having a high school diploma was prestigious, and it was relatively easy for them to find jobs, especially in public offices.

The majority of respondents mentioned that they attended a Quran course at least once during their childhood. They noted that, especially during the summer months, it was almost a social activity for the children in their neighborhoods to go to the Quran course, and they participated to avoid being left out when their friends went. Their

families also encouraged them to attend, viewing the Quran course as a place where children could acquire basic religious knowledge. However, nearly all of the respondents expressed that, compared to past conditions, these institutions have lost their innocent characteristics and have become unreliable, serving as a tool for imposing a political interpretation of Islam.

Alevi respondents stated that they did not receive education about Alevi beliefs in institutions like Quran courses, and that their knowledge of Alevi teachings came solely from what they learned from their families. They also mentioned that during their secondary school years, they attended religious classes where Sunni Islam was taught.

3.4.3. Professions

Out of the participants in the interview, seventeen of them were retired. Among these retirees, six were women and eleven were men. Of the retired women, one was a preschool teacher, two were elementary school teachers, two worked as public servants, and one was a retired worker. Among the retired men, there were four civil servants, one lawyer, two soldiers (petty officer) one high school teacher, one worker, one from the private sector, and one was barber retiree. Five of the women were housewives. However, two of them shared that they had babysat at certain times to support the family finances. In fact, one of these two women mentioned that she plans to quit her job soon because the family she cares for does not pay her insurance premiums and expects her to help with household chores. Additionally, they talked about various tasks they had previously done at home to contribute to the household economy, such as making and selling tomato paste at markets and sewing clothes, which were short-term jobs.

Among the women, those who work outside the home are employed as elementary school teachers, doctors, civil servants, and workers. One of them ran for neighborhood *muhtar* (headman) after retiring. The men's professions vary, including high school teaching, accounting in a public institution, municipal worker, and civil service. Additionally, one man works as a graphic designer in a private company and

started working from home full-time after the pandemic. He mentioned that he finds working from home quite challenging in terms of work discipline, so he prepares as if he is going to the office every morning and goes to one of the cafes, which are quite common in Batkent, to work.

3.4.4. Children

The families interviewed have at least one and at most three children. When determining the number of children, their primary consideration was economic planning. This perspective has become more prominent as the average age of the families has decreased. Compared to the past, the concern that having too many children would prevent them from raising them well and providing educational opportunities shaped their views. Twenty of the children still live with their families, and their average age is eighteen. The youngest is two years old, and the oldest is thirty-two. Among them, nine are graduates of state universities. One is studying at a private university on a full scholarship, stating that without the scholarship, she would never have been able to attend that university. The 32-year-old woman lives with her family because she is continuing her academic career and is not married-based on her own interpretation. She expressed her desire to move into her own home as soon as possible. She noted that, especially at this age, the cultural gap between her and her family has increased, making it difficult to return home at certain hours or go out without having to explain herself to her parents. However, she mentioned that she doesn't feel pressure from her family, but living with them still requires a sense of responsibility to provide these explanations, and she finds that quite tiring. She said that to move out, she needs to save a certain amount of money.

Among the children living with their families, one male graduate of biomedical engineering stated that despite graduating a long time ago, he has been unable to find a job because, in his words, he lacks connections. Additionally, four children are pursuing graduate education, and one has started working as a civil servant in a government institution. Among the children of secondary school age, five attend a public school, while three go to private schools in Batkent. Their chosen fields of

study do not concentrate in specific areas, which distinguishes them from their parents. Some have graduated in fields such as engineering, architecture, urban and regional planning, or basic sciences. Overall, they express that opportunities to earn money and build a comfortable life in Turkey have diminished due to their professions, and they talk about how fortunate those who go abroad are.

The number of children living separately from their families is seventeen, with an average age of thirty-four. They generally left their families' homes after getting married. Among these seventeen individuals, two studied at a private university on a scholarship, while the others graduated from state universities. Two of them are high school graduates and work as laborers in the trade sector. The professions of the university graduates are spread across various sectors. They include academics, civil servants, urban planners, engineers working in the private sector, civil servants, and even one art consultant.

Nearly all the children were born in Ankara. A few were born in different cities because their families—who are generally civil servants—were assigned to those cities at the time, but they completed their entire education in Ankara from elementary school onward.

Most families have sent their children to public schools and believe that Anatolian high schools play the biggest role in their children's university success. However, they stated that Anatolian high schools are not as quality as they used to be, and that private schools have taken on this role, which requires significant economic resources. One of the interviewees noted that in families sending their children to private schools, both spouses need to work, they must own their own homes to avoid paying rent to be able to pay the school fees. They explained that there are significant differences between children attending private schools and those in public schools, particularly in qualities like language education that will help children excel in international contexts and higher education. They expressed that if they were to send their children now, they would not have the financial means to enroll them in a private school. They have been able to provide their children with the opportunity for upward mobility in society

through education, but it is very difficult for a lower-middle-class family to do so in this period. Those trying to achieve this mentioned that they are even paying school installments by taking out loans. The most prominent issue concerning children has always been education, particularly the current quality of education and the state efforts to privatize education.

3.4.5. Place of Origin, Migration, Settlement

Since the families interviewed were from heterogeneous lower-middle-class families, I cannot speak of a regular pattern regarding their hometowns. About half of the men and women were born in Ankara, which is a major city. However, with one exception, none of their parents are from Ankara or other major cities. Every family had at least one migration story.

The origins of the interviewees cover almost every region of Turkey. Some families still maintain a connection with their villages. For example, a family that spends the entire summer in Trabzon has very close relationships with their relatives in the village. Those with relatives in the cities of Central Anatolia near Ankara often visit their hometowns and relatives during religious holidays, although not every time.

One of the families has its roots in the city of Erzurum, located in the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey. In the 1950s, their family migrated from there to Ankara. Despite having no relatives in their village and it not being a place they visit often, they mentioned that they plan to build a village house there and go during the summer months. The children of the families generally do not go to their villages with their parents; in their free time, they prefer to vacation with their friends or just stay at home.

Most of the families belonged to a group that I would call old residents of Batkent, and they generally mention that they came in the 1990s. Before that, they lived in different neighborhoods of Ankara, but in their own words, they decided to become homeowners by “going into debt” and joined a cooperative in Batkent.

There are also those who lived in these cooperatives before and later moved into different apartment units within Batikent. Especially since they do not want to leave their neighborhood, when their previous homes became uninhabitable, they found a house in Batikent again and moved.

CHAPTER 4

REFLECTIONS OF SECULAR LIFESTYLE: BALANCING MODERNITY AND TRADITION

4.1. Introduction

In this section of my study, drawing on a Bourdieusian perspective, I argue that the social positions of lower-middle-class families are reflected in their lifestyles. This reflection is made visible through the action repertoires in specific fields that emerge from the internalization of a particular system of thought and practices, which I refer to as the lower-middle-class secular habitus.

The most prominent themes inherent in the thoughts and behavioral practices that I attempt to conceptualize as the lower-middle-class secular habitus of the interviewees, from a specific generation, include "Atatürkist values". The study conducted with a heterogeneous group of interviewees in terms of educational background, cultural and religious beliefs and affiliations revealed that, from the perspective of their commonalities, lower-middle class interviewees, who define themselves as secular, express their secular lifestyle in the axis of what they call Atatürkist (Atatürkçü) values. Atatürkist values, as expressed by interviewees, signify being modern and progressive, attaching importance to education and gender equality, which they particularly define as equality of women and men.

A shared element shaping this social identity, and its meaning-making capacity is the collective memory of individuals educated within the same system during similar years, embodying a generation that internalized Atatürk's ideas and reforms. Mannheim (1952) argues that "contemporaneity gains sociological significance when

individuals participate in the same social and historical contexts."¹²⁵ This specific temporal positioning of a generation¹²⁶ reveals traces of a modernization narrative, emerging from the interplay between societal structures and individual life experiences. I call lower-middle class secular habitus as the commonalities between people who define themselves as secular because it represents a “generative formula which makes it possible to account both for the classifiable practices and products and for the judgements”¹²⁷ because of this collective memory which developed by the education system at the intersection of traditional past and modernization reforms, as Saktanber (2002) calls the “subject constitution regime of the society”¹²⁸, which I saw in the field as the internalization of modernization reforms, can be traced through the perceptions and practices of this generation.

I have outlined the areas of lower-middle class secular lifestyle that I will discuss in detail below as follows: the maintenance of gender equality under the shadow of patriarchal norms; the necessity for women to possess the qualities essential for societal progress and to be active in all areas of life; the continuation of interfaith marriages through Atatürkist values (being modern-minded) rather than being a source of tension; the quality of religious education provided to children (including practices in formal educational institutions and family-based religious education); attitudes toward premarital sexual relationships and especially the differences in children’s sexual orientations. Lastly, the practices that reflect families’ social positions through their cultural activities, consumption practices, and tastes.

I will consider these as areas of life that reflect a lower-middle class secular habitus as Bourdieu (2010) states that “the habitus is necessity internalized and converted into a

¹²⁵ Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations” in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1952), 291.

¹²⁶ June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner, *Generations, Culture, and Society* (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002), 6.

¹²⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 166.

¹²⁸ Saktanber, *Living Islam*, 121.

disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions.”¹²⁹ Since habitus is an internal structure and pattern of behavior formed by various factors such as an individual’s social environment, cultural heritage, educational level, economic situation, I looked at these components as an underlying dimensions of the habitus of interviewees’. I also tried to focus on my interviewees’ tastes in social and cultural practices such as activities they engage in, clothing styles, home decorations, or consumption patterns, associated with their lower-middle class secular habitus. Critchley (2012) argues that:

Furthermore – and this is something that Rousseau understood better than anyone – when it comes to the political question of what might motivate a subject to act in concert with others, rationality alone is insufficient. In order that a legitimate political association might become possible – that is, in order that citizens might pledge themselves to the good – reason has to be allied to questions of faith and belief that are able to touch the deep existential matrix of human subjectivity, what William Connolly calls its “visceral register.”¹³⁰

In a similar vein, I focused on what I termed as lower-middle class secular habitus, which encompass behaviors, reasoning abilities, expectations and tendencies that synchronize citizens with societal structures as a result of internalization of republican reforms aligning with their internal convictions.

As in the rest of the thesis, the views suggesting that individual lives, including traditional and religious practices, coexist with elements of modernization without being threatened but protected by secularism will be evident throughout the chapter. From the perspective embraced by the interviewees, secularism is perceived as the guarantor of the diversity of beliefs and their lifestyles in Turkey. I would like to underline again that this chapter focuses solely on the commonalities of the interviewees in terms of gender and marriage dynamics, child-rearing practices, including the official and religious educational choices for children, the religious practices, tastes in social and cultural practices such as activities they engage in,

¹²⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 166.

¹³⁰ Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (London and New York: Verso, 2012), 19.

clothing styles, home decorations, or consumption patterns, associated with their lower-middle class secular habitus.

The choices in practice, in parallel with the argument defended throughout the thesis, have shown that the secular way of life cannot only be limited and synonymous to excluding belief or refraining from religious practices, nor does it inherently equal to atheism but are shaped around the way in which individuals' cultural, economic and social capitals interact with the current political and cultural changes presented through everyday life.

In criticizing the instrumentalization of religion for political ends in the AKP era, interviewees usually focused on defining being a proper Muslim as well as their own Muslim identity. Religious practices accepted by the interviewees, defined by a Sunni interviewee as proper through being “normal Muslim” reflect their adherence to the principle of secularism in Turkey. Through this adherence, they aim to distance themselves from AKP voters, political Islamists, religious orders, and Muslim communities outside of Turkey as a way of asserting their social identity by distance.”¹³¹

I will discuss the discourse against other beliefs, boundary-setting and positioning regarding relationships among Sunnis and Alevis as well as toward other religious practices and rituals in the next chapter.

4.2. The Paradox of Progress: Gender Equality Discourse and Patriarchal Norms

In terms of marriage, household chore division, and gender equality, both men and women tend to discuss these issues within the framework of modernity and equality. Men generally express aspirations to be a modern spouse and father, emphasizing that

¹³¹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 167.

they do not discriminate between their daughters and sons regarding equality of women and men, and claim to have an equal share of responsibility in household chores, especially after retirement, even though the continuation of patriarchal gender roles. Additionally, women, particularly working or retired, emphasize the importance of their responsibility in creating a conscious, educated children and highlight the reinforcing role of being an educated and professionally employed mother in this process.

The point that I found noteworthy was the emphasis that couples placed on gender equality in every aspect of their life. The discourse has similarities to the secular middle-class identity, which Ayata (2002) argues as a fundamental principal demonstrating a critical attitude toward traditional and Islamist views emphasizing gender inequality.¹³²

The reason I added by saying “patriarchal norms” for this title, or not calling it division of labor at home, was because it was one of the shortest, most overlooked moments of the interviews. When it comes to gender roles, it seemed as though we were delving into an area that the interviewees considered unnecessary to discuss. They often provided brief responses, almost implying that discussing this subject was unnecessary in this modern era of the world. This led me to go over my questions repeatedly for a while, but then I discovered how much observation and the behaviors during the interviews revealed. They would mention living in a modern era, asserting equality of women and men in the workplace and the normalcy of sharing household chores between men and women.

However, my observations during the interviews provided clues suggesting just how naturally internalized patriarchal gender roles were exhibited. Women mainly carry out the decision-making processes for the most part of their lives, but the final decisions are often portrayed as joint efforts of couples. Discourses of modernity and

¹³² Sencer Ayata, “The New Middle Classes and the Joys of Suburbia,” in *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 33.

gender equality were used very frequently, especially by men, and many issues that were thought to undermine this identity or the way they present themselves were attempted to be suppressed as Beşpınar (2015) argues that:

“...this lifestyle that is equally important in this quest for new fatherhood in the Turkish context concerns the detachment of these fathers from traditional values in Turkish society, which they associate with the religious lifestyle.”¹³³

For example, in the home of a couple who were both teachers – the man (**aged 51**) is high school, and the woman (**aged 48**) is primary school teacher – the man talked about how much he supported the housework and his cooking ability, but his wife served tea and coffee, and the man acted as if he were the main interlocutor in the conversation. I felt that he was very sensitive about the image he portrayed as modern, atheist, and intellectual. When I asked him if he had a religious wedding, he said yes, immediately closed the subject, and turned his head to television. He wanted the matter to be closed. This reminded me Goffman’s (1959) argument that being aware that his audience might form negative opinions of him, the individual might start feeling ashamed of a sincere and well-intentioned action, solely because the circumstances under which it was performed give rise to unfavorable impressions.¹³⁴

“And to the degree that the individual maintains a show before others that he himself does not believe, he can come to experience a special kind of alienation from self and a special kind of wariness of others.”¹³⁵

I could elaborate on Goffman’s argument by noting that I this phenomenon occurs not only when individuals present themselves in a manner that contradicts their true beliefs, but also when they reject aspects of their past that are incongruent with their current life and values. His wife, on the other hand, made a nice explanation by saying,

¹³³ Fatma Umut Beşpınar, “Between Ideals and Enactments: The Experience of ‘New Fatherhood’ among Middle-Class Men in Turkey,” in *Gender and Sexuality in Muslim Cultures*, ed. Gül Özyeğin (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 97.

¹³⁴ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), 235-236.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.

“Well, the families suggested it, so we said, let’s do it. Otherwise, it did not come to our mind, and we did not care”. The man had a very fragile sense of being modern and intellectual, and I thought it would not be right to go into it too much by asking some more related questions. Another male interviewee talks about his past by giving example of how it was considered shameful for parents to show affection to their children around their own fathers and emphasizes how ignorant this mindset was. He does not want his children to exhibit the same behavior.

I participated as an observer in the election tent of the, **Fatma (aged 46)**, female neighborhood head (*muhtar*) candidate. The tent was set up on the edge of the Saturday market in the Turgut Özal Neighborhood of Batıkent. Volunteers who participated in the election campaign for the *muhtar* candidate were distributing brochures to passersby. A male citizen, approximately at the age of 60s, visited the tent jokingly said, “What’s this? Out of 7 candidates, 6 are female candidates.” Later, he chuckled and said, “Well, once you pass the age of 40, women are in charge of everything in life,” and then he left. The man was handed a list for shopping at the market was following the directives given by his wife. He jokingly recounted how especially after retiring, men leave themselves under the management of women.

It might seem like men strive to appear modern by jokingly accepting their ‘new situation’, but still the burden of thinking weighs more on women. As Ayata (2002) also mentioned, as age progress, masculine to feminine roles and activities raise¹³⁶, but this still indicates how much the mental labor has been placed on women, in a way. In a family, especially with children, this mental load means that women are responsible for planning, organizing, and managing household tasks, school related matters, their own professions, meal routines, and all other household-related responsibilities.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Ayata, “The New Middle Classes,” p.33.

¹³⁷ See: Long Doan and Natasha Quadlin, “Partner Characteristics and Perceptions of Responsibility for Housework and Childcare,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 81, no. 1 (2019): 145-163; Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home* (London: Penguin Books, 2012); Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, “Doing Gender,” *Gender and Society* 1, no. 2 (1987), 125-151.

Another man explained that the fundamental difference in household chores division between women and men is essentially attributed to women as having more meticulous and detail-oriented minds. This is also a way of prioritizing women from the perspective of modern men, and it demonstrates that modern men value their wives, acknowledging the superiority of their intelligence, by ignoring the mental load.

So, I do whatever I can. I never hesitate or think about things like ‘this is for women’ or ‘this is for men.’ I mean it is unnecessary to even discuss this at this time. If Sema asked me for help, saying ‘it’s your job’ or something would be ridiculous nowadays. But of course, women can think about things in much more detail. For instance, when I say there’s no work, she always finds something to do. Their minds seem to be more meticulous. Especially when it comes to the kids, she always gets more exhausted. But me, I’ll do whatever I can, whatever I’m capable of **(Onur-53)**.

One of the situations I encounter in almost all interviews is that male interviewees acted as the primary interlocutor when the relationship between religion and politics was discussed. When I was interviewing with the woman, her husband was listening to us from a distance, not making eye contact, but listening to her and my conversations by sitting on the balcony swing in the distance. It was clear that he was preparing himself. When my interview with the woman was completed, he sat across from me with a body language as if he wanted to have the last word, to summarize the issue for everyone, and started by returning to the question of the definition of secularism from his political and religious views. He gathered us around him as if he wanted to teach us all what the real issue was that we needed to discuss.

The fact that women tend to express their daily life examples in a more concrete way made me think that perhaps it would be more convenient to conduct such a field study with women as the unit of analysis. However, it was also very productive to see the difference between the way men and women describe and convey issues. While the women were simply describing what happened and the practice, the men were as if they were giving me instructions on how to understand this event in a certain political and religious framework.

I think it is also evident that women inwardly know this and thus draw their course accordingly. When I asked about the difficulties or advantages of being a female *muhtar* in the election tent, the female candidate stated that having a woman in such a position would contribute to a more organized and functional environment. She explained that when men gather, their discussions often diverge, leading to various unrelated topics. However, she emphasized that the presence of a woman in politics tends to bring about order and function. The phrase ‘woman’s touch’ (*kadın eli değmiş gibi*) is interpreted by women as ‘to do what needs to be done’ contrary to the meanings that romanticize women’s labor, ignore it or try to ensure its continuity. The role of women in society is also evaluated with a similar approach by women, in fact.

4.2.1. Women as the Pillars of Society’s Future

My two relatively older female interviewees had very clear ideas about the role of women. They explained the role of women in terms of women’s education, having a profession and being a mother. This was indicative of the emergence of an idea of modest womanhood in the minds of the interviewees, which they combined with their traditional ideas and the modernization reforms of the Turkish Republic towards women’s inclusion in public life and education. For example, a woman who expressed a strong attachment to her religious values emphasized that the role of women is crucial for the development and progress of society.

Women and girls being aware are pivotal for the progress of society. Because women give birth, raise children, and essentially create the home-mothers hold the family together. It’s crucial for women to stand on their own feet, to be independent, and to grow up as individuals capable of making their own decisions in every aspect of life (**Nurcan-60**).

I think it’s all our responsibility. A child absorbs everything from the family at home. In my opinion, the education a mother provides to her children is more important than the father in a family. (**Hatice-69**).

The codes of proper dressing for women and their participation in public space generally do not face overt interference from men. Women move, in dressing, without the permission of men but also act as a bridge through which patriarchal structures exist to some extent. While rules are often legitimized based on the tolerance of men,

women express that they already lift this burden from men's shoulders because they are careful themselves. **Gamze (aged 38)** stated that she's already very careful during beach vacations, doesn't wear bikinis, and prefers to wear shorts, so there's no need for her husband to warn her or **Hülya (aged 64)** said that "my son's wife is so careful about her dressing, so my son is very comfortable about it".

I observed that particularly after retirement, women dominate in giving instructions and guidance to men in household chores and management as mentioned before. However, when expressing this situation, women often make statements considering the feelings and thoughts of men. For example, they might say, "Our father never interferes" or "We settled this matter without letting him know," implying that although the father is aware, the woman perceives him as an abstract rule-setter and creates freedom zones by referring him as understanding and modern. This situation is a determining factor in female-male relationships, and in this context, women set the boundaries for the nature of male dominance.

But I think, compared to his time and his peers, he was more open-minded, I guess. Like, my aunt wore jeans once and his neighbor made a comment like 'her daughter also wears jeans' or something, because back then, women mostly wore skirts, you know. But he responded to it, never actually came up to my aunt asking, 'Why are you wearing pants?' or anything like that (**Buket, 32**).

Clothing is never an issue for us. For example, sometimes she wears a mini skirt, I say 'Do not wear it!' and sometimes her dad says, 'It is fine, looks good.' He does not bother us; you know (**Hatice, 69**).

Women's clothing cannot merely be discussed in terms of men's perspectives. My 61-year-old interviewee Candan told me that she spent all her youth in a slum neighborhood of Keçiören, composed of Alevi relatives, before moving to Batıkent. She had sewn herself a pencil skirt at a sewing course she had attended, but her aunt complained to her mother, "Now our girls will want one too." She also said, "What will they say (for non-Alevi neighbors)? Look at how their girls dress," and Candan said she got so angry that she tore the pencil skirt with her own hands. Many interviewees similarly say that in their youth, the rule-setters and constant self-correctors regarding clothing were their mothers or female figures within the family

as these women “call for different strategies to maximize security”¹³⁸ to be able to survive in a patriarchal environment they lived and grew up in. For the present, I also find it difficult to make sharp definitions when commenting on the dressing style of the women I interview. Yael Navaro Yashin (2002), especially regarding the middle-aged or retired demographic, says:

The association of “culturalism” were objectified only onto the clothing practices of Islamists, when the ways of secularists were constructed to be neutral or devoid of symbolism and history.¹³⁹

Rather than making narrow classifications such as tight-fitting and short miniskirts or loose, longer ones, they typically wear half-sleeve tops, fitted but not too tight denim or fabric pants that I can’t quite label as tight or revealing. However, when they talk about dressing well, or make definitions of proper dressing, especially on special occasions or in their youth, they always give examples with two-piece dresses (*döpiyes*)¹⁴⁰, and even the selection of ‘brave’ colors for the dresses is narrated as a sign of educated and free Republican woman as Jenkins (2006) stated:

“For Bourdieu, the body is a mnemonic device upon and in which the very basics of culture, the practical taxonomies of the habitus, are imprinted and encoded in a socializing or learning process which commences during early childhood.”¹⁴¹

As for the health and the body, four of the women I spoke with had undergone abortions, and they expressed how much this experience had worn them down and left

¹³⁸ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy,” *Gender and Society* 2, no. 3 (1988): 274.

¹³⁹ Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, 85.

¹⁴⁰ Most of the women I interviewed told me that they had these two-piece dresses in their wardrobes. One of them opened her wardrobe and showed me a red-colored *döpiyes* and told me that on every national day at school, she wore it proudly as a primary school teacher although she does not wear it after retirement. “Being proud of”, I think is in line with the Turkish modernization project’s approach to women as Saktanber (2002) argues that “It also made the Turkish modernization project much more successful than similar projects in other Muslim countries. I believe that this was possible because the republican reformers were almost all men, who did not base their discourse on gender politics merely on women’s issues, and nor did they address men through women... More importantly, the object of this discourse was not generally women as such, but rather the creation of women Turkish citizens, the modernization of civil law, and the development of a whole nation.” in *Living Islam*, 122.

¹⁴¹ Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Sociologists* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 46.

deep, difficult-to-understand effects on their souls. Therefore, they emphasized the necessity for women who do not wish to have children to use different methods such as birth control pills. While abortion is generally considered as ‘taking life’, religious expressions like ‘sin’ were frequently used. However, the common view among women was that practicing birth control would prevent the experience from being interpreted as a sinner for a believer or as ‘what a pity’ for those who view abortion within this framework. Women believed that by protecting themselves, they would not only avoid harming a life but also protect themselves from the psychological distress that could arise from this loss.

Yes, of course, abortion can happen, it is a right of women, but everything possible should be done to prevent it. I had one. It was devastating, you know. Very painful. It was a disaster for me. I was very bad, you know. I don’t even want to remember that period **(Güler-57)**.

Additionally, alongside women’s decisions about abortion, the issue of determining the number of children also falls under the umbrella of family planning. During the AKP era, this represents another example of policies aimed at “subjecting women to demographic state policies.”¹⁴² Women, especially those with lower levels of education and/or married early, were often uninformed about sexual protection methods and family planning. Neighborhood health centers¹⁴³ were providing these women with information and occasionally financial aid as required. However, it is no longer the case. The reason for this is shown as the association of women with only marriage and childbearing during the AKP era, expressions exist indicating that anti-abortion practices and the deliberate preference for keeping women uninformed about birth control methods were made.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Didem Ünal and Dilek Cindoglu, “Reproductive Citizenship in Turkey: Abortion Chronicles,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 38, (2013): 30.

¹⁴³ Neighborhood health centers are health units serving within neighborhoods within the framework of the Ministry of Health.

¹⁴⁴ On 2012, at the time he was Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said at the AKP Women’s Branch Congress, “Each abortion is a plan to erase the nation from the world stage and equated it with murder.”
<https://bianet.org/haber/basbakan-her-kurtaj-bir-uludere-dir-dedi-138644>.

Health system of current Turkey is criticized accordingly. Interviewees have developed a routine regarding health check-ups. There is a large state hospital in Batikent. Those who manage to get appointments prefer it initially due to their health insurance coverage, but especially in Turkey, the quality of university hospitals is emphasized. However, it is noted that during the AKP era, although the appointment system has been portrayed as improved and organized, many good doctors have left due to workload and economic reasons. Particularly for diseases where timing is crucial, tests like tomography are scheduled months in advance. Despite the system appearing to be good, it is pointed out that it is very unhealthy, disregarding families classified as ‘people like us’ such as the lower middle class and lower class and encouraging them towards private hospitals and significant expenses.

A common point of agreement regarding the AKP era is the attempt to undermine trust in scientific knowledge and the changes made in fields like medicine being detrimental to the public. Their effort to show that they value scientific knowledge emerges in criticisms of their own practices of cousin marriages. While cousin marriages are observed to be common in Alevi community, there is emphasis on its wrongfulness. Cousin marriages have decreased over time in Alevi families. In the past, it was noted that grandparents or parents engaged in such marriages, and it was difficult for individuals from different sects to marry, often not permitted. However, this practice has diminished over time. One interviewee categorizes cousin marriages because of significant ignorance, expressing concern over the hereditary problems it may cause, and questioning how previous generations may have taken such risks, perhaps luckily remaining healthy.

Approaches that take scientific knowledge and medical science seriously do not exclude alternative treatment options. One of the female interviewees, who is also a doctor herself, acknowledges the significant advancements in medical science, but points out that in some diseases where a solution has not yet been found, alternative medical practices are now being applied worldwide, which she does not see as wrong. She adds that if it can benefit the patient’s psychology, she sees no problem in it. Furthermore, it is observable that the interviewees, especially in psychological issues,

tend to exhibit a more religious approach. There are Sunni and Alevi families who express that prayers, religious rituals like namaz, fasting, or visits to Alevi shrines provide them with significant support in this regard.

The relatively younger generation, who are the children of the interviewees, before having children, especially calculate the care, education, and expenses for them. They particularly emphasize owning a house and a car before having a child, especially in Turkey, as they have come to understand this better with the increasing rental prices in recent years and the added expenses of children. The relatively older generation who are the main interviewees of the study, on the other hand, express that they have realized which number of children is more acceptable through their experiences. Here, rather than referencing religious and/or traditional beliefs and discourses, the emphasis is more on the quality of education to be provided to the child and the ability to provide them a profession. Therefore, what I mostly encountered was their reference to financial conditions. In this sense, how families keep a distance from other families they label as ‘ignorant’ or ‘uninformed’, how they perceive the number of children and what it means for the family and society, crystallizes around the ability to provide upward mobility for a child in society through education¹⁴⁵ as well as their self-perception about being modern.

So, you look at the circumstances. I struggled with two children. So, if I had four children now, could I be able to send all of them to university? For people like us, at most two children. Even the richest people have only one child, what’s our problem? They come and have four or five children and let them loose on the streets? **(Kemal-67)**.

However, here, the period covered by the thesis, the 2000s, and the association of these years particularly with the AKP era, serve as a reference point used to express the transformation of lifestyle practices, as in every aspect. Even the nostalgic comments

¹⁴⁵ Sennett and Cobb (1972) argue that fitting into American society hinges on respect, politeness, and being cultured. However, he also points out a sense of vulnerability in American society regarding being educated. In this context, upward mobility is intended to be instilled in children through education. Indeed, gaining respect within social classes is possible through being educated, which in turn means being cultured and reputable in Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

made about the past are shaped by comparison with the AKP era. One of the interviewees, the son of a retired civil servant, expresses how his father did not hesitate to have three children and how growing up in such a crowded environment shaped his character, and how he is content with that. He mentions how being a civil servant in the past, provided a stable economic lifestyle compared to today and offered certain opportunities, or rather, a reliable way of life. Hoggart (1960) argues in his study on the working class that in a world where control is difficult and constantly changing, and in moments of doubt or certain difficulties, the values and phrases of the past emerge as the only constants to hold on to.¹⁴⁶

4.3. Interfaith Marriages: “Let them be human.”

As a domain that unites individuals, marriages, particularly those formed across different sects, facilitate mutual understanding among families and, along with the emergence of common practices in everyday life, allow for the dissolution of stereotypical beliefs. Additionally, the lower-middle-class status and relatively more socially democratic inclination of Sunni families residing in Batıkent serve as tension-alleviating factors in Sunni-Alevi marriages.

Some families whose relationships with the village they lived in before coming to Ankara or with their relatives there continue to persist. In fact, the number of marriages facilitated through these connections is quite substantial. The concepts of arranged marriages, cousin marriages, religious ceremonies like religious weddings – *imam nikahı*¹⁴⁷, *dede nikahı*¹⁴⁸– form a pivotal focus on how individuals define these concepts, reference values in making marriage decisions, and approach these concepts within their personal narratives. Expressions like “being content about marriage or being satisfied”, while appearing as literary rhetoric, substantially elucidate how

¹⁴⁶ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1960), 17.

¹⁴⁷ Religious wedding performed by Imam.

¹⁴⁸ Religious wedding performed by Alevi religious/spiritual leader.

marriage decisions are shaped by the socio-political and cultural influences embedded in their life stories.

Understanding the continuity and resilience of commonly accepted perspectives, endeavoring to comprehend their foundations, often brings to light a theme from Turkey's history of modernization and secularization. In this vein, examples frequently cited by interviewees regarding the ideal partner definition, which emphasize being enlightened, modern, or a proper Muslim, serve as an indicator of how these aspects have been shaped by Turkey's history of modernization and are uniquely accepted within the Turkish context as being a normal Muslim.

When referring to his wife, a Sunni-origin male married to an Alevi woman, after discussing the definition and expectations of Alevism, he states that "I see my wife as Muslim" (**Onur- 53**). The wife on the other hand, who is of Alevi background, found odd when she first witnessed her husband praying in the early morning, but after emphasizing that at least he did not indulge in alcohol, gambling, or not unfaithful – unlike her previous Alevi husband – she frequently highlighted her father-in-law's strong adherence to Atatürk's principles. This situation demonstrates how spouses legitimize each other's personal histories, beliefs, and differences. Having an Atatürkist father-in-law becomes a means for legitimizing the marriage of an Alevi woman both within her own family circle and in terms of her personal experiences.

I'm grateful for my spouse. For instance, he says to me, 'Ask me anything you want, what I can do for your mother?' My mother was left alone after my father's death. He says, 'if you want, we can rent a separate house, different floors, and let your mother live in one'. I really like that attitude. If it were someone else, he might say, 'I have my own parents'. Especially, my father-in-law. Have a chat with him, he's so sweet. He's a good person, very Republican, he always wears an Atatürk pin. (**Sema, 51**).

One common ground between Alevi and Sunni families, in addition to being an Atatürkist, regarding marriage, is the disapproval of their children engaging in marriages affiliated with religious orders (*tarikats*). Religious orders are often perceived as structures where faith is exploited, religion is used for vanity, and are considered detrimental to Islam.

In the families interviewed, religious marriage ceremonies are quite prevalent, yet the accounts narrated by the participants generally progress in two main directions. Firstly, it was performed upon the request of the families, and they could not refuse. Secondly, it took place at the insistence of the spouse's family and is often expressed as "actually silly, but we did not want to upset our families." Traditionally tense points in marriages such as religious ceremonies, henna night, traditions like tying a red ribbon for the bride (*kırmızı kuşak*)¹⁴⁹, are interpreted as actions performed by the younger generation not out of personal choice but rather to avoid upsetting their families. A Sunni woman **Nurcan (aged 60)** participant who identified herself as deeply religious argued that religious marriage serves as a testimony before God and holds value yet emphasizes that civil marriage holds greater importance. This is regarded as an indispensable element in safeguarding the rights and interests of both women and men.

In the context of a Sunni family having an Alevi daughter-in-law or son-in-law, the reference to "let them be human" frequently emerges. When examining the origin of this expression, discussions regarding respect, honesty come to the forefront while Alevis use mostly the terms being modern-minded (*çağdaş*), and democratic. In the realm of everyday life, behaviors and attitudes encoded within the habitus activate one's personal history and make it speak through strategic positioning toward others. In an Alevi family, differences of opinion emerge as an example of this. One of the interviewees, a male, expressed his reluctance for his daughter to marry someone outside the Alevi faith, while his spouse indicated that such a marriage could be possible if the person has a modern mind set.

Here, by mentioning 'Sunni Muslims who live exactly like us,' the reference to a different belief once again points to Sunnism. The interviewee's lack of consideration for other religious beliefs or sects underscores how Alevi history in Turkey and the self-identification process of Alevis are closely intertwined with Sunnism. Due to the

¹⁴⁹ It is thought to represent the bride's virginity, but I do not have full information about the origin of this tradition.

interfaith marriages bringing different cultural capitals together, it is possible to observe changes in people's lives in terms of their perspectives on cultural differences.

Particularly, something I frequently encounter among Alevi interviewees is the expression of how Sunni women, those who marry Alevi men, feel liberated in terms of choices such as clothing and alcohol consumption, while Alevi women are concerned that they might enter a more oppressive environment because of marrying a Sunni man. For example, **Gamze (aged 38)** said that her daughter has never fast in her life, and she would be very upset if, one day, her daughter had to prepare an *iftar* table for her mother-in-law. Then, she continued by giving an example of her aunt who married into a highly religious family, denying her Alevi identity and now putting on a headscarf. Atatürkism is the common ground of marriages that bring people from different beliefs together. If families are Atatürkist or CHP supporters, it is not a problem at all if the mother-in-law wears a headscarf, provided it is not a *turban*, and fasting is not objected to. Additionally, Sunni families claim that discriminatory words they previously heard about Alevis are now seen as absurd and wrong when they encounter through marriages.

4.4. Embodied Learning: Transmitting Faith and Tradition to Children

Regarding faith, rather than the formal religious education, Quran courses, or membership in a specific religious community that imposes strict learning, the interviewees emphasized the need for their children to learn by 'seeing' at home and, consequently, make their own choices. They conveyed that this should not be something enforced or pressured upon them. After introductory remarks emphasizing the necessity for faith to come from within oneself and highlighting the importance of raising not just a religious child but a good person, it became familiar during this fieldwork for the interviewees to position themselves and commence their comments from that standpoint.

After positioning themselves – portraying a profile of a family that is liberal, non-oppressive, permissive in the sense that who supports their children's choices and

embraces modernity – they would then get into the main topic, as if to say, “Let’s now get to the real issue,” and provide examples illustrating their religious practices and how these are integrated into the lives of their children.

For instance, drawing from the teachings of an Alevi mother (*ana*)¹⁵⁰ whom an Alevi family regularly visited, they began to implementing practices at home, such as performing religious rituals, using religious sentences and movements, believing that they should do these in the presence of their children so that the children could learn this culture through practice. Moreover, their daughter’s name was also given by this Alevi mother.

Yes, she should know. *Zöhre ana* told us that. They said, “Let the child see when you’re making prayers.” They said she should do it too. It’s a tradition, you know. Our elders didn’t explain much, didn’t teach much. It was all hearsay. It’s not just waving your hands while listening to folk songs, it’s not just shedding tears (**Veysel-45**).

For example, I ask my daughter what her dad is doing, sometimes when I call during work. She says he’s performing the *Ehlibeyt* prayer. She knows about them, she’s learned (**Filiz-41**).

Although it is emphasized that children are free to form their own interpretations about faith, the religious practices conducted at home transform into behavioral patterns internalized during the children’s process of socialization. One of my interviewees, a young Sunni woman, reflects on how the days of fasting during Ramadan turned into such an enjoyable time for her in the village.

When I was very young and went to my grandparents in Beşikdüzü, they were fasting. I think that’s where I first was fasting in my life. They used to wake up at night, my aunts, my mom, and so on... We’d wake up in the morning, breakfast was prepared, my sister was there, and maybe some other kids, I don’t quite remember. Firstly, that breakfast in the morning, and secondly, the iftar, were so enjoyable, but why weren’t we fasting? We’d ask them to wake us up at night so we could fast too. But they wouldn’t wake us, and that made me really annoyed. I felt like I missed out on that run. I remember crying about it (**Buket-32**).

¹⁵⁰ In Alevi-Bektashi tradition, the female spiritual leader (Pir ana/bacı).

4.4.1. Religious Education: Shaping Beliefs in Educational Institutions

The discourses and perspectives that gain prominence in establishing relationships with official religious education and religious symbols in schools revolve around assessing how closely school rules and teachers' practices align with Atatürkist values. This approach aims to avoid imposing specific religious ideas or behavioral models on children, emphasizing secular principles instead.

The religious education outside the home, the perspective on religious education provided in schools, attitudes towards religiously oriented schools, or the relationship of teachers and educators with religion, and the way this education is delivered are associated with politics in the perspective of the interviewees. When it comes to child education, the nature of religious classes and whether they should be part of the education system become prominent topics. Recently, practices regulating students' school preferences, such as the requirement for students to attend a school in their residential area, and the conversion of many state schools into Imam-Hatip schools in several neighborhoods, have become subjects of debate regarding the explicit relationship between religion and politics. Among the individuals interviewed, the most prominently recurring concept revolves around the desire to protect children from 'imposed' ideas. Güneş-Ayata and Acar (2002) define the characteristic of Imam-Hatip schools as:

The overarching feature of school's culture was the presence of a totalizing worldview and philosophy. It is clear that here, at least intentionally, complete control of the student, both inside and outside the school, is desired and attempted. The teachers appear to have internalized this philosophy well and reflect it in their overall attitudes and behaviors towards students. Often, they perceive themselves exclusively as agents such control.¹⁵¹

“Imposed ideas” are often identified with Imam Hatip schools in the minds of the interviewees, as a type of high school capable of transforming students within a

¹⁵¹ Feride Acar and Ayşe Ayata, “Discipline, Success and Stability: The Reproduction of Gender and Class in Turkish Secondary Education,” in *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 94.

worldview that would detach them from their families' lifestyles. In a similar vein, opinions regarding the content of mandatory religious courses express concerns through the term 'imposed', reflecting apprehensions stemming from the education system's relationship with politics and its transformative power on children.

Most of the interviewees expressed the opinion that they are against compulsory religious education. They believe that religious education in Turkey is no longer neutral and is based on imposing certain ideas on children, particularly during a period when they are so young and not capable of making their own choices. They argue that making religious classes elective does not truly reflect reality. According to a new practice of the Ministry of National Education, students are presented with a list of elective courses through the system, yet the religious course is indicated as a default selection. Additionally, it is noted that although various activities were expected to be included in elective course contents, depending on the teacher and the school, the subject matter somehow pertains to religion. One of the interviewees expressing the need for the absolute removal of religious education provided an example where the information imparted to young children contradicts their family's lifestyle, emphasizing the psychological unhealthiness of the situation for the children involved.

My niece is in the fourth grade; sometimes my sister can't pick her up, so I go to get her from school. One day, I went to get her, and she looked pale. I asked what happened, but she didn't say anything. I took her home, and slowly, she started to talk. She said the last class was a religion class. The teacher said something like, 'Those who drink alcohol will go to hell and burn.' Her parents drink, and she sees it, you know. The teacher also mentioned things like women who don't wear headscarves or skirts will like this or that. The kids were petrified. She asked, 'Is this true, uncle?' I said, 'No, it's not.' But you know, these kinds of things happen again (**Oktay-40**).

The same interviewee, while expressing their opinion against religious classes, recounted attending a Quran course when they were younger but now feeling uncertain about sending their children to such institutions, pointing out the expansion of activities within religious sects as a reason for their lack of trust.

Personally, I don't think there should be any religious classes. I can't relate religion to children anyway. Not for any of them. If families want to teach, let it be like how we were in our childhood as a cultural coding. Okay, I didn't learn much (laughs), but my childhood friend was a Hafiz, for instance. He learned because he wanted to. I also

went a Quran course when I was a child, or something like that, with my friends. If you send your child to a Quran course now, do you know which community or religious order the teacher belongs to? Do you understand the kind of influence it might have on your child? It wasn't like back then (**Oktay-40**).

Selen (aged 46), after enrolling her children in a school that she believed upheld Atatürkist values, recounted her complaint to the school administration upon learning about the content of the religious education classes.

It was a school that appeared to be Atatürkist but was more preferred by conservative families. We immediately enrolled our child there, thinking it was close to our home. It was called 'Love' lesson back then, not a religion class. It was a love lesson in the first grade. The teachers said things like, 'You'll turn into stone.' The kids got scared, thinking they'd turn into stones. The teacher warned them not to behave in certain ways, saying they would turn into stones. I went to the school right away. I mean, what does a little child have to do with turning into a stone? I requested that my child not attend that teacher's class. The school administration agreed because they were afraid, she was leading the kids in the wrong direction. A six-year-old shouldn't have thoughts about turning into a stone.

An interviewee who believes that religious beliefs and values should not be imposed on children revealed that children should discover and choose such values and beliefs for themselves.

It's not right to impose religion on children. They should create their own belief system by observing and thinking. Let them decide for themselves (**Filiz-41**).

Veysel (aged-45), who believes it is wrong for children to take religious classes at a time when their mental capacities are not yet fully developed, stated that, despite being Alevi himself, he did not prefer a separate religious lesson for Alevi children.

My master at work, Adem, is in favor of children attending Quran courses, for instance. Personally, I wouldn't want separate religious classes even for Alevis. What are those children doing there at that age? It's their time to play. The development of a child's brain completes at a certain age. These little kids are, well, just kids. That would be fanaticism, nothing else.

Öykü (aged 48) who is also a primary school teacher explained that teachers who teach religious classes are generally inadequate both professionally and pedagogically, based on her conversations with children at school.

The teachers of religious classes are not very competent either. For instance, one of my former students mentioned, ‘Our teacher says if we don’t wash our faces in the morning, demons pee on our faces at night.’ I said, ‘Which one of you would be reachable by such a demon?’ (Laughs). Can such a thing happen? I told, ‘Wash your face so your pores don’t clog, causing acne and wounds. Clean it, get rid of the oil.’ They aren’t adequate individuals. Sometimes, they try to scare with things they can’t even explain. ‘You’ll turn into a stone,’ they say. I asked my student, ‘Have you ever seen someone turned into a stone around you? They are not competent psychologically as well as in their own fields (**Öykü-48**).

According to the new secondary education regulations, children can now receive education in schools located in their residential areas. However, the conversion of existing schools into Imam-Hatip schools in large numbers has drawn criticism from families. There is a considerable number of negative responses regarding the preference for their children to attend Imam-Hatip schools.

Never. It’s better he doesn’t have education. I would give homeschool education to him or move somewhere else. There was going to be an Imam-Hatip school in Kardelen (Batıkent), people resisted a lot. Of course, Batıkent is a more enlightened area. People strongly resisted. They collected signatures. Students’ parents organized marches. They made presentations¹⁵² (**Ayten-66**).

One of the significant areas affected by this transformation in education is the increasing number of private schools. Families are compelled to send their children to private schools if they can afford it. There is an observed decline in trust towards public schools.

Yes, they’re forced to. I see families who can’t afford to send their kids to private school. Otherwise, it’s mandatory due to the 4+4+4 system, it’s compulsory in the neighborhood they belong to now. They’re going out of necessity, but I believe many people do everything they cannot send their children. But unfortunately, it all comes down to money. I asked why you enrolled your child to Imam-Hatip school, and they said, ‘Well, you say that, but we don’t have the money; we had to enroll.’ They’ve closed a lot of public schools, turning secondary schools and high schools into Imam-Hatip schools (**Selen-46**).

¹⁵² They became successful and could not let the school to be converted into an Imam-Hatip school. Slogans of the parents were “Batıkent, don’t sleep, stand up for your school.”, “Kardelen will not become an Imam-Hatip school.”, “No to reactionary, racist education.”, “We don’t want child laborers.” <https://www.birgun.net/haber/okullar-imam-hatip-protestolariyla-acildi-62315>.

4.4.2. Pre-Marital Relationship and Sexual Orientation

Families' perspectives were largely formed by how they positioned their own viewpoints in reaction to the behavior and actions of individuals they disapproved of. The examples they cited and their implicit responses to the behavior and attitudes of those they considered ignorant and uneducated indicated where they stood in the intersection of traditional elements and modernity. In this context, what I noticed, based on these narratives, was their confident stance regarding their intended protection of their children. They appeared to understand the influence of traditional norms in society, foreseeing the perspectives and discourse that their children would be surrounded by, or more accurately, their confidence in understanding the reality of the society.

This stance in a way demonstrates how they re-produce the aspects of traditional ideas that they perceive as compatible with modernity, but in a new and different manner. In a sense, it seemed as if they were drawing a portrait of their personal histories. They reflected the outlook of a generation that knowledgeable about tradition and its trajectory in society, yet, as educated, self-cultivated, enlightened individuals envisioned by the Republic's conception of a modern society, they sought to transcend these codes of tradition in a rather nuanced manner, portraying the perspective of a generation without hurry. For example, a retired female teacher portrayed an example from her own village, and she had a multifaceted voice serving as a bridge between tradition and modernity:

When a girl gets pregnant, an unmarried young girl gets pregnant. Of course, consider the pressure on the mother, the environment, think about the pressure on the mother. The mother can't handle it. 'Send her away,' they say. In the village where I work, they brought a girl because she got pregnant, her brothers and father beat her by the creek and killed her. That's when the woman realizes she can't stay there, takes her daughter and moves elsewhere. They asked me back then, 'What would you do if your daughter did something like that?' I said, 'What would I do? Am I going to throw that child into the street? She made a mistake, after all (**Hatice-69**).

Acceptance of 'she made a mistake' and the rejection of 'Am I going to throw that child into street?' The bridge established between these two sentences indicated how

families, culturally encoded with norms of sexuality, and having undergone a certain education, attempted to maintain tradition by reframing it in a more modest relationship with modernity.

For example, **Sinan (aged 48)** admits that he approaches raising his daughter and son differently, being more protective of his daughter. He acknowledges that his daughter goes to study with male friends, and even hosts them at their home, expressing a great deal of trust in her. He implies indirectly that he trusts his daughter to protect herself regarding sexuality. He adds that her daughter can spend time with her male friends as she wishes because she knows how to behave well and protect herself, “I know she won’t do anything wrong.”

It is possible to observe that the most prominent point where generational differences create tension in the families interviewed is centered around gender roles. While the sexuality and relationships of male children are tolerated to a certain extent, statements such as “we trust our daughter” subtly imply expectations about how she should conduct herself regarding sexuality or relationships without marriage. For instance, remarks like “she knows how to behave” suggest an understanding of what is expected. A mother of three children once mentioned that “if my daughter could live with a man before marriage, she would have known him well, but unfortunately most men do not marry the women they live with.” If it will end in marriage, having boyfriends for daughters is managed for a while by the mother.

These statements are not actually interpreted from a religious perspective. They are specifically interpreted considering the potential harm they could cause to the children’s and family’s status in society. Within this perspective, there is a protective behavior in the face of a wide spectrum of people – from relatives to neighbors – who may interpret these relationships in various ways. The same perspective applies to requests for boys and girls to move out of to a separate house. Boys find it easier to get permission from their families in this regard, but it is more difficult for girls because of concerns for their safety. However, this concern is not just about daughters

living with their boyfriends but also, due to the increasing woman's murder news in recent times, they now are more worried about girls.

In their eyes (while talking about AKP voters), we are immoral. There was no such thing before. I am a woman of how old, for heaven's sake! But they give seats to young girls in the subway because they are head scarfed, but they do not give me seat. As if they are the only ones who have morality. There was no such thing in the past. But they know how to look at the legs of little girls wearing shorts. They are little girls. They look at us as immoral, but we are trying to protect our daughters from them
(Güler-57)

Some families praise their daughters' shyness and introversion. They would say, "My daughter is so shy, she could never lie." This was even presented as an achievement of the family. One family said they received compliments about how they raised their children this way.

4.5. Navigating Religious Change: Traditional Practices and the Critique of the Present

Gorski (2000), in this examination of the religious life in Western Europe before and after the Reformation (1300-1770), contends that the changes in social structure and religious experience during this period were much more complicated than suggested by either traditional or modern paradigms. In fact, these two paradigms are not as conflicting, or irreconcilable as often argued by their proponents. He continues claiming that Western society has become more secular while still maintaining religious beliefs and practices.¹⁵³

Although the interviewers came from very different cultural and religious backgrounds, one commonality I observed among them was their belief that the reforms of the Republic and Turkey's modernization history did not exclude their own pasts or religious beliefs and practices. They did not think that Turkey's modernization had harmed their traditions or beliefs. On the contrary, they believed that the reforms

¹⁵³ Philip S. Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000): 138-167.

of the Republic had strengthened and framed these practices, and especially that they had protected and preserved these practices.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Turkey's modernization reforms accomplished this by establishing a framework for Islam that was unique to Turkey, distinguishing it from other Islamic nations. For believing citizens who identified as secular and practices their religion, being a secular Muslim or, as one of my interviewees put it, a "normal Muslim", meant having an identity that helped them position themselves and establish distance from other Muslims around the world.¹⁵⁵

Even though my mother used to pray and even knew many prayers and was a believer, she doesn't like such things at all. So, she's not a bigot. She would even swear. That's exactly it. Now, if we say such religious orders (*tarikats*), they are fraudsters, degenerated exploiters. Everything is going on there. Money and all the bad things are there. Be a normal Muslim. That's it (**Onur-53**).

Among Sunni interviewees, the most prominent religious practice they regularly engaged in was fasting. **Hatice (aged 69)** said "I feel very guilty when I couldn't fast, I don't know why, it's just a habit." While some of the interviewees tried to perform regular prayers (*namaz*), it had become a challenging practice in daily life, especially among working individuals. Morning service (*bayram namazı*) on the first day of a religious holiday and visits to neighbors and relatives during religious holidays were typically interpreted through tradition. **Oktay (aged 40)** interpreted religious holidays visits as follows:

It wasn't like this in my childhood. Holiday visits had a different meaning – coming together, chatting. It was a sign of respect among people, respect for elders, and family elders. Otherwise, it wouldn't be done as a religious duty.

¹⁵⁴ For a similar perspective: Richard Tapper and Nancy Tapper, "Thank God We're Secular! Aspects of Fundamentalism in a Turkish Town", in *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism*, ed. Lionel Caplan (Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 51-78.

¹⁵⁵ In this context, I feel closer to Gorski, who tries to see secularization not as cutting ties with the metaphysical realm as Ertit (2019) claims, but as a process of change in religious sphere. Understanding the history of differentiation of social spaces and how citizens internalize and put this into practice would be more beneficial in terms of comprehending and narrating the diversity of those who identify as atheist or secular today while also engaging in regular religious practices, without necessarily referencing the religious sphere. See: Volkan Ertit, *Sekülerleşme Teorisi: Sekülerleşen Türkiye'nin Analizi* (Ankara: Liberte Yayınları, 2019).

Religious visits to neighbors and relatives on religious days are expressed within the framework of a Parsonian definition of religion, which sees the origin of social solidarity in shared values and rituals, rather than with a religious reference. They explain the social function of religion, religious rituals, and traditions. Here, explanations are very common that people have different and individual lives and values, but they try to keep the ties and relationships between them together with these rituals. Since people who make these visits and identify themselves as atheists also describe their own practices by referring to this function of religious practices.

Many of the Alevi interviewees visited *cemevis* primarily during funeral times. Apart from this, some regularly attended cem ceremonies, especially held on Thursdays – accepted as a sacred day like Friday for Sunni Muslims. In contrast to Sunni interviewees, visiting shrines or seeking blessings from an Alevi spiritual leader (*'dede'* or *'ana'*- women spiritual leader) were most reported practices. Particularly, many made sacrificial offerings at the Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli¹⁵⁶ shrine or visited it periodically. All the Alevi interviewees had visited the Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli shrine at least one.

On the contrary, opposing views regarding living one's own faith freely or the form of religious practices became particularly evident when the context is AKP era. Alevis believe that Turkey's republican reforms, Atatürkist values, and modernization practices are the greatest protectors of their own faith and identity, but that in the eyes of the government, the state has only one religion, Sunni Islam, and that as a result, ideal secular practices are still lacking and misapplied in Turkey. Sunnis, on the other hand, make similar claims by criticizing the different religious rituals and practices that they do not know before by referring to the years the Turkey has been governing by AKP. Criticism concentrates on the transformation of faith into a spectacle. A common argument is over the past twenty years, a segment of society that has economically strengthened through the AKP has turned this into a show through

¹⁵⁶ An important religious figure in Alevi and Bektashi faiths.

religious talks, weddings with religious hymns, *mevlit*¹⁵⁷ in luxurious houses, which are foreign practices in Turkey's religious culture. During my participation as an observer in a *mevlit*, held for their newborn grandchild, in a conversation about how such religious practices have changed, my interviewee said:

Whatever happened, happened later. The number of people wearing headscarf has increased. So, something has changed. In the past, there were no religious conversations or weddings with *mevlit*, we did not know such things. Everything was more modest (**Hatice-69**).

4.6. Cultural Activities, Gender and Identity

I visited one of the families in the cooperative sites of Batıkent for an interview. My first impression was how smartly dressed and lively the couple appeared. The woman warmly greeted me at the door, while her husband stood behind her in neatly ironed white shirt and fabric trousers. I sensed they were preparing something from the scent of freshly baked pastries coming from the kitchen, which made me feel quite embarrassed. I thanked them for welcoming me and we proceeded to the living room. The living room was not specifically designated solely for hosting guests¹⁵⁸; they also spent time there themselves. I observed this in all the homes I visited. Inside, I was greeted by their son, a graduate of ODTÜ (his diploma was prominently displayed on a shelf in the living room), and his American girlfriend who I learned was pursuing a master's degree at ODTÜ. When I looked at the diploma, she said she was proud to be an ODTÜ graduate mother. This was something I often heard. Families preferred to mention school names – such as ODTÜ, Hacettepe, Bilkent Universities – rather than professions. The woman had her son's name tattooed on her arm, with white shoulder-length hair streaked with blue on the left side. They were watching a program on Halk TV commemorating Yaşar Kemal¹⁵⁹ on the television.

¹⁵⁷ An epic poem that narrates the birth and life of Prophet Muhammad.

¹⁵⁸ Living room is no longer just a closed-off area reserved for guests. In fact, they told me that years ago, they used the living room in this way as well. Especially, there is a cabinet in the living room with crystal glasses displayed, which is now actually an item left over from those days and serves no function anymore.

¹⁵⁹ Yaşar Kemal, a Turkish novelist.

Üstüner and Holt (2010) argue in their studies on the middle class that there are variations in cultural capital based on its quantity and quality among groups with similar economic capital. They state that the middle class with high cultural capital tends to adopt a more Western lifestyle, while those with lower cultural capital reference local cultural contexts when forming their middle-class identities.¹⁶⁰ I found that the lower-middle-class families I interviewed are more closely aligned with cultural capital that refers to local contexts. For instance, despite facing criticism, the families I spoke with greatly appreciate programs on Halk TV or Sözcü TV that feature Turkish intellectuals. Being cultured becomes evident through references to the works of these intellectuals.

In terms of home design, the aesthetics of the home serve as a status symbol. However, rather than focusing on luxury or expensive items and fashion, the emphasis is on cleanliness, tidiness, and acquiring the most stylish items that are affordable given one's economic situation. For instance, one of the interviewees I met displays variously patterned wooden items in her home because she attended a wood painting course organized by the Batıkent municipality. During my visits, I observed homes where the priority was on maintaining a clean and organized environment with moderately priced items expected to serve their full lifespan, rather than extravagance.

The living room, furnished with old-fashioned brown furniture and wooden-framed armchairs, was adorned with family photographs everywhere. In many homes, they mentioned that they gradually replace such old items with new ones whenever they find the financial opportunity. For couples who have not retired yet, their furniture consists of more modern-looking (non-luxurious) items that they said they changed while still working and receiving a salary. A small statue of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli was displayed in an old-fashioned glass cabinet showcasing crystal glasses. Apart from these religious items, photographs or paintings with prayers written on them, it was very difficult to distinguish between Alevi and Sunni households.

¹⁶⁰ Tuba Üstüner and Douglas B. Holt, "Toward a Theory of Status Consumption in Less Industrialized Countries," *Journal of Consumer Research* 37, no. 1 (2010): 37-56.

In nearly more than half of the homes I visited, there were cats or dogs. In one of the homes I visited, a woman opened the door with her cat and said to her cat, "Look who's here." She tried to serve me tea while telling me about the series she was watching on Netflix. She mentioned that she had started watching a lot of series on Netflix after retiring. She also talked about how much she loved reading historical novels. One common thing I encountered while discussing religion with families in Batıkent was their frequent reference to Yaşar Nuri Öztürk's¹⁶¹ book "Allah ile Aldatmak" (Deceiving with Allah). They saw him both as devout religious and as a secular person, valuing his beliefs on Islam. Moreover, I noticed a keen interest in recent times in the Turkish series "Kızıl Goncalar" because it reveals the inner workings of religious orders. Similar Turkish series depicting the intersecting lives of conservative and secular families, like "Kızılıcık Şerbeti" was watched by both women and men. Halk TV and Sözcü TV are among the most watched news channels. However, they are also heavily criticized. Some say Halk TV is a different version of A Haber, which is accused of being pro-AKP, which serve to CHP voters to manipulate them. As a result, they expressed that they often try to watch it critically.

In fact, it is possible to indicate that in this lifestyle, young people contribute to and have transformative power in their families' lives both culturally and in terms of consumption. For example, they frequently update their parents' habits in internet shopping, introducing them to different clothing brands, or changing their TV viewing habits. Families mentioned their children introducing them to memberships on platforms like Netflix, the diversity of online shopping, different fashion trends, makeup products, or brands. Particularly, the frequent use of social media tools such as YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter among young people also facilitated families' involvement in this process. Nearly all the women and men I interviewed had Facebook memberships, but they said they started trying Instagram and Twitter accounts later, after seeing and trying them out from their children. Women and men are active users of YouTube and Facebook. They join these social media

¹⁶¹ Yaşar Nuri Öztürk, a Turkish theologian.

communication channels to connect with neighbors, old friends, or fellow hometown residents.

In Alevism, community bonds based on kinship and hometown ties, predominantly consisting of Alevi members, are more commonly observed. These bonds are diversified through memberships in village associations, activities on social media, events held on special occasions such as funeral meals at cemevis, International Women's Day celebrations, pilgrimage trips and events to sacred places, particularly the Hacı Bektaş Veli shrine. These ties are naturally nurtured through Alevi practices. At a Women's Day event I attended at a village association, held in a venue funded by the association, women gathered with small Atatürk and Turkish flags in hand. They danced halay and sang folk songs accompanied by an invited singer. Almost all the women were dressed elegantly and had visited a hairdresser. Conversations at the tables mostly revolved around their children's education, news from relatives, clothing, shopping, and other everyday practices. In another event, they transformed their village's Liberation Day into a festive day with folklore performances in traditional local attire. They mentioned that they had prepared for this performance for a long time.

One of the women, **Ayten (aged 66)**, during the folklore performance, pointed out her dance partner and said:

Look, for instance, this man is not our relative, but he is from our village. However, since we don't separate men and women, my husband never had any bad thoughts. He always sees me as his sister. This is how civilized we are. Which religious husband would allow something like this?

In fact, one of the women I interviewed was Sunni and originally from Trabzon. She, **Hatice (aged 70)**, mentioned that despite women in her family wearing traditional headscarves, they were criticized by a man from Erzurum who visited their village for holding hands during the horon dance, considering it a narrow-minded mindset. The notable point here is that Alevis legitimize and narrate these practices while referring to Sunnis as the "other" or opposite. When I asked if there were Sunnis who are modern, they replied, "Yes, there are Sunnis like us who are modern and not narrow-

mind." Upon further discussion, it became clear that rather than making a generalization about Sunnism, they were referring to Sunnis who marginalized themselves. However, in their narration, they did not express this distinction and instead made a general reference.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the boundaries and encounters between different religious identities and discursive biases and stereotypes on their perceptions of worship styles, religious identities across different faiths.

CHAPTER 5

ENCOUNTERS AND BOUNDARIES: THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I aimed to investigate how lower-middle class families, identifying as secular and coming from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, express their differences during interactions with each other and in encounters with different beliefs and identities. Specifically, I explored the influence of discursive biases and stereotypes on their perceptions of worship styles, religious identities across different faiths and, as most stressed ones, how worship time is allocated in working settings and neighborly relations. I also examined how interviewees respond to criticism related to those biases and stereotypes, and how they position themselves against such discriminations. Additionally, I saw that they sometimes overlook the effects of modernization that weaken patriarchal norms in terms of gender relations, attributing this weakening effect to the influence of their own religious beliefs and cultures.

In social environments characterized by cultural diversity and coexistence of religious identities, I explored how individuals define themselves in relation to others, express their freedoms, engage in neighborly relations, and practice their religions in public sphere such as workplace settings as an encounter area. Through interviews, I observed that perceptions of secular lifestyles still play a crucial role for bringing them together at a common ground although they draw distinctions among themselves within Turkey's unique religious and cultural diversity.

The characteristics that I refer to as the interviewees' lower-middle class secular habitus—such as being Atatürkist, modern, advocating gender equality, and prioritizing education for both girls and boys —also constitutes the boundaries they

collectively – both Alevi and Sunni – draw in terms of their lifestyles. Therefore, during AKP rule – including People’s Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı) since 2018 – they expressed that they couldn’t maintain these boundaries. They pointed to reasons such as the use of religious displays in workplaces, AKP’s support for economically favored voter segments, the economic empowerment of religious orders, and the narrowing of cultural activities from public to private spheres. Interviewees, whom I observed constructing their identities particularly around secularism within the lower-middle class, expressed their exclusion from the religious field due to the political relationship with religion and the new symbolic codes of the religious field, such as identifying as AKP voters, along with the economic losses they experienced. As a solution, they emphasized the need for poverty politics to take precedence in Turkey to resist the system that excludes them economically, as well as in terms of identity and lifestyle.

5.2. Difference through Connections

If Emile Durkheim’s assertion about religion’s primary role in sacralizing and thereby maintaining communities holds any truth, then every religion must have methods of distinguishing its followers from others.¹⁶² Gupta and Ferguson (1997) argue that the variations among cultures arise not from their separation but from their interactions. This observation implies that alongside diversity, there are also hierarchies of power. Culture serves not only to signify distinctions between groups but also to obscure the unequal power dynamics between them, which persist through interconnectedness rather than isolation.¹⁶³ For instance, Gupta and Ferguson’s (1997) definition of “difference through connections in spatial terms”¹⁶⁴ applies to the youth memory of one my interviewees.

¹⁶² David R. Vishanoff, “Boundaries and Encounters,” in *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, ed. David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁶³ Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “‘Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference,’ from *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology (1997)*,” in *The Cultural Geography Reader*, ed. Timothy S. Oakes and Patricia L. Price (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 61.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

5.2.1. Boundary Formation: Religious Identity through Interaction

My Alevi interviewee, **Melek (aged 66)**, shared her memories of a neighborhood where she lived as a young person to describe her first encounter with the “us” and “them” difference. In 1955 – years of intense migration waves from rural areas to larger cities in Turkey¹⁶⁵ – her family migrated from a village in Erzurum (a city in the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey) to Ankara, Keçiören neighborhood. They started living in slums side by side, with their relatives following them in a chain migration. Their Sunni neighbors, across the street, with only a narrow road between them, were immigrants from Çankırı (a city in the Central Anatolia region of Turkey) living in rows of slums side by side like them. This narrow road – as space itself becomes a kind of neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization are inscribed¹⁶⁶ – was like the first symbolic boundary separating these people, who came from the lower class and had the same economic capital.

In this slum, where the infrastructure had not yet been formed, Alevi and Sunni residents who experienced and shared the similar practices – men and women who went to the same grocery store, carry water to their homes from the same well – had discovered the difference of their own identities through daily interactions. Later, boundaries began to be sharpened religiously. However, these cultural and religious boundaries were only one aspect of their relations with each other. Bayat (2010) argues that in essence, "communities" aren't just inward-focused groups that are exclusive and interact with others only through distrust. Instead, communities strive to reconcile their differences and coexist harmoniously.¹⁶⁷ For example, at the end of the quotation below and on similar topics, **Melek** often adds, “They actually loved us a lot.”

¹⁶⁵ Tahire Erman, “Becoming “Urban” or Remaining “Rural”: The Views of Turkish Rural-to-Urban Migrants on the “Integration” Question,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30, no. 4 (1998): 541-561.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁶⁷ Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 185.

During Ramadan, they did not talk to us or greet us. They were bigots. My mother used to say ‘Now, we are good, but who knows maybe one night they come and kill us’. Now I look at their daughters, sometimes we come across each other, they dress more revealingly than I do, and they do everything with ease. Once, one of their daughters got pregnant without marrying. They said, ‘God forbid the *Kizilbash*¹⁶⁸ hear about it.’ Because they attribute things like this to us. When they fought with us, they would say ‘*Yunacaklar* (need to be washed)’ in their own dialect. They meant we were not washing or performing ablution (*gusül abdesti*¹⁶⁹). But other than that, they actually loved us. When they had weddings, the *köçek*¹⁷⁰s would come, and we would go and watch them when we were kids. It would be very enjoyable.¹⁷¹

Berkes (1998) argues that the values held at the highest level in a society tend to take the appearance of religious values, especially in such times. Religion is the last refuge of tradition, the last bastion of defense. In fact, many habits that come from the roots of the old life of the society easily acquire the quality of being a requirement of religion. There is a dialectical relationship between modernization and religiousization. Modernization initiates the process of religiousization. When a trend towards modernization begins, many tasks that have not been under the umbrella of religion until then are gathered under this umbrella in the face of the rain of change.

¹⁶⁸ Here, the woman narrating the story imitates the body language of a woman who referred to them as *Kizilbash*. “They used to call us *Kizilbash*,” she emphasized. She explained that they were using it to insult them.

“*Kizilbash*, any member of the seven Turkmen tribes who supported the Safavid dynasty (1501–1736) in Iran. As warriors, they were instrumental in the rise of the Safavid empire and became established as the empire’s military aristocracy. The name *Kizilbash* was given to them by Sunni Ottoman Turks in reference to their attire: they wore red caps to signify their loyalty to the Safavids. The term was applied later to the followers of a mystical Islamic sect in eastern Anatolia.” “*Kizilbash*” in *Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kizilbash>.

¹⁶⁹ The term “*gusül*” (or “*gusl*”) in the dictionary means “washing, cleansing” as a verbal noun, and as a noun it refers to the act of washing oneself, particularly to purify from ritual impurity such as *janabah* (major ritual impurity due to sexual intercourse), menstruation, or postpartum bleeding. In Turkish, it is known as “*boy abdesti*” or colloquially in some regions as “*büyük abdest*” Mehmet Şener, “*Gusül*,” in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* 14 (1996). <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/gusul>.

¹⁷⁰ A *köçek* is widely known in Anatolia as a male dancer in women’s clothing.

¹⁷¹ I find Bayat’s following argument relatable to me: “How, then, can one explain the episodic feuds between individuals and families of different denominations who have been living together through communal divide? This is an extremely challenging task, and a satisfactory response is yet to emerge. Suffice here to suggest that the very coincidence of cosmopolitan interaction, on the one hand, and communal belonging, on the other, carries within itself the seeds of an exaggerated emphasis on demarcation, which can potentially grow into mass violence of extraordinary scale. Georg Simmel observed that “the degeneration of difference in convictions into hatred and fight occurs only when there are essential similarities between the parties.” In other words, when conflict erupts between ethno-religious groups that had a history of similarity and coexistence, rival parties make an exaggerated attempt to highlight the differences and wipe out blurring and confusion.” Bayat, *Life as Politics*, 207.

Religiousization is an effort to protect against modernization. After every modernization process, a religious fever begins. For Berkes, modernization is a matter of shaking the sacred rules. This is much more comprehensive process than the separation of religion and state, expressed by secularism¹⁷². Therefore, based on the conflict between tradition and modernity, it is necessary to evaluate the conflicts narrated by the interviewee who had migrated from a rural way of life to a new setting in addition to her religious identity.

Through this narrative, she did not only display of her religious identity, but also the story behind the way she was expected to behave and dress, why she did not continue her education, and how she encouraged her children to pursue a successful educational life. **Melek**'s story, according to her, especially as a woman, was shaped by the expectations of the interplay of moral judgements and discursive discrimination against Alevis. These expectations became particularly evident in processes such as the need to pay attention to her attire, avoiding studying in a high school, which was far from her house – as a girl; she did not dare to go there alone – and eventually dropping out of school. According to her, these experiences were linked to the importance she placed on her children's education to prevent them from facing similar problems.

I hold the view that it is necessary to generalize **Melek**'s story not only through her individual experiences, but also through the exposure of Alevi or Sunni women from the same class¹⁷³ background to common patriarchal norms and the adaptation processes of families migrating from villages to cities. **Melek** addressed these issues through the Alevi-Sunni divide, giving examples from her own life story. However, at one point, she said, 'I felt that my mother was happy that I dropped out the school so I could help her with the housework.' While explaining that her shy temperament stems from Alevi culture and the fears associated with this identity – despite me finding it

¹⁷² Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 5-7.

¹⁷³ See: Nikki R. Keddie, "Problems in the Study of Middle Eastern Women," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10, no.2 (1979): 225-240.

quite normal for someone who grew up with stories of Alevi massacres to be timid, quiet and thus even shy – I must also mention that, regardless of whether they were Alevi or Sunni, I heard very similar stories from women of her class background about dropping out of school.

Alevi women, the ones I encountered during the fieldwork, who are sensitive for discriminatory words and behaviors related to their religious identities have not had the opportunity to consider their internal contradictions. In other words, when expressing themselves on issues like gender equality or marriage, they usually compared religious identities with Sunni people by ignoring patriarchal norms if not asked in detail. Alevi women defined the areas of freedom they gained, such as taking alcohol or participate in activities with men equally, by comparing themselves to Sunni women and pointing out the differences between them. The effort to show in which areas they are freer than Sunni women are, and how they differ from Sunni women, made it difficult to obtain information from them about the problems they might have with the patriarchal norms and gender inequalities. They also, implicitly, expressed that non-Alevi women do not have the freedoms they possess.

But for us, there's nothing like 'women don't drink.' There's no rule that a woman can't sit at the table... We don't have any alcoholics: exceptions don't break the rule, but there are no alcoholic women, you know. Because they've tried it... So, I think fundamentally it's all based on this Alevi culture. Actually, the absence of rules and strictures (**Serpil, 46**).

At the same time, they expressed that what they considered to be their freedom was provided by Alevi culture.

There's no need to necessarily put it into words. I mean, this is the real foundation of Alevi culture, you know. That's why maybe they say you are born Alevi; you don't become one. You just feel it from within. That's the foundation. Because there are no rules, not strictures. No one says it's taboo. No one raises you with the fear of Allah striking you down forever, you know, like that. (**Serpil-46**).

To some extent, this approach has valid foundations in Alevism. Particularly, there is frequent reference to the saying of an important religious figure, Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, emphasizing the education of women. However, the dynamics of interfaith or intra-

faith marriages reveal certain paradoxes that necessitate a deeper examination beyond the freedom Alevi culture provides to women.

One of my interviewees, **Güler (aged 57)**, married a man whose family is highly religious and currently aligned with the AKP (she specifically emphasized this). Her husband identifies himself as secularist and Atatürkist, being a sergeant in the military. Consequently, she married with him with peace of mind, but never told her Alevi identity to anyone in his family except her mother-in-law. She says that “When my father-in-law was alive, whenever I visited them, I would immediately put on a skirt and a headscarf in another room.” Despite not revealing her identity, she was found odd by all the other women in the family because she wore jeans, did not pray, and did not wear a headscarf. Her mother-in-law did not want to accept her because she was Alevi and had previously been engaged to someone else. If this woman were Sunni instead of Alevi but had the same lifestyle, as we understood from the reactions of the other women in the family, she would still receive similar reactions.

Similarly, the problematic aspects of intra-sect marriages in Alevism become less discussed if the freedom of women is expressed only by referring to the Alevi culture. One of my interviewees, an Alevi woman now married to a Sunni man, expressed how challenging her experiences had been with her first husband who was Alevi.

I got married in 1993. After divorcing in 2003, I met Onur. My first husband was an Alevi, but what happened? My parents said so too. My first husband did a lot to me. It's still inside me, goes with me to the grave. Cheating, taking my gold, he beat me, I've buried a lot inside. Even my parents don't know most of it (**Sema, 51**).

5.2.2. Discrimination against Alevis in Discourse

The memories in the backgrounds of Alevi interviewees have prepared them for discriminatory language they might encounter in urban life. More precisely, they have found a way to classify non-Alevis as either backward or enlightened because of such experiences with similar discriminatory expressions or practices still existing today. Therefore, it makes a lot of sense to include in the repertoire of commonalities I

referred to as “lower-middle class secular habitus” in the previous chapter, ways in which Alevi and Sunni individuals discuss what they know about each other, what they expect, and how to negotiate. For instance, when an Alevi offers *aşure*¹⁷⁴ to their neighbors at the end of *Muharram*¹⁷⁵ or invites them over to eat *aşure* at their home, they think they understand who embodies the secular habitus, or rather, who are enlightened, democrat¹⁷⁶, and Atatürkist. This perspective stems from one of the discriminatory discourses towards Alevis that almost all my Sunni and Alevi interviewees are aware of or have heard in some form, such as “Alevi food cannot be eaten” or “Food slaughtered by Alevis cannot be eaten”. As **Zehra** put it:

I make *aşure* and invite everyone. Anyone who is destined to eat from that pot can come and eat. But despite that, maybe due to people’s opinions and beliefs, they couldn’t come; they want to come but hesitate, so they can’t come. So, I offered them *aşure* in plates. The sentence I heard was this: “When making *aşure*, they say Alevi people use the water from their ritual ablution (gusül), so it shouldn’t be eaten.” This really hurt my honor. I no longer offer *aşure* to them (**Zehra, 66**).

There are various similar discourses about Alevis, typically rooted in moral prejudices. Among these, one of the most extreme examples could be the implication that Alevis engage in incestuous relationships with their family members, expressed as “*mum söndü*” (the candle went out). Many of the Alevis and Sunnis I spoke with were aware of or had heard it at some point in their lives. Although factors such urban life, modernization, and increased education levels of Alevis and Sunnis have reduced its credibility, it has nonetheless left its mark on the experiences of Alevis. They find themselves either defending and explaining their beliefs or distancing themselves from those who propagate such ideas. One of the Sunni interviewees said that she heard these statements against Alevis in the past but her ideas changed when she met them as Bayat (2010)¹⁷⁷ argues that individuals often test their imaginery and abstract

¹⁷⁴ Ashura is a dessert made from a mixture of grains, fruits, dried fruits, and nuts. Muslims in Turkey and the Balkans prepare ashura during the month of Muharram.

¹⁷⁵ Alevis fast for 12 days during the month of Muharram. This fast is related to the 12 Imams who are significant in both Shia and Alevi beliefs. It also marks the beginning of the Islamic New Year.

¹⁷⁶ This is one of the words Alevis used frequently to describe people who are Atatürkist, enlightened (*çağdaş*) and do not discriminate against them because of their sect.

¹⁷⁷ Bayat, *Life as Politics*, 188.

perceptions of the “other” (formed by factors like prejudice or provocation) with the real interactions and relationships they develop with them. As Hatice expressed:

No, no. We don't have any around here. There are no Kurds or Alevis at all. In only knew Alevis after I got married and moved to Malatya¹⁷⁸. I knew them there, and I really liked Alevis. My spouse also had many friends, they would invite us to their villages. But we used to hear a lot of wrong things about Alevis before. Later, we realized that those things weren't true (**Hatice-69**).

For instance, **Gamze (aged 48)** began explaining these discourses against Alevis like *mum söndü* and *gusül abdesti* without my prompting and how she counterattacked them.

We don't do what they say, like “*mum söndü*”. They do. Take *gusül abdesti*, for example. I take a bath, that's it. What does the name matter? When I was a child, they said you blow out candles and engage in sexual intercourse. I felt so bad. “You do it,” I said. Don't you do it to your children in your religious orders? Don't you abuse children in all your religious orders, boys too?

They vividly remember and frequently mention the discriminatory approaches they experienced both in primary and high school.

For example, when I was in primary school, a girl asked me whether I am A or S. I learned about the Alevi-Sunni divide in primary school. In high school, I was often singled out; girls would exclude me because I was Alevi. Once, I remember saying to someone, ‘I got an A in religious studies, and you got a C’ to defend myself.” (**Filiz-41**).

In discourse about Alevis, there is often a strong emphasis on cousin marriages and/or marriages within their own community. This is frequently highlighted as one of their ‘distinctive characteristics’. The practice of typically marrying only within their faith community is also seen as demonstrating their adherence to Turkish traditions by nationalists, which excludes Alevism from being an inclusive identity regardless of various ethnic backgrounds. However, Alevi interviewees argue that this discourse is a language consciously used by Sunni people to discriminate them. They argue that Sunnis also engage in cousin marriages but do not discuss it. There is also a secular

¹⁷⁸ A city in the Easter Anatolia region of Turkey.

dimension to these discussions. Alevi often point out in their conversations that such labeling regarding cousin marriages contradicts modern medical science. Therefore, they believe that such labeling damages their modern identities, presents them as a backward community and is used as a language to marginalize them.

Regarding marginalization, in my interviews with Alevi, I noticed that feelings of being a second-class citizen become more pronounced as education and income levels decline. In their daily lives and dialogues with non-Alevi individuals of similar socioeconomic backgrounds, they mention that discussions such as *mum söndü* or *gusül abdesti* are still brought up. Despite Alevi who have gained social mobility in society through increased education and income levels largely interpreting such narratives as signs of ignorance and relics of the past and ceasing to attribute much significance to them. Alevi from lower socioeconomic status still report experiencing these issues and have higher commitment to Alevi identity and rituals. **Veysel (aged 45)** who works as a laborer in a municipal cleaning service, described experiencing this discrimination throughout his life.

I feel like I am considered a second-class citizen. I experience this in both in the work and in my personal life. The perspective on life and how one views others is somewhat apparent in an Alevi person. However, the behavior of others also reveals itself. Having known people for years, I can say I understand people, almost like an expert of human nature. So, Alevi individuals are seen as lacking in humanism, with exclusionary attitudes. I have experienced these things firsthand. I once asked my friends, “Morality or religion?” They were left puzzled. Morality, of course. Religion came for morality. Some people react as if I’ve caused a disaster when I say this. They’ve caused us a lot of harm in this country. Killed us. Just because I say morality is more important than religion, some think I should die for it. We’re not doing that to them though.

Alevi believe they can only rise to a limited position in society because the state adheres to a specific religion (Sunni Islam), and for that matter they think that secularism is not fully practiced. They exclude Atatürk from this, believing he strove to establish principles of secularism and enabled Alevi to gain opportunities as a result. However, there is a prevailing sense that Turkish governments failed to uphold these gains. Regarding Atatürk, in addition to being a progressive and enlightened statesman, there are occasional expressions among Alevi such as “He is a saint for us” in the language of their own beliefs.

There's no such thing as secularism if the state's religion is Sunnism. It's only on paper, secularism. That means they aren't living it, and we can't live it either. They don't allow us to live it. Actually, we're plenty, we exist, but we don't know about each other. We don't have something like standing up for each other (**Veysel-45**).

It seems paradoxical that Alevis are both proponents of secularism and at the same time express political issues with reference to religious terms, such as viewing Atatürk as a saintly figure or displaying images of Atatürk alongside figures like Hz. Ali and Hacı Bektaş-I Veli in *cemevis*. However, they explained that they do so because they want to practice their beliefs freely and openly, and that is why they believe that secularism is the only guarantor of this freedom.

Because after Atatürk came, we were able to practice our worship and live well, both men and women freely. Because we couldn't even say we were Alevi, we were denying it. We couldn't say we were Alevis. For example, I worked, started a job. I couldn't say I was Alevi because I couldn't even get a job if I said so (**Ayten-66**).

When discussing the official status of *cemevis* with Sunni interviewees, generally three perspectives emerged. The first one, supportive in nature, was that just as they have their mosques or other religions have their churches or synagogues, Alevis also have their *cemevis* and they have the right to practice their beliefs freely. The other perspective is also supportive, but it involved Sunni interviewees making comments from a position of some kind of perceived superiority over Alevis. For example, Sunni interviewees discussed how Alevis should worship, how they should use their *cemevis*, or the place of Alevi practices and religious leaders within Islam, all while believing they were supporting Alevis. In essence, they interpreted Alevi religious rituals and practices based on references to the rituals and practices in Sunni Islam.

For example, after my grandmother's death, *cemevi* organization was going to host a meal, a 40th day meal. Onur (her Sunni husband) said, "Will the *dede* (spiritual leader) come there? How will it be?" I replied, "Yes, the *dede* will come." We ate there, and he said, "When will we sit with the *dede*, chat with him?" I said Onur it is finished. He found it strange. He said, "Is this what you call worship?" He said, "What's this?" I thought everyone would gather and sit down, pray and everyone would pray, then we would move on to the meal, but you directly eat the meal, then say your prayers. He found it very strange. He said, "That's not a place of worship," he said (**Sema-51**).

The cultural capital of the interviewees, particularly Sunni interviewees' upbringing in a certain religious and cultural practices, shapes their manner of critiquing other beliefs and cultures based on the religious practices they are familiar with.

I recognize *cemevis* as places of worship, even though highly religious Sunnis may not want to. I see them as places of worship, but I notice that *cemevis* are not often used by Alevis themselves. There is a place, but nobody goes there, you know. Alevis really need to step up and update it, like they need to start going. For example, (asking his Alevi wife) how many times have you been to a *cemevi*? **(Onur-53)**.

They need to assertively show Sunnis that this is our place of worship. Let me tell you what they see. Yes, there are *cemevis*, but they don't see them as places of worship; they see them as places where they perform their rituals, like cultural centers. However, all Alevis should somehow start going, like how they go to Friday prayers. They need to assert to the Sunni community, even to the Directorate of Religious Affairs, that we go here, we perform our rituals and worship here—they need to apply pressure, by pressure I mean they need to show that they exist. There are *cemevis*, there are places of worship, but I haven't seen many people going there. If they go, they eat, chat, and leave if there's something there. However, if they entered before eating, danced the *semah*¹⁷⁹, and then moved on to eating. Of course, it should be like a cultural center too, but they need to give the impression of a place of worship to the Sunnis **(Onur-53)**.

Now, Alevis also have their own community, they have their *dedes*. They have this thing called "*dede*." Is there something like that in Islam? Aren't Alevis Muslims too? **(Tarık-64)**.

Finally, Sunni interviewees who identify themselves as atheist or socialist interpreted the issue within the framework of politics and power relations. They expressed that the dynamics leading to Alevis feeling like second-class citizens in society, and issues such as the status of *cemevis*, are the result of the political support for the dominant faith and religion in societal contexts. They also argued that behind the claims of Alevis being more enlightened, progressive, or secular lies their lack of political dominance.

If Alevis weren't treated as second-class citizens in this society, I mean they wouldn't become high-level bureaucrats or chief physicians. Therefore, if Alevism were the dominant sect like Shiism in Iran, we would say Alevis are very conservative people. That's how I think the issue developed **(Oktay-40)**.

¹⁷⁹ *Semah* performed in cem ceremonies by Alevis and Bektashis is a path to reaching God through mystical and aesthetic movements synchronized with the rhythm of music played by the zakirs, who are the service holders, accompanied by verses sung along with the saz. See. <https://yakegm.ktb.gov.tr/TR-345113/alevi-bektasi-ritueli-semah.html>

The Alevis interviewed were aware of how the discrimination they face is intertwined with politics. In a sense, this confirms Yashin's (2002)¹⁸⁰ argument that thinking and discussing secularism in Turkey independently of state is not really feasible. In parallel to Sunnis interpreting the issue politically, Alevis expressed that they believe this political perspective is the fundamental reason for the discrimination they face. **Filiz (aged 41)** recounted that when they used to live in Keçiören, one of their neighbors was a veiled and deeply religious woman. She emphasized the need for such individuals in society because they supported each other regardless of their religious differences. She then said, "I used to call her a 'normal person'." She stated that their current next-door neighbors do not talk to them or even greet them because of their political allegiance. She thought that they were part of some kind of religious order because of their dressing style and behaviors. She mentioned that they might have deduced that they are Alevi from the hymns they play at home or even from their appearance. When I asked detailed questions about the reasons of why she called her neighbor as a 'normal person', I found that although Alevis and Sunnis have different cultural norms, they have a shared history of living together and building relationships. This suggests that religious differences, when not mixed with politics, have a limited impact on people's daily interactions.

In addition, based on my observations, Alevis believe that even Sunni politicians who support them may lose votes or support just because of this. For example, I attended the official opening of the *Pir Sultan Cemevi* in Batıkent. During the opening, where many CHP politicians were present, I overheard women next to me saying, "Now they might turn against this man just because he came here," referring to Mansur Yavaş, who was elected for the second time as the Ankara Mayor with a high percentage of votes in 2024.

Alevi interviewees usually interpreted the fact that they do not have the chance for upward mobility in society and their feeling of "second-class citizens" with reference to religious borders shaped by right-wing politics in Turkey. The example provided by

¹⁸⁰ Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, 6.

Filiz (aged 41), in neighborhood relations, demonstrates how the connection between neighbors' religious identities and political views creates a boundary when they are intertwined. She expressed that being Alevi is a reason why their neighbors do not communicate with them or greet them because they see religious identities as in cooperation with politics. However, she used to be very close with a veiled neighbor where she used to live and had genuinely introduced her as a highly religious person. These examples also highlight how religious boundaries in Turkey are intertwined with politics.

However, when we attempted to delve deeper into what Alevi participants meant by 'them' during field interviews, it became evident that they were referring not to Sunni Muslims but to political Islamists, particularly fervent supporters of the AKP in recent years. For instance, when **Gamze (aged 48)** described how she perceives Alevi people in Turkey as particularly enlightened, and the connection she saw between being Alevi and being progressive and open-minded in Turkish society, I asked her, "What do you think about Uğur Mumcu¹⁸¹? He was not Alevi." She hesitated for a moment and responded as follows:

Actually, I'm not saying these things about them. They are exceptional. Well, they exist but very few. Are there more bad ones in this period? I don't know. We had neighbors, for example. They used to prepare very nice meals for *iftar*. We used to visit them even though we weren't fasting. I think I'm talking about the current situation. Discrimination is more evident now. Actually, we question everything not as Alevis but as social democrats. Our youth questions religion. That's why we are enlightened.

5.2.3. Everyday Strategies against Discrimination: Concealment or Assertion of Identity

Based on the data provided by field research, I have categorized Alevi interviewees' methods of coping with all these discursive discriminations or generally encountered

¹⁸¹ An enlightened Turkish journalist, researcher and writer. He was assassinated in 1993 by Islamist fundamentalist terrorists when a bomb placed in his car exploded. For details see: <https://cpj.org/data/people/ugur-mumcu/>

exclusionary attitudes into two categories. The first is concealing or hiding their identities. Examples of these behaviors include pretending to fast during Ramadan, and making efforts to introduce themselves as Muslims, which also entails adapting to the practices of the Sunni culture. The second approach involves legitimizing their identities through counter-discriminatory rhetoric with statements like 'they are actually immoral.' Discussing ways to strengthening Alevi identity has been a topic of conversation with nearly all Alevi interviewees.

In interviewees with Alevis, there were those who publicly declare their identities even though they were hiding before, those who still try to hide this identity, and those who described how much Alevis feared until about a decade ago, despite now openly discussing it. They talked about how the *cem* ceremonies used to be secretive, how they worshipped in secret places known to participants even though they did not have “*cemevi*” written on them. Even 46 years old **Serpil** said she had only attended the *cem* ceremony twice in her life and emphasized how secretive it was. She described how in a village near Ankara, when a *dar cemi*¹⁸² was to be held, men kept watch outside all night in case of a raid. Especially during Ramadan, Alevi interviewees provided the most examples of hiding their identities. **Nermin (aged 56)**, who described waking up for *suhoor*¹⁸³ during Ramadan and turning on the kitchen lights, said, "My mother used to wake up every night and make noise in the kitchen so that others would think we were also waking up for suhoor." Her grandmother used to attend *mevlits* with the neighborhood women and go to Quran reading days.

I find it more meaningful, along with Nermin's account, when Sunni interviewees often express statements like "we didn't used to know who Alevi was and who wasn't," that Alevis used to conceal their identities more in the past. Similarly, in some Alevi families, parents didn't even tell their children that they were Alevi.

¹⁸² In the Alevi-Bektashi tradition, a gathering based on the principle that a person who has passed away reconciles and seeks the consent of their loved ones through intermediaries is called a "cem."

¹⁸³ The meal eaten by those fasting during Ramadan just before dawn

I also remember, we didn't know what a Kurd was, we didn't know what an Alevi was, then these migrations happened. Alevi have always stayed in rural areas, they fled out of fear. They couldn't come down to the centers. It was never talked about. Even my father didn't tell us. We learned when we came to Ankara, in '68 (**Mahmut-75**).

There are still families who conceal that they are Alevi. **Zeynep (aged 47)** never told any of her neighbors in the apartment building that she is Alevi. "My parents never told anyone, and I don't either because I have a son, and I don't want their attitudes towards me to change," she said. There are also Alevi who try to adapt when they cannot conceal their Alevi identity. Serpil provided an example by describing the changes she observed in her mother after a Sunni daughter-in-law came into their family. She explained that her mother started fasting not only during *Muharram* but also during *Ramadan* and expressed a desire to read the Quran in Arabic. "Actually, our daughter-in-law is a secular person, but she is very devout and performs all her religious duties. I think my mother is influenced by her," she said.

This is a topic I've heard a lot among Alevi interviewees. It is generally said that Sunni women who marry to an Alevi man maintain their beliefs and face no restrictions on their freedoms. However, it is told that Alevi women who marry to a Sunni man are often heavily criticized and subjected to pressure. In fact, one of my interviewees' mothers used this expression related to this topic: "The one who comes to us becomes a wolf, the one who leaves us becomes a lamb" referring to Alevi-Sunni marriages and the situation of women. However, there were examples that proved the opposite.

Hülya (aged 62) explained that her own mother, being a Sunni woman, faced a lot of discrimination within the Alevi family of the man she married. She mentioned that her grandmother used the following words when she loved her: "One side of you is my child's child, the other side of you is the child of a snake"¹⁸⁴. On her father's side, when they were angry with her mother, they used to call her "the daughter of Yezit". She said that her mother tried so hard to please them. She also added that her father

¹⁸⁴ When I asked other interviewees whether they heard this phrase, some said, regardless of being Alevi or Sunni, it is used for all daughters-in-law, especially in the Eastern part of Turkey. One Alevi interviewee said, "My mother-in-law, who was also my aunt, loved my children in that way when they were babies."

would prefer her and her sisters to marry a Christian rather than a Sunni. Her husband **Celal (aged 64)** on the other hand, is Alevi, but he believed that his father-in-law was mistaken. He thought that Ramadan Bayram and other rituals of Sunni culture were part of society's traditions and cultural structure, and that they should not be interpreted solely in terms of religion. In fact, some Sunni interviewees also discussed the same issue with Alevism. They expressed that there is more discrimination in Alevism and that they are called "foreigner or *Yezit*¹⁸⁵" by them.

Alevi call non-Alevi 'foreigners'. What foreigners, I say. It seems like Alevi are the ones who segregate people more, I don't know. Now, if we consider Alevism as a religion, they seem stricter to me. That's how I've seen it and experienced it. Of course, there are also very strict Sunni individuals. There are crazy types who won't eat Alevi food, won't shake hands, won't meet you, you know. But all I hear is the word 'foreigner', they really separate a lot (**Onur-53**).

However, Alevi interviewees were explaining that they don't say '*Yezit*' to everyone, but rather to those who are cruel, ruthless, or referring specifically to political Islamist figures. **Filiz (aged 41)**, when asked if she would accept her daughter marrying a Sunni she said:

If they're not bigots, I wouldn't mind. But if they are, I'd want to stop it because they crush my daughter. They don't allow her to live well. They restrict everything, I'm afraid. If someone is cultured, went through a certain level of education, if their family is like that, then there are Sunni Muslims who live completely like us.

When I asked her what she meant by "Sunnis like us," she explained the qualities as being modern-minded and educated, giving importance to gender equality, avoiding oppression and being Atatürkist or democrat, all referring to which I had in the previous chapter attempted to explain in more detail as a lower-middle class secular habitus. As I explored deeper into the legitimacy criteria for people from different faiths being able to marry, I also realized that being a good person and being able to be morally upright even without religious belief revolve around these qualities. As I

¹⁸⁵ Yazid was the Umayyad caliph who, during his reign, ordered the killing of Imam Husain and his companions. Alevites use the name 'Yazid' to refer to those who do not love the Ahl al-Bayt (the family of the Prophet) and their descendants, who persecute their supporters (Alevites), and who approve of Yazid and his actions.

delved into these issues, I saw that there are indeed very different practices involved. More specifically, I observed the development of coping strategies for dealing with differences, and how these were reflected in certain activities.

For example, **Kadriye (aged 63)** whose son is married to an Alevi woman says she loves her daughter-in-law dearly and that their differing views do not cause any problems. In her daily life, such as during prayers, she wants her grandchild to be present, see, and learn. She believes it may be difficult for her grandchild to learn this practice from an Alevi mother. Although not explicitly stated, efforts are made to balance this through practices and compensatory actions.

At a *mevli* I participated, **Kadriye** who cares for her granddaughter from her Alevi daughter-in-law had given the little girl a prayer book for children. "Children should learn from a young age. Let our children know" she said. In fact, in inter-faith marriages, if both parents work and the child is not yet of preschool age, it is important who the caregiving grandparents are, since they subtly try to teach their beliefs and practices to the children.

Güler (aged 57), who is married to a Sunni man, mentioned that her mother-in-law chose the names for two of her three sons, ensuring they were names mentioned in the Quran. "I named my youngest son myself," she said. "She got very angry and didn't speak to me for weeks just because it's not mentioned in the Quran."

Another coping mechanism that I try to classify as assertion of identity also sheds light on how Alevi interviewees navigate boundaries and manage them through their daily interactions and momentary attitudes. For example, participating in election campaigns at the neighborhood head's (*muhtar*) tent was useful to observe how Alevi interviewees manage daily life boundaries. The *muhtar* candidate pointed to another female *muhtar* candidate who was distributing brochures in the opposite side:

Look, for example, while distributing her own brochures at the market, she tells people that I am Alevi and says, "Don't vote for those with impure blood (*kani bozuklar*)."
My friend personally heard this and came to tell me about it.

She also asked me which neighborhood of Batıkent I live in and told me who the Alevi female *muhtar* candidate there is, with a confident attitude that I would vote for her. This conversation and the subsequent recommendation happened very briefly and unplanned. For the woman, this was a familiar or previously experienced conversation. The prevailing idea is that they need to support each other to build a stronger Alevi identity. Alevi interviewees also argued that Alevis do not support each other as much as political Islamists do, and they do not support each other sufficiently. Some Alevi interviewees, expressing a lack of religious leadership, interpreted Alevis who fast during Ramadan or who have not learned about Alevi culture as corrupted.

Alevis cannot live their culture compared to others because they have no religious leaders. They came from village to the city and could neither remain a villager nor become a city dweller. The number of self-educated and self-aware people is not even thirty percent. For example, there is no longer any need to take care of each other. For example, there are Alevis in my workplace who fast during Ramadan. When I ask them why they fast, they say they don't know. It's because they haven't learned their own culture. So, you see, our people have experienced that kind of cultural corruption. Also, partly out of fear, of course. **(Filiz-41)**.

Some Alevi interviewees also mentioned that they no longer visit neighbors during Ramadan Eid, and they now show the same attitude towards people who do not recognize or know their religious practices such as *Muharram* fasting. **Sinan (aged 48)**, particularly feeling more assertive about his Alevi identity during the AKP era, said, "After these years (AKP era), I started to be proud of my identity and now I say I'm glad to be Alevi."

5.3. Politics of Everyday Life: Criticisms and Resistance

Sinan's argument that "I started to be proud of my identity" continued as "I do not defend Alevis but Alevism; Alevis are religious not puritans." When referring to "puritans," he expressed discomfort with the use of religion in politics whether through religious orders, politics, or in the broadest sense, the politicization of religion, in the following moments of the interview. He expressed that especially during the AKP era, he has become much more chauvinistic regarding Alevism. The impression I gathered from Alevi interviewees is that during the AKP era, the discriminatory language

regarding the long-standing Alevi-Sunni divide has politically become much more deepened. I have observed that they see the entire history of marginalization, rhetoric, discriminatory discourse they encounter in daily life are crystallized during the AKP era. They re-express their identities by associating the Sunnis, whom they frequently refer to as the source of these discriminatory discourses, or rather Sunnis who are not like them, that is, those who are not democratic or enlightened, with AKP and the religious orders, child abuse, murders of women and economic collapse that increased in visibility. During the interviewees, I felt like they have constructed a counter-narrative to a long history of discrimination on this channel. Even though they do not frequently visit *cemevis*, do not fast during *Muharram* and *Hızır* months, or give serious education to children in this direction, defending Alevism and expressing that they are proud of this identity has turned into a lifestyle defense.

Since this study focused on the lifestyle of people who define themselves as secular, it elaborated more on their lifestyles, references to religion and the boundaries they set accordingly. However, as seen in the examples provided by the interviewees, the years of AKP rule in Turkey, also necessitated a perspective aimed at understanding the political factors that shaped individuals' daily decisions, interactions, and practices. Drawing on Bourdieu's approach¹⁸⁶ that evaluates religion as a field of power, I believe that the political discourse labeling society as "us vs. them" with reference to religious/secular divide excludes individuals who identify themselves as secular from this field of power. More precisely, I believe that politics, by designating acceptable (*makbul*) believers or Muslims, excludes the individuals I interviewed, citizens having the lower-middle class secular habitus, from the field of religion as domain of power. In this context, I can say that my interviewees, regardless of whether they were Alevi or Sunni, as lower-middle class and secular citizens, found that the boundaries they try to delineate in their daily lives have become ambiguous due to the intertwined relationship between religion and politics. In accordance with Bourdieu's (2010) statement that the various types of capital, which delineate one's social class and dictate their position within power dynamics, also shape the strategies accessible for

¹⁸⁶ Bourdieu, "Genesis and Structure," 1-44.

navigating these struggles¹⁸⁷, interviewees feel that their options for making choices have narrowed in terms of lifestyles, and they perceive that their social status in society has eroded. In a sense, the lower-middle class secular habitus of the interviewees has now lost its synchronization with the religious field.

AKP, for example, sees secularism as irreligion and Westernization. Secularism is not about Christianity or Islam, is it? It is set of rules organizing the public life. **(Selen-46)**

Therefore, I have tried to look at the points my interviewees commonly agreed on about drawing boundaries in their daily lives and especially in public spaces. The most prominent among these are using religious practices as a spectacle in work life, the integrity of business ethics by undermining meritocracy and exploiting religious practices in ways that increase the workload of others. In these areas, I can say that my interviewees agreed on one point that violates their boundaries. This is the use of religion as a determinant outside of private life and its intertwined nature with politics in today's Turkey.

I now work as an urban planner in a private company. They tried very hard to take me to Friday prayers. Pressure, pressure. I did not want to. They can't give up on me just because I do my job well. But now I am looking for another job. There is an incredible favoritism. People like me also cut a swathe. **(Özgür-25).**

Another interviewee argues that:

For example, right now they look at me with prejudices like 'the Philosophy teacher is atheist, so and so is irreligious,' but I don't look at them that way. If they do their job well, I appreciate them. But if they use religion for their own interests while doing their job well, I don't like that. If they put it there for display (religious figures, posters), to be liked, appreciated, approved, and applauded, then I don't believe they are Muslims, or Christians for that matter **(Çetin-51).**

In workplaces or during working hours, practicing religious rituals can provoke reactions if it creates an additional workload for non-participants or inequality in working conditions. This issue is seen more as a matter of abuse rather than just a debate on faith or worship. One of my interviewees, **Serpil (aged 46)**, mentioned

¹⁸⁷ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 315.

working in the same office with a man a few years ago. She recounted that after her colleague went to Friday prayers and then participated in another prayer – calling it as *sünnet*¹⁸⁸ – as well, he did not return to the office.

I used to particularly dislike Fridays because I worked with a guy who would go to Friday prayers. He would warn me not to have any work scheduled during Fridays, saying things like "If you do, I won't forgive you for the sin." I couldn't get any Fridays off even when I had work scheduled. Despite expressing my discomfort, he wasn't bothered by this situation, which I didn't appreciate. Religion shouldn't be brought into school, work, or home anymore, please let it not happen.

Apart from this, interviewees explained that they tried to set sharp boundaries for themselves regarding relations with neighbors that acquire religious dimensions or turning into a “neighborhood pressure”. An interviewee who regularly prays expressed how valuable his faith is to him, and then stated that he was extremely disturbed by the fact that people in the district where he previously resided used it as a determinant in their relationships with others or their neighbors. Below I quoted some secular point of views about the discomfort with neighborhood if it is built on religious dimensions:

No one can put pressure on me. I don't put pressure on anyone. For example, I shouldn't say you must fast, you must pray – I shouldn't say that. There was this woman opposite in Keçiören, you know, how she was influencing you, trying to convince you to wear a headscarf (telling his wife) (**Onur-53**).

I don't like interference in my way of life; that's my boundary. I don't like interference in my children's way of life. I accept people as they are without judging them. But, you know, if someone is mistreating their spouse, their child, or their dog, or put pressure on me, well, that's not okay (**Çetin-51**).

Many of the interviewees talked about the fear generated by a political atmosphere where they cannot freely express their views. This was also described as something that undermines the boundaries they try to establish to protect their lifestyles. For example, **Selen (aged 46)**, who is a medical doctor, while stating that she can freely express her opinions in the municipality she is affiliated with, which is led by the CHP, mentioned that she wouldn't be as free if she held the same position in the Ministry of

¹⁸⁸ The common term for the sayings, actions, and approvals of Prophet Muhammad which serve as the second source of Islamic law.

Health. She explained that there is a pervasive connection to religious orders throughout all ranks, and records are kept on who attends Friday prayers.

Everyone should live the life they want; you know. It was like that in Turkey twenty years ago anyway. People didn't even say "I'm fasting" back then. When I was a child. I mean, if you really pushed and said eat something or whatever, they'd say "I intend to fast today" or something like that. Now, at workplaces, you know who is fasting and who isn't. It's the same at the Ministry of Health, they know who went to Friday prayers and who didn't. They keep records of that now. It's in the hands of the religious orders. Even during Ramadan, they close tea gardens in courthouses and such.

In many of these examples, distrust in the state's security forces also emerged prominently. One female interviewee expressed fear that which religious order a police officer might belong to not only affect them but their entire family as well if she expressed her ideas freely near one of them. The prominence of religious orders, particularly during the AKP era, and their increasing influence in educational institutions, were among the most criticized aspects of their prevailing politics. Here, I specifically chose to use the words "increasing influence" for religious orders because what one interviewee said was later confirmed by others I spoke with. **Celal (aged 46)** said, "Members of religious orders were always among us. You greet them, but you don't engage in conversation. That's how it is in Turkey."

The religious orders have always been present in Turkey, and depending on the region, their presence varies in intensity in people's everyday lives as familiar and recognized entities. However, in recent years, their economic empowerment and influence in healthcare and educational institutions, according to what my interviewees have conveyed, have narrowed the choices for people in Turkey who identify themselves as secular. For example, my interviewees who previously preferred not to shop at stores or markets affiliated with a religious order or known for their extreme right-wing affiliations, have now explained that they are compelled to go there because capital is now completely "in their hands," and their own income levels are declining in this economic landscape. In addition to their reactions to price increases in stores where they used to shop comfortably, they also recounted how some brands now sell clothing more prominently targeted towards Islamic conservatives, implying that money has shifted hands to them.

To put it more clearly, my interviewees' socio-economic positions have started to restrict their choices and lifestyles. They started to go to stores they didn't prefer to go before, or if they cannot afford private schools, they obliged to send their children to state schools that they wouldn't have chosen before because they believed that the quality of education had declined. Regarding this matter, criticism is particularly directed towards how AKP members display their wealth. For instance, one interviewee, a doctor who visited the home of a family known to be AKP members in the *Çukurambar*¹⁸⁹ neighborhood for a funeral, described the wealth she saw when she entered the house.

I was very surprised in *Çukurambar*. I go to their funerals, you know, their houses are amazing. The entrance of their house is as grand as our house, with gold leaf and such. Sometimes we use their bathrooms too, I see them (**Selen-46**).

The political debate revolved around how much wealth AKP members have accumulated recently, how they financially support only those who support them, and how they marginalize and discriminate against those who do not vote for them. Both Alevi and Sunni interviewees described that Islamic figures and discourse have begun to penetrate almost every aspect of society, imposing restrictions on cultural activities and expressions as well as economically impacting the lifestyles of lower-middle-class and self-identified secular individuals. Interviewees explained that they can no longer afford activities such as concerts, travel, vacations, or spending time in places where alcohol is served due to economic difficulties. As a result, they have moved their social gatherings, entertainment, and similar cultural activities to their homes. My interviewees believe that the public space is narrowing for them, and they think this is being done intentionally by the government. One of my interviewees mentioned that having an imam present at openings of state-owned institutions or organizations is not a reflection of Turkey's traditionally accepted religious beliefs or practices, but rather as a symbol of political Islam.

¹⁸⁹ A neighborhood in Ankara known with its wealthy residents who are AKP supporters. For a comprehensive study on the conservative middle classes written on a field study in *Çukurambar* see: Akçaoğlu, *Zarif ve Dinen Makbul*.

I feel very uncomfortable. Because political Islam's efforts to penetrate everywhere including cultural activities is very disturbing. It succeeds or not but at worst it causes harm as in the *Altın Portakal*¹⁹⁰. At worst it harms the balances. I hate this (**Oktay-40**).

5.4. Creating Space for Resistance: Poverty and Politics

Despite being so restricted in terms of lifestyle, the interviewees believed that the increasingly prevalent poverty was not just their own concern but was also relevant for AKP voters too. They think that opposition focused on preserving lifestyles wouldn't be effective because what really matters is poverty, and AKP especially obscures this through discourse, particularly regarding lifestyles.

We are concerned right. There's an ideology in power that views a certain lifestyle as the enemy. But aren't AKP voters poor? Poverty is their primary issue. Why are you talking about the constitution and the headscarf (referring to CHP). Why aren't talking about poverty? Look at Brazil, for example. How did that guy get elected? He talked solely about poverty, the end of the middle class, and wealth transfer. AKP's base is getting poorer. His base receives the most social assistance. In the news, they find something in the garbage and give it to their child's mouth. This is the situation we're in (**Oktay-40**).

Interviewees agreed on that the politics conducted by the CHP as the main opposition party, which is framed within the boundaries and issues set by the AKP, does not actually offer a solution to the concerns of those worried about lifestyle issues. AKP employs a discourse that marginalizes those outside its own voter base regarding lifestyle, yet if the opposition were to focus on poverty instead, it could potentially resonate deeply with the poverty within AKP's own voter base. In this sense, the extent to which secularism and secular politics are intertwined with class dynamics can be emphasized. The dominance of religion in public life and education forces children from poor families to attend schools they are compelled rather than willing to attend, and to reside in student dormitories – mostly belong to religious orders – they would not necessarily choose. The importance of poverty in politics extends to lifestyle as well. Citizens who are marginalized due to their lifestyle experience a situation where

¹⁹⁰ A traditional film festival held in Antalya. In 2024, it was cancelled by Ministry of Youth and Sports alleging that the content of the festival would harm the “national will”.

cultural activities, specific consumption patterns, or time spent outside the home are restricted to being confined at home again.

In this regard, clinging tightly to Atatürkist values, influenced by the politicization of religion during the AKP era, and reconstructing this identity by comparing it to its years before the AKP was one of the most stressed perspectives of the individuals I interviewed. In this context, during the interviews, I noticed that while discussing political past of Turkey, the interviewees preferred to use 'Kemalism,' whereas when speaking about their current views, they preferred to use the term Atatürkism. After 1980, Kemalism as an ideology in Turkey was often portrayed by the state through a frightening, suffocating, or coercive image of Atatürk. Atatürkism, on the other hand, seemed to symbolize a protective and progressive lifestyle that shapes the values they see as being lost in today's Turkey and signifies areas of freedom.

Some (politicians) were previously obsessed with Atatürkism. Atatürk was deliberately presented to us as a taboo **(Celal-64)**.

Everything done by the founding leadership is now narrated by the conservative mentality as a reflection of secularism. However, there were also reflections of modernity. Blaming everything on secularism, like our fez being abolished, was seen as the culprit. But figures like Kenan Evren transformed Kemalism into something like a set of rules in textbooks and elsewhere **(Oktay-40)**.

Both Yashin (2002) and Özyürek (2006) discussed the increasing visibility of Islam in the public sphere after the 1980s and the commercialization of the image of Atatürk, intruding into the private sphere of individuals¹⁹¹. Meta-symbols such as the headscarf and the figure of Atatürk are the main concepts around which secularism has been discussed in Turkey particularly in the last 2 decades in Turkey. However, I argue that when explained solely through these aspects, we might not perceive how a secular lifestyle internalizes the dynamics of modernity, alongside diverse belief systems in society, in every aspect of public and private social lives. This includes how people who define themselves as secular sustain traditional values or reinterpret them to gain new perspectives. To preserve this diversity and way of life, interviewees, particularly

¹⁹¹ Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*; Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

the women believe that they should not be afraid. Below are some final remarks of women who hold the view that we should not be afraid of AKP.

So basically, everyone is afraid, but I'm expecting people not to be afraid. If people weren't afraid, they would rise. All the people I follow such as journalists are currently in jail. If everyone rose up, we would rise from our ashes again. They're attacking everyone. They're attacking LGBT+ people (**Selen-46**).

Actually, I think there are more enlightened people than we realize. Sure, the AKP says they have fifty percent or whatever, but there are educated people within them too; they vote out of fear (**Ayten-66**).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Since winning the elections in 2002, the Adalet and Kalkınma Partisi (AKP, Justice and Development Party) has pursued a series of authoritarian policies that have raised concerns about the diversity of lifestyles in Turkey. These policies included restrictions on freedom of expression, regulations on alcohol sales, violations on women's reproductive rights, the content of mandatory religious courses in primary schools, the appointment of religious authorities as spiritual counselors in state institutions, and debates over the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. The increasing conservatism in everyday life have raised concerns about the authoritarian intervention in citizens' lifestyles by the secular segments of society including ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey.

Displays of dissatisfaction with the AKP government was manifested in the form of massive demonstrations, known as the *Cumhuriyet Mitingleri* (Republic Rallies), held in April and May 2007 across three major cities in Turkey: Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir and at the end of May 2013, another widespread protest against the government erupted in Turkey, known as the *Gezi Movement*. Various segments of society were dissatisfied with the government's authoritarian and neo-liberal policies participated in *Gezi Movement*. However, it was when the government placed the movement within a conflict-driven framework, criminalizing and marginalizing the protestors in the eyes of the fervent supporters of AKP that religious discussions began to dominate the discourse surrounding the *Gezi Movement*.

The AKP government attempted to polarize society along religious lines and developed a sectarian discourse targeting Alevi citizens although the movement

included a diverse array of citizens having different cultural and religious backgrounds. Despite the protestors' attempts to steer the movement away from the government's polarizing religious discourse, Erdoğan, the Prime Minister then, targeted the *Gezi* protestors and the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP, Republican People's Party) portraying the *Gezi* movement as a continuation of what he referred to as the CHP mentality.

In this study, I aimed to understand this diversity and attempted to demonstrate that the secular lifestyle in Turkey has become deeply rooted into various ways of life, thereby showing that it cannot be part of a polarizing discourse of the politics. To achieve this goal, I examined the lifestyles and cultural values of a group of lower-middle class families defining themselves as secular and residing in close neighborhoods who experience diverse religious and cultural values as a way of life in Ankara, *Batıkent* neighborhood in Turkey, after 2000s. The study aimed to understand how the principle of secularism in a specific lower-middle class neighborhood in Turkey interacts with various social, cultural, and religious values and how this interaction shapes the lifestyles and worldviews of individuals. Accordingly, the focal point of this study was to understand how individuals with diverse religious and cultural affiliations embody the implications of secularism as a political doctrine in their everyday lives. To deeply understand this topic and partly immerse myself in the minds and lifestyles of these individuals, I conducted an 8-month ethnographic study in the *Batıkent* neighborhood of Ankara.

One of the reasons for choosing *Batıkent* as the area for field study was linked to Ankara's layered social and spatial transformation process. As a consequence of this historical process, it emerged as a residential area and founded as a solution project, particularly considering demographic shifts such as migration that altered the population structure. Following the transformation experienced by Ankara as a model city, the role of *Batıkent* in this historical process holds significance in terms of developing an understanding of both the spatial aspect and the lower-middle class residents residing there. On the other hand, I chose this area because it represents a successful neighborhood project that is organized into cooperative sties named after

occupational groups, including mosques and *cemevis* (Alevi worship houses), as well as Alevi and Sunni populations.

In this field, I conducted in-depth interviews with 20 families. 13 families identified as Alevi, while the other 7 identify as Sunni. In addition, I used questionnaire to obtain demographic information of the interviewees and participated in various activities as a participant observer such as *mevlits*, official opening ceremony of *cemevi* in Batkent, International Women's Day organization and election campaign of a *muhtar* candidate.

I predominantly utilized Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital, along with his explanations on power dynamics within the religious field. This choice was driven by the fact that despite their diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, the group I studied shared a common generational identity. A shared element shaping this social identity and its meaning-making capacity is the collective memory of individuals educated within the same system during similar years, embodying a generation that internalized Atatürk's ideas and reforms. Additionally, they were shaped under similar social and economic conditions due to coming from similar traditional structures. Building on this perspective, I examined their daily lives, gender roles, child-rearing practices, religious, cultural, and social activities. I observed that this generation shared commonalities which shape their perspectives regarding these areas of life, which I termed as lower-middle class secular habitus.

In the last 20 years, the increase in Islamic discourse and activities in the public and educational spheres in Turkey has highlighted commonalities in the lifestyles of those who identify themselves as secular. I observed that these shared concepts and expressions, which I refer to as lower-middle class secular habitus, include being Atatürkist, having a modern mindset and behavior, and placing a high value on education. This research sought to illuminate the perspectives of lower-middle-class individuals from a diverse religious and cultural background on secularism. Challenging the stereotype of 'elite secularists,' this study revealed a distinct understanding of secularism among this population. They defined their secular lifestyle in the axis of what they call Atatürkist values. Atatürkist values, as expressed

by interviewees, signify being modern and progressive, attaching importance to education and gender equality, which they particularly define as equality of women and men.

Participants perceived secularism as a catalyst for personal and societal progress, emphasizing its role in empowering women and fostering social mobility through education. Notably, this group did not equate secularism with irreligiosity but rather viewed it as a safeguard for their religious beliefs. By constructing identities intertwined with Atatürkism and secularism, these individuals formed a significant counter-narrative within Turkish society. This research, I think contributed to a more nuanced understanding of secularism by demonstrating that it is not confined to a privileged elite but is deeply embedded in the lives of a broader segment of the population who equated Atatürkism and secularism.

I observed that individual lives, including their traditional and religious practices, coexist with elements of modernization without being threatened but protected by secularism. From the perspective embraced by the interviewees, secularism was perceived as the guarantor of the diversity of beliefs and their lifestyles in Turkey.

Interviewees generally embraced the idea that religion should be a private matter and normalized its place within the everyday flow of life through their practices. They prefer their children to learn about religious practices and traditions through informal transmission at home rather than formal religious education. In fact, this reflects the current political climate in Turkey, influencing educational institutions, and they are concerned about their children being subjected to a religious education rather than the religious education they had in the past at schools and in their family lives.

In addition, I emphasized understanding that leading a secular lifestyle is not limited solely to the being irreligious or atheist in Turkey; rather, it encompasses a wide spectrum of lifestyles where individuals integrate secular, religious, and traditional references into their daily practices and shape their lives accordingly. This perspective led me to interpret the classical secularization thesis—where the importance of religion

diminishes as societies modernize—in a different light. Among the individuals I interviewed were Sunni and Alevi individuals who continue their religious practices, as well as those who identify as atheist and culturally uphold traditional religious practices. In this diversity, it would be more meaningful to focus on the change in religion instead of discussing whether its role is diminishing or not. In this context, I observed that Turkey's history of modernization interacts with religion and traditional structures in a transformative and harmonious manner, rather than in an exclusionary way.

Discourses among Alevi interviewees regarding secularism centered on issues such as tolerance towards their religious beliefs, concerns about compulsory religious education, and demands for legal recognition. Specifically, most of the time, they defined Alevism in comparison to Sunnism such as issues on freedom of women, being an enlightened and modern people. They described characteristics of 'good' Sunnis with reference to the components of what I called as lower-middle class secular habitus. Perspectives of Sunni interviewees, on the other hand, frequently underlined their commitment to maintaining traditional religious practices and the inherent Turkish cultural dimensions of their Muslim identities within the Turkish context. I also observed that the political context of Turkey in the 2000s provided a ground for reconsidering the content of dialogues between Alevis and Sunni citizens as they frequently defined the commonalities that unite them.

I also examined how lower-middle class families, identifying as secular and coming from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, express their differences during interactions with each other and in encounters with different beliefs and identities. I explored how individuals define themselves in relation to others, express their freedoms, engage in neighborly relations, and practice their religions in public spaces such as the workplace setting which was the most stressed one. The most prominent among these were using religious practices as a spectacle in work life, the integrity of business ethics by undermining meritocracy and exploiting religious practices in ways that increase the workload of others. For neighborly relations, interviewees set sharp boundaries for themselves regarding relations with neighbors that acquire religious

dimensions which turns into a neighborhood pressure. Specifically, I explored the influence of discursive biases and stereotypes on their perceptions of worship styles and religious identities across different faiths.

In this regard, I divided Alevi interviewees into two groups when interpreting discriminatory discourse against them. The first group consisted of interviewees who had experienced upward mobilization through education, particularly highlighting examples from their past to explain discriminatory discourses, attributing them to ignorance and lack of education. The second group, regarding marginalization and discriminatory discourses, expressed the feelings of being a second-class citizen. This was more pronounced as education and income levels decline. They believe that Alevis can only rise to a limited position in society because the state adheres to a specific religion (Sunni Islam), and for that matter they think that secularism in Turkey is not fully practiced. I divided Alevi interviewees' way of coping with discrimination, based on the frequency of examples, into two categories: concealment and assertion of identity. Concealing or hiding identity included the examples of pretending to fast during Ramadan or making efforts to introduce themselves as Muslims like Sunni Muslims. Assertion of identity was the effort to legitimize their identity through counter-discriminatory rhetoric against Sunni Muslims and their sense of belonging that they believe has strengthened even more during the AKP era.

On the other hand, I discussed how Sunni interviewees make comments from a position of some kind of perceived superiority over Alevis. For example, Sunni interviewees discussed how Alevis should worship, how they should use their cemevis, or the place of Alevi practices and religious leaders within Islam, all while believing they were supporting Alevis. In essence, they interpreted Alevi religious rituals and practices based on references to the rituals and practices in Sunni Islam. Despite their differences, the characteristics that I refer to as the interviewees' lower-middle class secular habitus—such as being Atatürkist, modern, advocating gender equality, and prioritizing education for both girls and boys—also constitutes the boundaries they collectively – both Alevi and Sunni – draw in terms of their lifestyles. Therefore, it made a lot of sense to include in the repertoire of commonalities I referred to as lower-

middle class secular habitus in ways which Alevi and Sunni individuals discuss what they know about each other, what they expect, and how to negotiate on certain common political and cultural values.

Interviewees, whom I observed constructing their identities particularly around secularism within the lower-middle class, expressed their exclusion from the religious field due to the political relationship with religion and the new symbolic codes of the religious field, such as identifying as AKP voters, along with the economic losses they experienced. I understood that, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of religious field as a domain of power, interviewees who define themselves as secular are excluded from the religious field as they are seen as irreligious because they criticize AKP and not vote for it. In other words, their secular habitus does not align with AKP's definition of being a proper Muslim and they are excluded from the field of religion. In accordance, the political debate revolved around how much wealth AKP members have accumulated recently, how they financially support only those who support them, and how they marginalize and discriminate against those who do not vote for them.

Similarly, increasing power of religious orders in the AKP era, especially in the fields of education and health were sharply criticized by both Alevi and Sunni interviewees. But many of the interviewees talked about the fear generated by a political atmosphere where they cannot freely express their views. This was also described as something that undermines the boundaries they try to establish to protect their lifestyles. To put it more clearly, my interviewees' socio-economic positions have started to restrict their choices and lifestyles.

They emphasized the need for poverty politics to take precedence in Turkey to resist the system that excludes them economically, as well as in terms of identity and lifestyle. In a political climate where the AKP has polarized citizens based on their beliefs, cultural affiliations, or lifestyles, the expectations from the main opposition party were to shift away from the discourse set by the AKP and focus on the real issue of poverty. Based on the impressions I gained from the findings of this thesis, I believe

that conducting similar studies with individuals identifying themselves as secular from different social classes and regions would contribute to the literature on the diversity of religious facets and lifestyles.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

29 KASIM 2023

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Prof. Dr. Ayşe SAKTANBER

Danışmanlığımı yürüttüğünüz Aysun Güneş Durmuş "*The Secular Lifestyle of Urban Citizens: The Formation of Knowledge on Secularism and the Establishment of a Secular Way of Life in Ankara after the 2000s in Turkey*" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek 0457-ODTÜİAEK-2023 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof. Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut
Üye

Doç. Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ
Üye

Doç. Dr. Murat Perit ÇAKIR
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Süreyya ÖZCAN KABASAKAL
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

B. INTERVIEW QUOTATIONS

CHAPTER 3

1) Benim babamlar Hacettepeli ben doğma büyüme aslında Kurtuluşluyum. Orta sona kadar orda yaşadık zaten. Sonra Karayalçın'ın meşhur kooperatifleri ve uydu kent projesi. Benim annem halk bankasında çalışırdı o zamanlar. Bankacılar da böyle bir kooperatifleşme sürecine girdi. Esnaf Sanatkarlar sitesi annemlerin oturduğu yerin adı. O bitince zaten annemle babam hadi Kurtuluş yoksul bi mahalledir. Yani tipik memur semti gibi ama annemin memur maaşı direkt kiraya gidiyordu. Babamın maaşıyla da işte kooperatifin parası evin kömürü karşılanırdı **(Oktay, 40)**.

2) 93'te geldik. Babam geldi buraya kooperatife girmiş emekli olunca. Keçiören'den iki tane daire almış. Fakat şey babam daireyi sevmezdi. Gecekondundan çıkmış bir adamdı. Bahçeli ev isterdi. O yüzden Batıkent'te ilk öyle bir kooperatife girmiş almış Batıkent'i Karayalçın kurmaya çalışıyor ya o ara tanıdıklar vardı. Sonra annemle babam vefat edince kardeşlerim dediler ki annemin vasiyeti var o evde sen oturacaksın dediler. Başta çok istemedim ama oğlanın okulu iyi olsun diye geldim. Çok kaliteli öğretmenleri vardı. Atatürkçü. Temellerini sağlam attılar Mehmetcan'ın **(Ayten, 66)**.

3) Şimdi şöyle Batıkent için bunu söyleyemem ama biz önceden Keçiören'de otururken orası kasıyordu yani. Komşularımız da öyle bizi kasıyordu. O zamanlar tabi dua falan ederdim yine ama mesela ben şunu istemiyorum. Karşıdaki komşu orucunu falan tutuyo. Oruç açıldığı anda balkonda olmak istiyorum mesela olamıyorum. O beni çok sıkıyordu mesela anlatabiliyo muyum mekanlarda öyle Ramazan da yapamıyordum bi sıkıyordu beni insanlar. Hala öyle mesela ben ne kadar namazımı kılıyosam iftarda açıldığı zaman ben balkonda oturur sigaramı içerim yani. İçmeliyim yani. Burda onu yapıyorum mesela. Burda rahat. Kasılmayı sevmiyorum. Keçiören kasıyordu bizi. Hatta

Sema' da giyimine falan dikkat ediyodu yani. Sevmiyorum ben böyle şeyi yani (**Onur, 53**).

4) Yobazlardan kaçtık. Yani hani bir tane kızınız var mesela? Eşimin en çok rahatsız olduğu Ela daha yedinci sınıf 12 yaşında şortla markete gitmişlerdi ikisi. Geldiğinde eşimin tepesinden dumanlar çıkıyordu. Yaşlı bir adamı Ela'nın bacaklarına bakarken görmüş yani bu kabul edilebilir bir şey değil yani onu. Bir şey söylemiş mi? O kısma girmedim, muhtemelen tartışmadım kızımın yanında ama çok sinirlenmişti. Onun üzerinden zaten birkaç ay geçmeden taşındık. Biz Ekim ayında taşındık, Haziran'da oldu bu olay. Öyle taşınmaya karar verdik. Batıkent'e o nedenle gittik. Orada da var evet, bir takım yobaz olduğunu düşündüğümüz insanlar var ama en azından ne yazık ki ama yani en azından diyorum ama ne yazık ki azınlıkta oldukları için müdahale edemiyorlar ya da. Biz öbür tarafta biz azınlıktaydık. Biz korkuyorduk sanırım burada onlar müdahale edemiyorlar. Çünkü Batıkent'te benim oturduğum yerde böyle diğer Batıkent'in her tarafını çok iyi bilmiyorum ama genel anlamda heralde rahat ettiğimiz bir yer (**Serpil, 46**).

CHAPTER 4

5) Yani elimden geldiği kadar yaparım. Hiç gocunmam öyle şeylerden düşünmem yani bu kadın işi bu erkek işi. Yani o şeyleri geçtik artık. Şimdi Sema gel yardım et dese yok senin işin desem falan komik olur bu devirde yani. Ama tabii kadınlar çok daha detaylı düşünebiliyor. Ben mesela iş yok diyorum ama o yapacak bişeyler buluyor hep. Zihinleri sanki daha detaycı. Çocukla ilgili mesela o hep daha fazla yoruluyor. Ben ama yaparım elimden ne gelirse (**Onur-53**).

6) Kadınların, kızların bilinçli olması toplumun gelişmesi için mihenk taşıdır. Çünkü kadın doğurur, kadın yetiştirir, kadın var eder yani evlatlarını, çocukları, yuvayı kadın ayakta tutar. Kadınların kendi ayaklarının üstünde durması her şekilde bağımsız ve kendi kararlarını verebilecek bir insan olarak yetişmesi en öncelikli şeylerden birisidir (**Nurcan-60**).

7) Bence bütün şey bizde sorumluluk. Bi çocuk her şeyi evden aileden alır. Bence babadan çok önce annenin eğitimi önemli bi ailede. Böyle olduğu sürece de böyle işte tarikatlar marikatlar devlet de onlara göz yumuyo oy potansiyelinden dolayı. İnşallah artık bu hükümet değişir de Allahım. Yoksa yok yani bittik gittik Türkiye’de yani **(Hatice-69)**.

8) Ama bence yine dönemine ve yani şey akranlarına göre bence daha açık fikirliymiş. Mesela bi tane benim teyzem işte kot pantolon giydiğinde komşusu işte laf etmiş onun kızı da işte kot giyiyor diye falan diye o zamanlar kadınlar hep etek giyiyor falan ya. O da mesela yapıştırmış cevabını hani hiç gelip teyzeme sen niye pantolon giyiyorsun dememiş mesela **(Buket-32)**.

9) Giyim konusu bizde hiç sorun olmaz. Mesela giyer bazen mini etek ben diyorum bazen giyme çok kısa babası güzel gayet güzel diyo. Karışmaz bize yani **(Hatice-69)**.

10) Tabi ki olsun. Hakkımızdır. Ama olmasın diye her şeyi yapmak lazım. Ben bir kere oldum. Yıkıcı bişey biliyo musun. Çok acı. Felaketti benim için. Hatırlamak bile istemiyorum **(Güler-57)**.

11) Şimdi koşullara bakıyosun. Ben iki çocukla zor başettim. Şimdi 4 çocuğum olsaydı benim oktuabileceğim miydim böyle. Bizim gibi insanlara en fazla iki. Ya en zenginler bile bi tane yapıyo bizim derdimiz ne. Yapıyolar dört beş tane at sokağa sonra **(Kemal-67)**

12) Ama eşim için şükrediyorum. Mesela bana diyo ki dile benden ne dilersen annen için ne yapabilirim. Babamdan sonra yalnız kaldı annem. İstersen diyo müstakil ev turalım ayrı katlarda anneni oturtalım birini. O yönü çok hoşuma gidiyo. Başka erkek olsa. Benim anam babam da var der mesela. Hele Necati kayınbabam. Onunla bi sohbet et şeker şeker ya. Adam çok iyi, çok Cumhuriyetçi yakasında mutlaka koyar Atatürk rozetini **(Sema-51)**.

13) Bilsin evet. Zöhre ananın orada bize söylediler. Siz niyaz ederken çocuk da görsün dediler. O da yapsın diyor. Gelenektir yani. Bayrak yarışı. Bizim büyüklerimiz pek bişey anlatmadılar öğretmediler. Kulaktan dolma hep. Sadece türkü dinlerken elini kolunu sallamakla olmuyor bu iş sadece gözyaşı dökmekle olmuyor **(Veysel-45)**.

14) Mesela ben İkrar'a soruyorum baban ne yapıyor arıyorum işten bazen. Ehlibeyt namazı kılıyor diyo. Onları biliyor öğrenmiş **(Filiz-41)**.

15) Çok küçükken anneannelere gittiğimizde Beşikdüzü'nde oruç tutuluyodu. Hayatımda oruç ilk defa orda gördüm sanırım. Gece kalkıyolar teyzemler annemler falan. Teyzem de becardı o zaman. Ve böyle sabah uyanıyoruz. Kahvaltı hazırlanıyo işte ablam falan başka çocuk var mıydı hatırlamıyorum. Birincisi sabah yapılan o kahvaltı ikincisi iftar çok keyifli ama niye biz oruç tutmuyoruz. Tutcaz işte gece bizi de kaldırım işte diyoduk. Kaldırmıyoladı çok uyuz oluyodum. O eğlenceyi kaçırmış gibi hissediyodum. Cidden ağladığımı hatırlıyorum **(Buket-32)**.

16) Yeğenim ilkokul dördüncü sınıfa gidiyor bazen kardeşim yetişemiyor ben almaya gidiyorum okuldan. Bi gün almaya gittim. Suratı bembeyaz. Anlatmıyor da noldu kızım dedim. Arabaya bindik eve götürüyorum. Sora sora anlattı. Son ders din dersiymiş. Kadın tutmuş şey diyomuş. İçki içenler cehenneme gidecek yanacak. Yani anası da babası da içiyo o da görüyo yani. Türban takmayanlar etek giymeyen kadınlar şöyle olacak böyle olacak. Çocuklar kaskatı olmuş. Dayı gerçekten böyle mi dedi. Yok kızım dedim. Yani ama ufak tefek şeyler oluyor yine **(Oktay-40)**.

17) Hiç din dersi olmasın bence. Çocukla dini bağdaştıramam ben zaten. Hiçbiri için olmasın. İlla öğretmek istiyosa aileler kültürel bi kodlama olarak biz çocukluğumuzda nasıldık öyle olsun. Tamam ben öğrenmedim (gülüyor) ama benim çocukluk arkadaşım hafız mesela. O öğrenmiş istemiş. Ben çocukken Kuran Kursuna da gittim bilmem neye de gittim. Arkadaş çevresiyle. Şu an Kuran Kursuna yolladın. O hocanın hangi cemaatten hangi tarikattan olduğunu biliyo musun. Nasıl bir kodlama çocuğun kafasına biliyo musun. O zaman öyle değildi ki **(Oktay-40)**.

18) Görünüşte Atatürkçü görünüp ama daha çok dinci ailelerin tercih ettiği bir okulmuş meğerse. Hemen bize de çok yakın diye oraya verdik. Sevgi dersiydi o zaman din dersi değil adı. 1. sınıfta sevgi dersiydi. Taş olursunuz falan demiş öğretmenleri. O zaman bi korkmuşlardı taş olacağız diye. İşte şöyle şöyle yapmayın böyle yapmayın taş olursunuz demiş çocuklara. O zaman bi okulu birbirine karıştırmıştım ben gidip. Yani küçücük çocuk ne taş olacak. Girmesinler o kadının dersine demiştim o zaman. Okul yönetimi tamam girmesinler dedi. Çünkü çocukları yanlış yönlendiriyordu korkuyorlardı. 6 yaşındaki çocuk yani taş olmakla ilgili düşünceleri olamaz yani **(Selen-46)**.

19) Hiç doğru değil çocuklara din dayatmak. Çocuk kendi inanç sistemini kendi oluştursun görerak düşünerek. Kendi karar versin **(Filiz-41)**.

20) Benim ustam Adem usta çocukların Kuran kursuna gitmesinden yana mesela gitsinler diyor. Yani Aleviler için de olmasın istemem ben. Ne işi var o çocukların o yaşta orada. Oyun çağları onların. Çocuk beyninin gelişimi bile belli bi yaşta tamamlanıyo. Bu küçücük çocuk ya sübyan onlar. Bu yobazlık olur başka bişey olmaz **(Veysel-45)**.

21) Din dersi verenler de çok yeterli öğretmenler değiller ki bir de. Mesela şey diyodu benim eski öğrencilerim. Öğretmenim sabah yüzümüzü yıkamazsak günah geceleri cin işiyormuş yüzümüze. Yavrum dedim hangi birinize yetişecek bu cin (gülüyor). Böyle bişey olabilir mi. Yavrum dedim yüzünü neden yıkamalısın o gözenekler tıkanmasın sivilcelere yaralara neden olmasın diye temiz olsun diye yağdan arınsın diye dedim. Yani yeterli insanlar değiller. Bazen cevaplayamadıkları şeylerle de korkutmaya gidiyorlar. Taşa dönersin bilmem ne. Çocuğum dedim bir gün öğrencime hiç taşa dönmüş insan gördün mü etrafında. Hiç gördün mü şimdiye kadar. Yani şey olarak psikolojik olarak da yeterli değiller kendi alanlarında da yeterli değiller zaten **(Öykü-48)**.

22) Asla. Okumasın daha iyi. Erkin Koray gibi evde okuturum ya da taşınırım. Kardelen'de (Batikent) bir imam-hatip açılacaktı çok direndi insanlar. Tabi Batikent daha aydın bir kesim. Çok direndi insanlar. İmza topladı insanlar. Öğrenci velileri yürüyüşler yaptılar. Sunumlar yaptılar. **(Ayten-66)**.

23) Evet mecbur kalıyorlar. Görüyorum aileleri özel okula gönderemiyor parası yok. Öbür türlü 4+4+4 mecburi. E bağlı olduğu mahallede zorunlu kıldılar artık. Mecburen gidiyo ama göndermemek için bence birçok insan elinden geleni yapıyo. Ama olay parada bitiyor işte maalesef. Arkadaşların çocuğu vardı neden verdiniz dedim, e sen öyle diyosun da dedi para yok dedi mecburen verdik. Hep devlet okullarının çoğunu kapattılar ortaokulları liseleri hep imam-hatip şeklinde yapmışlar **(Selen-46)**.

24) Hani kız hamile kalmış bekar genç kız hamile kalıyo. Tabi anne çevre, düşün anne üzerindeki baskıyı. Anne onu kaldıramıyor. İşte at gönder. Benim çalıştığım köyde hamile kaldı diye getirdiler kızı derenin kenarında kardeşleriyle babası vurdu, öldürdüler. İşte kadın orda duramayacağını anlıyo alıyo kızını başka bi yere taşınyo. Bana o zaman sormuşlardı senin kızın böyle bişey yapsa naparsın. Naparım dedim, napıcam ben o çocuğu sokağa mı atıcam sonuçta bi yanlış yapmış **(Hatice-69)**.

25) Bunların gözünde biz dinsiz ahlaksızız. Öncede yoktu böyle bişey ya. Bak kaç yaşında insanım Allah aşkına. Metroda bana yer vermiyolar görüyorum ben kapalı genç kıza veriyolar. Bi onlar namuslu ya. Yoktu böyle bişey eskiden. Küçücük kızların bacaklarına bakmayı biliyolar ama. Bize namussuz diyolar biz onlardan korumaya çalışıyoruz kızları **(Güler-57)**.

26) Annem de işte her ne kadar namazını kılardı hatta çok duaları bilirdi inançlıydı dememe rağmen annem böyle şeyleri hiç sevmez yani. Yobaz değil yani. Hatta küfür bile ederdi yani. Zaten yani doğrusu o ya. Şimdi böyle tarikatlar falan dersek bunlar üçkağıtçının, soysuzların, sömürücülerin hatta oğlancılarn bütün her şey orda var dönüyo yani. Para pul bütün kötü şeyler orda. Normal Müslüman olucaksın ya. Bişey söyliyim mi DAESH bunu yapmış vay kafa kesmiş yok bunu yapmış, sen bunlarla

ilgilenmicen arkadaş sen Allahla kendin senin kendi şeyin olacak düşüncen inancın. O bunu yapmış, bu bunu yapmış, nasıl Müslümanmış demene gerek yok yani **(Onur-53)**.

27) Çocukluğumuzda böyle değildi ki. Yani bayramlar ne bileyim işte bir araya gelmek, hasbihal etmek, yaşlılara aile büyüklerine saygı göstermek. Yani dini bişey gibi yapılmazdı **(Oktay-40)**.

28) Ne olduysa sonradan oldu. Bu türbanlı sayısı arttı. Bir değişti yani. Dini sohbetler, mevlütlü düğünler yoktu eskiden böyle şeyler, bilmiyorduk **(Hatice-69)**.

29) Bak bu adam bizim köylümüz akraba değil. Biz kadın erkek ayırmadığımız için kocam da öyle düşünmez asla. Bacısı gibi görür bizi hep. Biz işte böyle medeniyiz de. Onların dindarları böyle izin verir mi hiç? **(Ayten-66)**

CHAPTER 5

30) Ramazan gelsin konuşmazlardı bizle. Çok yobazlardı. Annem hep diyodu yüzümüze güldüklerine bakma bi gece gelir keser bizi bunlar. Şimdi bakıyorum onların kızlarına karşılaşıyoruz bazen benden rahat giyiniyorlar her şeyi de yapıyorlar. Bi kere bunların bi kızı hamile kalmış bekar daha. Aman Kızılbaşlar duymasın demişler. Çünkü bize diyolar ya normalde. Bizle kavga edince yunacaklar diyolardı Çankırı şivesi. Biz yani abdestsizmişiz. Ama yine de işte seviyolardı bizi normalde. Düğünleri oluyodu köçek geliyodu gidip izliyoduk çocukken. Eğlenceliydi **(Melek-66)**.

31) Ama bizde mesela kadın içmez diye bir şey yok yani. Kadın sofraya oturmaz diye bir şey yok. Biz de hiç alkolik olan hani istisnalar kaideyi bozmaz ama alkolik kadın yoktur yani hani. Çünkü denemiştir. Yani herhalde dediğim gibi özünde hep bu Alevi kültürüne dayanıyor. Aslında kural ve kaidelerin olmaması **(Serpil-46)**.

32) Yani çok da açıklamaya gerek yok. Çünkü Alevi olunmaz Alevi doğulur gibi bişey vardır yani o yüzden sonradan Alevi olunmaz. İçten hissedersin onu. Temeli bu. Çünkü Kural yok kaide yok. Kimse bu tabu demez. Allah korkusuyla büyütmez seni kimse biliyosun yani böyle **(Serpil-46)**.

33) Ben 1993'te evlenmiştim. 2003'te boşandıktan sonra Onur la tanıştım. İlk eşim Aleviydi ama noldu. Annemle babam da öyle dedi. İlk eşim çok yaptı bana. Hala içimdedir mezara kadar gider benimle. Aldatmalar, altınlarımı aldı dövdü ben çok attım içime. Annem babam bile bilmez çoğunu **(Sema-51)**.

34) Ben aşureyi yaparım bütün herkesi çağırırım. Kısmeti olan herkes o kazanda pişen aştan yer. Ama ben ona rağmen insanların görüşleri, inançlarından dolayı belki çekindikleri için gelemeler, gelmek isterler ama hani çekinirler, gelemeler diye ben tabaklarla onlara aşure götürdüm. Benim duyduğum cümle şuydu. Aşure yaparken efendim Aleviler gusül abdesti aldığındaki suyla aşure pişirirlermiş, onun için o aşure yenmezmiş. Ben bu zamanın insanı olarak gerçekten insan olarak onuruma dokundu benim. Ben onlara aşure yaptığımı söylüyorum ama aşure götürmüyorum. Bana o lafi diyen insanlara aşure götürmedim **(Zehra, 66)**.

35) Yok, yok. Bizim oralarda hiç yok. Kürt de yok Alevi de hiç yok. Ben Alevileri evlenip Malatya'ya gittikten sonra tanıdım. Orda tanıdım ama ben Alevileri çok sevdim. Eşimin de çok arkadaşları vardı, bizi köyelerine çağırırlardı. Onların bi özel pilav günleri falan oluyodu, çağırırlardı. Ve elleri de çok açıktı ordan hiç boş dönmezdik. Malatyanın da kayısı, bulguru bilmem neyi Hasan Hüseyinler paket paket bütün üniversiteden gelenlere böyle dolu dolu verirlerdi. Ben orda bi Sünni köyüne gittim, pislikten köye giremedik. Tezek kokusundan afedersin öyleydi. Ama yan tarafında bitişiğinde bi Alevi köyüne girdik pırıl pırıl evleri tertemiz, evlerin önünde hep çiçeklikler, çiçek bahçeleri ama bizim yöremizde hiç yoktu. Olmadığı için de yok biz Aleviyi sevmiyoruz şey yapmıyoruz. Ama Aleviler hakkında bize çok yanlış şeyler zamanında duyardık. Sonra sonra onların gerçek olmadığını anladık **(Hatice-69)**.

36) Onların dediği gibi mum söndü yapmıyoruz onlar yapıyo. Gusül abdesti mesela. Ya ben banyo yapıyorum banyo. Adının ne önemi var? Ben çocukken siz mum söndü yapıyomuşunuz diyolardı. Siz yapıyosunuz diyodum. Çocuklarınıza erkek çocuklarına bile tarikatlarda siz yapmıyo musunuz? Erkek çocuklarına bile **(Gamze-48)**.

37) Mesela sınıfta ben okuldayken kız bana A mısın S misin demişti. Ben ortaokulda öğrendim bunu Alevi Sünni ayrımını. Lisede beni çok ayırırlardı kızlar Aleviyim diye dışlardı ben bi kere e ama ben din dersinden 10 aldım sen 6 aldın demiştim **(Filiz-41)**.

38) Zaten ahlak olsaydı din diye bişey olmazdı din gelmezdi. Ateist bi insan evet ahlaklı olabilir. Bunda abes bişey yok. Sözüm meclisten dışarı çoğumuzdan ahlaklı olabilir. İçgörü, samimiyet çok önemli. Ahlak mı din mi dedim bir kere arkadaşlarıma kaldılar böyle. Ahlak tabi. Ahlak için din geldi. Bunları bazı insanlara söyle felaket olmuş gibi korkuyorlar bakıyorlar. Bizi çok öldürdüler bu ülkede. Sırf bu konular yüzünden. Ben mesela bunu tartışabiliyorum ahlak dinden daha önemli diyorum diye bile benim ölmem gerektiğini düşünenler olur biliyorum. Biz onlara yapmıyoruz ama **(Veysel-45)**.

39) Devletin dini sünnilikse laiklik diye bişey yok. Sadece kâğıt üzerinde yani laiklik. Yani onlar da yaşamıyor biz de yaşayamıyoruz. Onlar bize yaşatmıyor. Aslında bizde çoğuz varız ama birbirimizden haberimiz yok. Sahip çıkma gibi bişeyimiz yok **(Veysel-45)**.

40) Çünkü Atatürk geldikten sonra biz ibadetimizi yapabilmışiz hem güzel yaşayabilmışiz kadın erkek özgürce. Çünkü Alevi olduğumuzu bile söyleyemiyorduk inkar ediyorduk. Biz Aleviyiz diyemiyorduk. Ben mesela çalıştım işe başladım. Aleviyim diyemiyordum çünkü işe bile giremiyordun söylersen **(Ayten-66)**.

41) Mesela anneannemin cemevinde yemeği olacaktı 40 yemeği. Onur dedi ki dede mi gelecek oraya nasıl olacak. Evet dedim ben de dede gelecek. Orda yemek yedik e ne zaman dedeyle oturacağız sohbet edeceğiz. Onur bitti dedim. Böyle yadırgadı. Dedi ibadet dediğiniz bu mu dedi. Bu ne ya dedi. Ben sandım ki herkes toplanacak dizlerinin üstüne oturacak duası edilecek herkes dua edecek ondan sonra yemek faslına geçilir ama siz diyo direkt yemek yiyosunuz yemeğin üstüne dua ediliyor. O onu çok garipsedi. İbadethane değil orası diyo yemekhane **(Sema-51)**.

42) Ben cemevlerini bi ibadethane olarak tanıyorum istiyorum aslında. Her ne kadar Sünniler istemiyosa da koyu Sünniler yani. İbadethane olarak görüyorum fakat cemevlerinin Aleviler tarafından pek kullanılmadığını görüyorum. Bi yer var ama kimse gitmiyor yani. Bunu Alevilerin çok üstüne düşüp güncellemeleri lazım yani şöyle güncellemeleri lazım gitmeleri lazım. Mesela (eşine soruyor) sen kaç kere gittin cemevine **(Onur-53)**.

43) Yani bu toplumun Sünnilerine baskıyla göstermeleri lazım yani burası bizim ibadethanemiz. Onlar ne görüyor ben size onların kafasını söylüyüm mi. Evet cemevleri var ama ibadethane değil işte onların ritüellerini yaptıkları bi yer gibi görüyorlar. Kültür evi gibi. Oysaki bütün Alevilerin, hani nasıl Cuma ya gidiyorlar ya bi şekilde gitmeleri lazım yani. Bunu toplumun Sünnilerine hatta Diyanete biz buraya gidiyoruz ritüellerimizi ibadetimizi yapıyoruz baskısını, baskı derken yani şeklini göstermeleri lazım. Var olduklarını, yani cemevi var, ibadethane var çok da giden görmedim. Gidiyolar orda bişey varsa yemek yiyolar sohbet edip çıkıyorlar. Oysaki yemekten önce girseler orda semah dönseler falan ondan sonra yemeğe geçseler. Tabi ki kültür evi gibi de olsun ama o ibadethane imajını vermek lazım Sünnilere. Adam işte bas bas bağıyor tamam cemevlerine statü veririm de işte Alevilik bi din değildir diyo yani. Dini olmanın baskısını yaratmaları lazım **(Onur-53)**.

44) Şimdi Alevilerin de kendilerine göre bi cemaatleri var dedeleri var. Onlarda da dede diye bişey var. Dede. Öyle bişey var mı İslamiyette. Onlar da İslamiyetin içinde değil mi? **(Tarık-64)**.

45) Yani ben ikinci sınıf bir vatandaş olduğumu düşünüyorum. Yaşıyorum bunu yani özellikle iş dünyasında gerekse böyle özel dünyamda. Yani bi Alevi insanın yaşama bakış tarzı insana bakış tarzı az çok belli ediyo kendini. Ama diğer insanların davranışı da belli ediyor kendini. 35 yılı aşkın bir süredir insanları tanıdığım için biliyorum insanları, insan sarrafı gibi oldum tanıyorum insanları. Yani Alevi bi insanı hümanist olmaktan uzak yani dışlayıcı bir tavırları var yani. Ben yaşadım bunları **(Veysel-45)**.

46) Aleviler bu toplumda böyle ikinci sınıf vatandaş olarak şey yapılmasaydı. Ne bi üst düzey bürokrat oluyo ne başhekim oluyo. Dolayısıyla belki baskın mezhep Alevilik olsaydı ya da Şiilik olsaydı İran gibi. Biz Aleviler çok gerici insanlar dıcektik. Aslında böyle gelişti bence mevzu **(Oktay-40)**.

47) Yani aslında onlara demiyorum. Varlar ama istisna yani. Yani şimdi mi çok anlamadım ki. Bilmiyorum. Bizim komşularımız vardı mesela. Çok güzel iftar sofrası hazırlarlardı biz tutmadığımız halde gidip yedik. Galiba ben şimdiden bahsediyorum. Şimdi ayrımcılık daha çok. Aşşında biz her şeyi sorguladığımız için Aleviler değil sadece sosyal demokratlar. Bizim gençliğimiz sorguluyo dini. Bu yüzden aydınız **(Gamze-48)**.

48) Biz bir de hatırlıyorum Kürt nedir bilmezdik Alevi nedir bilmezdik sonra sonra bu göçler oldu onun için. Aleviler hep kırsalda kalmışlar kaçmışlar korkudan. Merkezlere inememişler. Hiç lafi edilmezdi. Babam bile söylemedi bize. Biz Ankara'ya gelince öğrendik 68'de **(Mahmut-75)**.

49) Ama şimdi bişey söylüyüm aklıma gelmişken ben çok kızıyorum Alevilere. Benim şimdi etrafımdaki çok koyu Müslümanları olmadığı için bilmiyorum ama mesela şimdi Aleviler Alevi olmayanlara 'yabancı' diyor. Ne yabancıyı diyorum. Sanki Aleviler daha çok insan ayırıyormuş gibi geliyor bilmiyorum. Şimdi Alevilik din diye düşünürsek bana daha katı geliyorlar. Yani ben öyle gördüm tecrübe ettim. Tabi ki şimdi Sünni lerinde çok katı olanlar var. Hatta Alevinin yemeğini yemeyen elini sıkmayan görüşmeyen manyak tipler var yani. Hep ama duyduğum kelime yabancı, çok ayırıyorlar **(Onur-53)**.

50) Yobazlık işte. Yobaz olmayan. Yobazsa engel olmak isterim. Ezerler çünkü. İyi yaşamasına izin vermezler. Kapatırlar eve ne bileyim işe gitmesine istediğini giyinmesine izin vermezler her şeyine karışırılar korkarım. Kültür sahibi ise, belli bi eğitim seviyesinden geçtiyse ailesi de öyleyse tamamen yani bizler gibi yaşayan Sünniler de var **(Filiz-41)**.

51) Mesela bak şu karşıdaki kadın broşür dağıtırken pazarcılara benim için o kanı bozuklara oy vermeyin diyomuş. Arkadaşım duymuş söyledi bana **(Fatma-61)**.

52) Alevilerde kültürünü yaşamamak daha yüksek çünkü dini önderleri yok. Sonuçta köyden kente gelmiş ne köylü kalabilmiş ne kentli olabilmiş. Yani kendini eğiten kendini bilen sayısı yüzde otuz bile yoktur. Birbirine sahip çıkma mesela kalmadı Benim orda mesela benim işyerimde oruç tutan Aleviler var Ramazan'da. Niye tutuyorsun diyorum bilmiyorum diyo. Çünkü bilmiyo kendi kültürünü öğrenememiş ki Yani işte o kültürel bi yozlaşmayı yaşamış bizim insanlarımız. Korkudan biraz tabi de **(Filiz-41)**.

53) AKP mesela laikliği dinsiz ve Batılılaşma şeklinde görüyorlar. Laiklik Hıristiyanlıkla Müslümanlıkla ilgili bişey değil ki **(Selen-46)**.

54) Ben şimdi özel bir şirkette çalışıyorum Şehir Planlamacı olarak. Çok zorladılar beni Cuma'ya götürmek için. Sürekli baskı baskı. İstemedim ama işimi iyi yapıyorum diye benden vazgeçemiyorlar da. Ama şimdi hep arka planda iş bakıyorum. İnanılmaz bir kayırmacılık var. Benim gibiler de göze batıyor **(Özgür-25)**.

55) Cuma günleri özellikle nefret ediyordum bir tane erkekle çalışıyordum. Cuma namazına gidiyordu. Namaz saatleri çok hakim değilim. Bu arada yani hiç bilmiyorum. Hatta günü de kaçırabilirim yani onu. İşte namaza bi vakit gidiyodu saatini bilmediğim için on bir buçukta gidiyodu atıyorum. Üçte geliyodu neden bu saatte geldin dediğimde Hz. Muhammed'in sünneti vardı. Namazdan sonra kestiriyoruz mescitte dedi yani ama o kestirdiğinde benim çocuğum çok küçüktü ve ben gece sıfır uykuyla geliyorum. Ve iş yerinde işlerim çok onun olmadığında ben izin alıp gidemiyorum adam yani ben bir cuma mesela işim olacak, doktora gideceğim bana şey diyordu. Ya o zaman ürküyordum herhalde yaşım küçüktü, günah sakın Cuma'ya izin alma biliyorsun. Benim Cumaları ziyarete gidiyorum diyordu. **(Serpil-46)**.

56) Mesela şimdi bana Felsefe öğretmeni ateist bilmem ne inançsız gibi önyargılarla bakılıyorsa ben öyle bakmam. İşini iyi yapıyorsa onu takdir ederim. Ama işini iyi yaparken kendi çıkarları doğrultusunda dini kullanırsa benim hoşuma gitmez.

Onu reklam için oraya koyduysa beğenilmek, takdir görmek onaylanmak alkışlanmak için oraya koyduysa ben onun Müslüman olduğuna da inanmam yani. Hıristiyan olduğuna da inanmam (**Çetin-51**).

57) Karşıdaki insan beni baskılamıcak ben kimseyi baskılamıyosam. Mesela oruç tutmalısın, namaz kılmalısın demem, dememeliyim yani. Karşıda bi kadın vardı işte Keçiörende nası etkiliyodu işte seni ya (eşine hitap ediyor) (**Onur-53**).

58) Yaşam biçimime müdahale edilmesinden hoşlanmam o sınırdır benim için. Çocuklarımın yaşam biçimine karışılmasından hoşlanmam. Ben insanları yargılamam olduğu gibi kabul ederim. Ama ne bileyim karısına, çocuğuna kötü davranıyorsa, köpeğine kötü davranıyorsa olmaz yani devam edemeyiz (**Çetin-51**).

59) Herkes istediği hayatı yaşamalı yani. Bi yirmi yıl öncesinde de öyleydi Türkiye zaten. İnsanlar ben orucum bile demiyolardı zaten. Ben çocukken. Yani çok zorlarsan hani bişeyler ye falan dersin. Niyetliyim ya ben bugün falan derlerdi. Şimdi bugün kim oruç kim değil iş yerlerinde. Sağlık Bakanlığı öyleymiş mesela kim Cuma'ya gitti kim gitmedi. Bunun çetelesini tutuyolar şimdi. Ramazan'da adliyelerde bile çay bahçelerini falan kapatıyorlar (**Selen-46**).

60) Çukurambar'da çok şaşırılmıştım. Onların cenazelerine gidiyorum ya ben evleri acayip. Evlerinin girişi AKP li siteler bizim ev kadar girişleri yahu altın varaklı falan. Lavaboları falan da kullanıyoruz ya bazen görüyorum ben (**Selen-46**).

61) Çok rahatsız oluyorum çok. Çünkü artık boku çıktı bu siyasal İslamın her alana nüfus etme çabası afedersiniz. Kültürel alana bilmem neye beceriyo beceremiyo ama en kötü bozuyor Altın Portakal'da olduğu gibi. En kötü dengeyi bozuyo. Nefret ediyorum bundan mesela (**Oktay-40**).

62) Kaygılıyız ayrı. İktidarda bir ideoloji var ve o belli bir yaşam tarzını düşman olarak görüyor. Ama bu ülkenin ikinci büyük partisi kalkıp da yani şunu düşünsenize AKP seçmeni yoksul değil mi yani. Bu insanların birincil meselesi yoksulluk. Sen neden anayasaya türban diyosun. E sen yoksulluktan bahsetmiyosun bilmem ne e

ikiyüzlüsün o zaman diyo oy vermiyo işte. Yoksa Brezilya mesela. Nasıl seçildi o adam. Tamamen yoksulluktan orta sınıfın bitmesinden sermaye aktarımından bahsetti. Bu adamın tabanı da fakirleşiyö. En çok sosyal yardımını bunun tabanı alıyo. Haberlerde çöpten bişey çıkarıp çocuğunun ağzına veriyor yani bu durumdayız **(Oktay-40)**.

63) O kurucu önderliğin yapmış olduđu her şey bugün o gerici zihniyet tarafından laikliğin bir yansıması olarak anlatıldı halbuki modernitenin yansımaları da var. Bizim sonra işte fesimizin çıkması da bilmem neyde her şeyin sorumlusu laiklik olmuş. Kadınların kamusal alanda yer alması da laiklik. Ama bu Kenan Evren gibiler işte Kemalizmi böyle bir nasıl diyeyim sanki kurallar manzumesiymiş gibi bir şeye çevirdi. Bir mücadele sonrasında çıkan öncü kadroların Şevket Süreyyalar yok falan ama sadece Atatürk figürü var öyle bir şeye çevirdi ders kitaplarında falan **(Oktay-40)**.

64) Yani aslında herkes korkuyor ya bi korkmamayı bekliyorum. İnsanlar bi korkmasa ayaklansa. Bütün takip ettiğim insanlar şimdi içeride. Herkes bi ayaklansa küllerimizden yeniden doğarız. Herkese saldırıyorlar. LGBT'lilere saldırıyorlar **(Selen-46)**.

65) Aslında bence bildiğimizden daha fazla aydın insan var. Tamam AKP yüzde elli bilmem ne diyoruz da onların içinde de var aydın insanlar korkudan oy veriyorlar **(Ayten-66)**.

C. SURVEY FORM AND QUESTIONNAIRE

C.1. In-Depth Interview Topics

This part of the survey will be conducted by in-depth interviews of the family members. The subtopics of the interview are listed below:

Do you define yourself as secular? What do you think secularism is? Why are you secular/or not? What do you think about whether Turkey is a secular country today and the government's religious policies?

- Family Relationships and Values
 - Marriage
 - Gender Roles
 - Raising Children
 - Health and Family Planning
- Education
- Work
- Religious Beliefs and Practices
 - Religious Ceremonies and Traditions
 - Religious Freedom
 - Religious Tolerance
 - Secular Humanism Perspective on the idea that individuals can be ethical and moral without religion or a God.*
- Social Ties and Community Relations
 - Interactions with Various Belief Systems
 - Equality-Discrimination
 - Freedom of Expression
- Cultural Activities, Interests and Consumption
- Views on Politics and Economy

C.2. Questionnaire Form

Data about the Demographic and Socio-economic Structure of the Family

1) Data about the Household

Spouses

Date of Birth	
Place of Birth	
Years of Marriage	
First Spouse?	
If any, kinship relation between spouses	
Education	
Professional Life:	
Profession	
Present Occupation	
Previous Occupation	
Reason for quitting the previous job	

Children

Sex	
Date of Birth	
Place of Birth	
Education	
If any, extra-school courses, sports and other leisure time activities that children participate in	
Occupation	

Others in the Household

Sex	
Date of Birth	
Place of Birth	
Marital Status	
Type of affinity with the family	
Occupation	
How long has s/he been in the household	

Children out of the Household

Sex	
Date of Birth	
Education	
The reason for leaving the household	
The time when s/he left the house	
Marital status	
If married, the occupation of the spouse	
If there are any, his/her children:	
Sex	
Age	
Education	

2) Residency

The period of residence in Ankara	
If there are any, the previous places of residence and the time of residency	
The places lived in Ankara and the period of residency	
The period of residency in the present residence	
The owner (s) of the house	

The area of the residency in square metres	
The number of rooms in the residence	

3) Level of Income

Average monthly income of the family	
Sources of income	
The number of people contributing to the family income	
The proportion of their contribution	
Owner a car or not?	
If there is one, who drives it?	
The electrical appliances at home	
Do they have a maid at home?	

D. LIST OF INFORMANTS

The List and Profile of Female Informants

#	Name (Religious Background)	Setting District / Neighborhood	Age	Place of Origin (Mother - Father) / Place of Birth	Education	Profession	Marital Status
1	Zehra (Alevi)	Batıkent / Kardelen	60	Gaziantep / Gaziantep	University Degree	Retired Pre- School Teacher	Married
2	Hatice (Sunni)	Batıkent / Batı Sitesi	70	Trabzon / Trabzon	University Degree	Retired Primary School Teacher	Married
3	Buket (Sunni)	Batıkent / Batı Sitesi	32	Trabzon / Trabzon	University Degree	PhD (c) / Architecture	Single
4	Sema (Alevi)	Batıkent / İlkyerleşim	51	Erzincan - Bayburt / Ankara	High School	Housewife	Married
5	Filiz (Alevi)	Batıkent / Kardelen	41	Erzurum / Ankara	University Degree	Accounting Officer in a Market / Laborer	Married
6	Nurcan (Sunni)	Batıkent / Batı Sitesi	60	Samsun / Samsun	Secondary School	Housewife	Married
7	Ayten (Alevi)	Batıkent / İlkyerleşim	66	Erzincan / Ankara	University Degree	Retired Civil Servant	Married
8	Selen (Sunni)	Batıkent / Turgut Özal	46	Amasya / Almanya	University Degree	Doctor	Married
9	Öykü (Alevi)	Batıkent / İlkyerleşim	48	Kars / Kars	University Degree	Primary School Teacher	Married
10	Serpil (Alevi)	Batıkent / İlkyerleşim	46	Tunceli - Yozgat / Ankara	University Degree	Civil Servant	Married
11	Gamze (Alevi)	Batıkent/ Kardelen	48	Yozgat /Ankara	High School	Laborer	Married
12	Melek (Alevi)	Batıkent/ Kardelen	66	Erzurum/ Erzurum	Secondary School	Housewife	Married
13	Nermin (Alevi)	Batıkent/ Kardelen	56	Erzincan/ Ankara	Secondary School	Housewife	Married
14	Zeynep (Alevi)	Batıkent/ Kardelen	47	Kayseri/ Ankara	University Degree	Housewife	Married

15	Hülya (Alevi)	Batıkent/ Turgut Özal	62	Erzurum/E rzurum	High School	Housewife	Married
16	Fatma (Alevi)	Batıkent/ Turgut Özal	61	Erzican/ Ankara	University Degree	Mukhtar	Married
17	Güler (Alevi)	Batıkent/ Kardelen	57	Nevşehir/ Ankara	High School	Retired Laborer	Married
18	Emine (Sunni)	Batıkent/ Kardelen	46	Afyon/ Ankara	University Degree	Retired Civil Servant	Married
19	Ayşegül (Sunni)	Batıkent/ Kardelen	45	Manisa/ Ankara	University Degree	Civil Servant	Married
20	Kadriye (Sunni)	Batıkent/ Kardelen	63	Amasya/ Ankara	University Degree	Retired Primary School Teacher	Married

The List and Profile of Male Informants

#	Name	Setting District / Neighborhood	Age	Place of Origin (Mother & Father) / Place of Birth	Education	Profession	Marital Status
1	Hüseyin (Alevi)	Batıkent / Kardelen	60	Kayseri / Kayseri	University Degree	High School Teacher	Married
2	Onur (Sunni)	Batıkent / İlkyerleşim	53	Ankara	University Degree	Public Accountant	Married
3	Veysel (Alevi)	Batıkent / Kardelen	45	Erzincan / Ankara	High School	Laborer at Municipality	Married
4	Tarık (Sunni)	Batıkent / Batı Sitesi	64	Samsun / Samsun	High School	Retired Civil Servant	Married
5	Mahmut (Alevi)	Batıkent / İlkyerleşim	75	Tekirdağ - Çorum / İstanbul	University Degree	Retired Lawyer	Married
6	Oktay (Sunni)	Batıkent / Ergazi	40	Erzincan – Ankara / Ankara	University Degree	Videographer in a Private Company	Married
7	Çetin (Sunni)	Batıkent / İlkyerleşim	51	Kars / Kars	University Degree	High School Teacher	Married
8	Sinan (Alevi)	Batıkent/ Turgut Özal	48	Erzurum / Ankara	High School	Retired Soldier	Married
9	Celal (Alevi)	Batıkent/ İlkyerleşim	64	Kars/Kars	University Degree	Retired Teacher	Married
10	Kemal (Alevi)	Batıkent/ İlkyerleşim	67	İğdır/Ankara	High School	Retired Civil Servant	Married
11	Mehmet (Sunni)	Batıkent/ Kardelen	57	Düzce/ Ankara	University Degree	Retired Soldier	Married

12	Erkan (Alevi)	Batıktent/ Kardelen	67	Erzurum/ Erzurum	Secondary School	Retired from Private Sector	Married
13	Tuncay (Alevi)	Batıktent/ Kardelen	56	Kars/Ankara	High School Degree	Private Sector	Married
14	Hasan (Alevi)	Batıktent/ İlkyerleşim	67	Erzincan / Ankara	University Degree	Retired Civil Servant	Married
15	Haydar (Alevi)	Batıktent/ Kardelen	60	Erzincan/ Erzincan	Secondary School	Retired Laborer	Married
16	Salih (Sunni)	Batıktent/ Kardelen	47	Afyon/ Ankara	University Degree	Retired Civil Servant	Married
17	Osman (Sunni)	Batıktent/ Kardelen	51	Manisa/ Ankara	University Degree	Private Sector	Married
18	Murat (Alevi)	Batıktent/ Turgut Özal	47	Tunceli - Yozgat / Ankara	University Degree	Civil Servant	Married
19	Kenan (Alevi)	Batıktent/ Turgut Özal	58	Erzurum/ Erzurum	High School	Retired (Barber)	Married
20	Kadir (Sunni)	Batıktent/ Kardelen	62	Denizli/ Denizli	University Degree	Retired Civil Servant	Married

Distribution of Children among Families

Number of Families	Number of Children
6	1
11	2
3	3

Children Living with Their Families

Age	Level of Education	Type of School	Profession	Birthplace
26	University Degree	Public University	Biomedical Engineer	Ankara
32	University Degree	Public University	PhD (c) / Architecture	Trabzon
10	Primary School	Public School	Student	Ankara
9	Primary School	Private School	Student	Ankara
25	Master's degree	Public University	City and Regional Planner	Ankara
15	Secondary School	Private School	Student	Ankara
15	Secondary School	Private School	Student	Ankara
10	Primary School	Public School	Student	Ankara

28	University Degree	Public University	Chemical Engineer / Unemployed	Ankara
16	High School	Public School	Student	Ankara
19	University	Private University	Student	Ankara
24	University Degree	Public University	Graduate Program Student/International Relations	Ankara
2	-	-	-	Ankara
2	-	-	-	Ankara
8	Primary School	Public School	Student	Antalya
24	University	Public University	Graduate Program Student/Statistics	İstanbul
27	University Degree	Public University	Graduate Program Student / Physics	Ankara
31	University Degree	Public University	Civil Servant	Ankara
22	University	Public University	Student	Ankara
16	High School	Public School	Student	Ankara

Children Away from Home

Age	Level of Education	Type of School	Profession	Birthplace
31	University Degree	Public University	Accountant in a Bank	Ankara
33	University Degree	Public University	Assistant Professor in a Private University	Malatya
33	University Degree	Public University	Business Administration / Unemployed	Ankara
35	University Degree	Public University	Business Administration / Manager in a Bank	Ankara
41	University Degree	Public University	Chemical Engineer in a Private Company	Ankara
34	University Degree	Public University	Lawyer	İstanbul
32	High School Degree	Public School	Technician	Ankara
38	University Degree	Public University	Computer Engineer in a Private Company	İzmir
28	University Degree	Public University	Graduate Student in Italy/International Relations	Ankara
38	University Degree	Public University	Primary School Teacher /Mathematics Graduate	Denizli
34	University Degree	Private University	Human Resources /Business Administration	Ankara
37	University Degree	Public University	Technician	İstanbul
39	University Degree	Private University	Art Consultant in a Private Company	Ankara

29	University Degree	Public University	PhD Student /Research Assistant /Chemistry	Ankara
33	High School Degree	Public School	Laborer in Ankara Municipality	İstanbul
34	University Degree	Public University	High School Teacher in Private School/English Teacher	Ankara
37	University Degree	Public University	Civil Servant/City and Regional Planning	Ankara

E. CURRICULUM VITAE

AYSUN GÜNEŞ DURMUŞ

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Sociology, Middle East Technical University, September 2024

PhD dissertation: “Secularism as a Lifestyle in the 2000s in Urban Turkey: The Formation and Performance of Secular Way of Life among Lower-Middle Classes in Ankara, A Case Study”

M.S. in Sociology, Middle East Technical University, September 2014

M.S. thesis: “Democracy in the Discourse of Justice and Development Party”

B.S. in Sociology, Middle East Technical University, June 2011

ACADEMIC TITLES / RESEARCH and TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor / PhD (c)

International Student Advisor, International Students Office, January 2021-present.

Specialization in first-hand assistance to the prospective and continuing international students.

Participation in the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan of the Middle East Technical University in the subfield of SP Area Committee – Education and Teaching as one of the representatives of Student Affairs, September 2017-2022.

Research Assistant, Middle East Technical University

International Student Advisor, International Students Office, May 2012-January 2021.

Teaching Assistant, Middle East Technical University

Spring 2016- Spring 2019, SOC 503 Problems in Studying Women in Muslim Societies

Summer 2017- Spring 2019, SOC 403 Social Problems in Turkey

Fall2107-Fall 2019, SOC 659 Space, Place and Gender

TRAININGS and WORKSHOPS ATTENDED

ISO9001:2015 Quality Management System Basic Training, Middle East Technical University, September 2020.

Participation in International Staff Week ‘Communication in the Multicultural Environment’ organized by Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland, December 2019.

Participation in “Workshop on Improving Incoming Student (Erasmus, Exchange, International) Services” held in Boğaziçi University, İstanbul, August 2017.

CIMEA-Academic Equivalence Mobility Information Center, Micro-Credentials Program, Rome, Italy, April 2024.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2020 “Creating Subjective Experience with Secularism: Conservative/Islamist Women in Political Space in Turkey”, American Sociological Association, 115th Virtual Annual Meeting, August 8-11, San Francisco, USA.
- 2021 “Democracy as a Discursive Instrument of Establishing Hegemonic Power and Consolidation of Anti-Secularist Base”, Emancipatory Sociology: Rising to the Du Boisian Challenge, American Sociological Association, 116th Virtual Annual Meeting, August 6-10, USA.
- 2021 “Gender, Women and Sexuality in the Discourse of Islamist Women Intellectuals in 2000s Turkey: A Contestation to Secularism”, Sociological Knowledges for Alternative Futures, 15th Conference of the European Sociological Association, Barcelona, Spain, August 31-September 3.
- 2023 Presentation of my dissertation project titled “The Secular Lifestyle of Urban Citizens: The Formation of Knowledge on Secularism and the Establishment of a Secular Way of Life in Ankara after the 2000s in Turkey” in the colloquium of the Humanities Center, Multiple Secularities: Beyond the West, beyond Modernities held on May 8-10, 2023, upon the official invitation of the Institute for the Study of Religions at Leipzig University.

REFERENCES

Prof. Dr. Ayşe Saktanber

Assoc. Prof. Mustafa Şen

F. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKKÇE ÖZET

Bu çalışma, 2000'li yıllardan sonra kendilerini laik olarak tanımlayan ve Türkiye'nin Ankara ilindeki Batıkent bölgesinde, yakın komşuluk ilişkileri içinde yaşayan alt-orta sınıf ailelerin yaşam tarzlarını ve kültürel değerlerini keşfetmeyi amaçlayarak ortaya çıktı. Bu ailelerin günlük yaşamlarında var olan çeşitli dini ve kültürel etkilerle nasıl etkileşimde bulunduğunu ve bu etkileşimlerin ve laikliğin bireylerin yaşam tarzlarını ve dünya görüşlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini araştırmayı hedefledi.

Araştırma, Türkiye'nin çeşitli illerinde de karşımıza çıkabilecek bir alt-orta sınıf mahallede laiklik ilkesinin çeşitli sosyal, kültürel ve dini değerlerle nasıl etkileşimde bulunduğunu anlamaya odaklandı. Özellikle, farklı dini ve kültürel kimliklere sahip bireylerin, laikliği bir siyasi öğreti olarak günlük yaşamlarında nasıl yorumladıkları ve somutlaştırdıkları üzerine yoğunlaştı. Bu bireylerin deneyimlerini analiz ederek, araştırma, laikliğin alt-orta sınıf bağlamında nasıl karmaşık ve çok boyutlu bir şekilde ortaya çıktığını aydınlatmayı amaçladı. Bu çalışma, yalnızca Türkiye'deki laiklik üzerine daha geniş bir tartışmaya katkıda bulunmakla kalmayıp, aynı zamanda bireylerin sosyal çevreleri içinde, kesişen farklı kimliklerle nasıl başa çıktıklarını da anlamaya çalıştı.

Batı literatüründe 'yükselen dini hareketler' olarak adlandırılan olgunun yaygınlığı—sıklıkla 1979 İran Devrimi gibi olaylarla ve dünyanın çeşitli yerlerindeki mezhepsel çatışmalarla örneklendirilen—laiklik çalışmalarına olan ilgiyi önemli ölçüde artırmıştır. Bu olgu, sosyal bilimler çevrelerini, dinî kimliklerin ve hareketlerin yeniden öne çıktığı hızla değişen bir dünyada laikliğin dinamiklerini yeniden gözden geçirmeye yönlendirmiştir.

Uzun bir siyasi ve sosyal tarih ile birleştiğinde, laiklik, 21. yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde Türkiye'de hâlâ tartışmalı bir konu olmaya devam etmektedir; bu durum, dünya

genelindeki benzer tartışmalarla paralellik göstermektedir. Bu süregelen tartışma, politik alan, medya temsili ve hem dinî toplulukların hem de ateist vatandaşların talepleri ve eleştirileri gibi geniş bir yelpazeyi kapsamaktadır. Fikirler ve perspektifler arasındaki bu karmaşık etkileşim, laikliğin çok boyutlu doğasını ve toplum üzerindeki etkilerini açığa çıkarmaktadır.

Bu konunun Türkiye'de neden bu kadar güncel ve yoğun bir şekilde tartışıldığı sorusu, bu çalışmayı yapma kararımın temel motivasyonlarından biridir. Bu tartışmanın sürekliliğine katkıda bulunan temel faktörleri araştırarak, laiklik ile Türkiye toplumundaki çeşitli sosyal, kültürel ve politik dinamikler arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiye ışık tutmayı amaçladım. Bu araştırma, yalnızca Türkiye'deki laiklik anlayışını derinleştirmekle kalmayıp, aynı zamanda laikliğin güncel bağlamlardaki zorlukları ve fırsatları üzerine daha geniş küresel tartışmalara da katkıda bulunmayı hedefledi.

Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), 2002 yılında yapılan seçimleri kazanarak iktidar partisi haline geldi. Sonraki yıllarda, eğitim, hukuk ve kamu alanı ile ilgili uyguladığı politikalar –ifade özgürlüğüne getirilen kısıtlamalar, alkol satışları üzerindeki kontroller, kadınların üreme haklarına yönelik ihlaller, ilkokullardaki zorunlu din derslerinin içeriği, devlet kurumlarına 'manevi danışman' unvanıyla atanan dini otoriteler ve İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nin feshine dair tartışmalar– vatandaşların yaşam tarzlarına otoriter bir müdahale olabileceği endişelerini artırdı.

Hükümet, bu politikalarını sağlık, kamu güvenliği veya demokrasi söylemi çerçevesinde yorumlasa da bu alanlarda üretilen hiçbir strateji, siyasal İslam'ın sürekli bir tehdit oluşturduğu konusundaki şüpheleri ortadan kaldırmamıştır; bu, Türkiye tarihindeki eski fakat kalıcı bir tartışmadır. Günlük yaşamda artan muhafazakarlık, laik toplum kesimleri ve Türkiye'deki etnik ve dini azınlıklar tarafından bir tehdit olarak algılandı. Öte yandan, AKP hükümetinin günümüz Türkiye'sinde farklı din ve inançlardan bireyleri kutuplaştırıcı bir söylemle kategorize etme çabaları, kamu alanında laik-dindar ayrımının olumsuz bir temsiline yol açmış ve bu ayrım sıklıkla 'laikçi' veya 'laikçi teyze' gibi küçültücü terimlerle ifade edilmiştir. Gelişen sosyal kutuplaşma manzarası, topluluklar içinde artan gerginlikler olarak da kendini

göstermiştir. Bu çerçevede AKP hükümetine duyulan memnuniyetsizlik, 2007 Nisan ve Mayıs aylarında Türkiye'nin üç büyük şehrinde – Ankara, İstanbul ve İzmir'de – düzenlenen Cumhuriyet Mitingleri olarak bilinen büyük gösterilerle kendini göstermiş, ayrıca, Mayıs 2013'ün sonlarında Türkiye'de hükümete karşı başka bir geniş çaplı protesto, Gezi Hareketi olarak bilinen olay patlak vermiştir. Hükümetin otoriter ve neo-liberal politikalarından memnuniyetsizlik duyan toplumun çeşitli kesimleri Gezi Hareketi'ne katılmıştır. Ancak, hükümet, hareketi çatışma odaklı bir çerçeveye yerleştirip, protestocuları AKP'nin destekçileri gözünde suçlu ve marjinal hale getirdiğinde, dini tartışmalar Gezi Hareketi'ni çevreleyen hakim söylem haline gelmiştir.

Hareket, farklı kültürel ve dini aidiyetleri olan çeşitli vatandaşları içermesine rağmen AKP hükümeti, toplumu dini çizgiler üzerinden kutuplaştırmaya çalışmış ve Alevi vatandaşları hedef alan mezhepsel bir söylem geliştirmiştir. Protestocuların, hareketi hükümetin kutuplaştırıcı dini söyleminden uzaklaştırma çabalarına rağmen, o dönemde Başbakan olan Erdoğan, Gezi protestocularını ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'ni (CHP) hedef alarak Gezi hareketini, CHP zihniyetinin bir devamı olarak tanımlamıştır. Sonuç olarak, kamusal söylem giderek artan bir şekilde rekabet eden kimliklerin savaş alanı haline gelmiştir; burada laiklik sıklıkla ulusal birliğe ve dini bütünlüğe bir tehdit olarak çerçeveselendirilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, AKP'nin politikalarının sonuçları yalnızca bir siyasi stratejiyle sınırlı kalmamaktadır; bu politikalar, toplumsal normları ve kişisel kimlikleri yeniden şekillendirerek, günümüz Türkiye'sinde laik veya dindar olmanın ne anlama geldiğini yeniden değerlendirmeye yol açmaktadır.

Türkiye'de bu konu, laiklik terimi çerçevesinde tartışılmaktadır. Fransız kökenlerinin daha az biliniyor veya daha az sık gündeme getirilir olmasına rağmen, hem siyasi (sağ ve sol siyaset) hem de sosyal bilim çevreleri, laikliği vatandaşlar üzerinde kontrol sağlayan bir devlet aracı olarak görmektedir. Bu nedenle tartışmalar, laikliğin değiştirilmesi veya gevşetilmesi gerekliliği etrafında dönmektedir. Bu bağlamda, laiklik Türkiye'de kamu ile bağlantısı kopmuş bir kavram olarak sunulmakta ve yalnızca belirli bir elit grubun yaşam tarzını temsil ediyor gibi görünmektedir. Bu durum, laik grupların katı tutumları ve "gerçek Müslümanlar" veya "halk" olarak

tanımlanan kesimlere karşı dışlayıcı doğaları nedeniyle din ve laiklik arasında bir denge kurulamayacağı izlenimini yaratmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu tartışmalar, AKP hükümetinin kutuplaştırıcı politikaları ve söylemleri göz ardı edildiği için, toplumsal birliğin sağlanması açısından ciddi bir engel oluşturmaktadır.

Çağdaş dünyada, yeni dini politikaların yükselmesi, laik toplumun ve onun siyasi kurumlarının eşitlik ve özgürlüğünü önemseyen birçok kişiyi endişelendirmektedir. Türk laikliğini destekleyen, toplumun çeşitli kesimlerini kapsayan bireyler, hükümetin muhafazakâr söylem ve politikalarından kaynaklanan benzer bir kaygıyı paylaşmaktadır. Örneğin, Türkiye'de din, toplum ve siyaset üzerine yapılan araştırmalar, Türk toplumunun yaşam tarzı, etnik gruplar, dinî bağlılık ve muhafazakarlık ekseninde kutuplaşmakta olduğunu göstermektedir. Benzer şekilde, son dönem teorik tartışmalar, laiklik üzerine yapılan çalışmalarda yetersiz bir bölüm olan yaşam tarzlarının incelenmesi gerekliliğini vurgulamaktadır.

Siyasetin kutuplaştırıcı söylemi, toplumun laik kesimlerini ateizmle ve topluma genellikle yabancı olarak görülen değerlerle ilişkilendirilen bir kategoriye itmiştir. Bu durum, laiklik kimliğini benimseyen ancak Türkiye'deki farklı sosyal sınıflara, bu çalışmanın kapsamında alt-orta sınıflara ait bireyleri dışlama eğilimindedir. Dini bağlılıkları ve pratikleri olmasına rağmen, hem gelenekle hem de moderniteyle çatışmayan ilişkiler sürdürseler de, laik-dini ayrımında belirli bir “elitist” kamp içinde gösterilmiş ve topluma ve onun değerlerine yabancı olarak sunulmuşlardır.

Ben bu çalışmada, bu bireylerin Türkiye'deki toplumun önemli bir kesimini oluşturduğunu savundum. Laik yaşam tarzı, yalnızca belirli bir toplumsal kesime atfedilemez. Aksine, çeşitli sosyal sınıfların günlük yaşamlarına kök salmıştır. Laiklik, dini uygulamalarla çatışmak yerine, bu dini kimliklerin ve uygulamaların koruyucusu olarak içselleştirilmekte ve deneyimlenmektedir. Bu nedenle, alt-orta sınıfların laik kimliğini, dini bağlılıklarını ve modern yaşamla ilişkilerini daha nüanslı bir şekilde anlamayı amaçladım. Laiklik genellikle bir siyasi prensip ve devlet ilkesi olarak tartışılrsa da Türkiye'de günlük yaşamın belirli alanlarında uygulanabilir düşünce ve

davranış kalıpları oluşturmuş ve bireylerin ait olduğu sosyal sınıfların yaşam tarzlarını yansıtmıştır.

Laiklik ilkesi, 5 Şubat 1937'de Anayasa ile güvence altına alınmış olup, yalnızca din, vicdan ve ibadet özgürlüğünün garantisi değil, aynı zamanda akıl, bilim ve hukukun üstünlüğünü de temel alarak vurgulamaktadır. En basit tanımıyla din ve devletin ayrılması olarak karakterize edilse de, laiklik politikadan kültüre, eğitimden hukuka kadar yaşamın çeşitli alanlarında uygulanmıştır; burada devlet, özellikle laikleşme süreciyle birlikte, din üzerinde kontrol sağlamaktadır. Benzer bir şekilde, Ferdinand Buisson (2019) laikliğin laikleşme sürecine dayandığını, bunun da en temel düzeyde kurumsal farklılaşma ve modernleşmeyi ifade ettiğini savunmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, laiklik, davranışlarımıza, alışkanlıklarımıza ve geleneklerimize sızmıştır.¹⁹² Benzer bir yaklaşımla, Niyazi Berkes (1998), din ve devlet ayrımını vurgulayan laiklik yerine, "çağdaşlaşma" teriminin farklılaşma ve modernleşme sürecini açıklamak açısından çok daha kapsamlı olduğunu düşünmektedir.¹⁹³

Önceki çalışmalar, Türkiye'de laikliğin siyasi tarihine ve laik/dinî ayrımının kamu alanındaki yansımalarına odaklanmıştır. Bu çalışmalar genellikle laikliği bir ideoloji veya siyasi doktrin olarak ele almış, çoğunlukla çatışma perspektifinden tartışmış ve 'yukarıdan aşağıya devrim' söylemini kullanmıştır. Bu konu üzerindeki hâkim literatür, Cumhuriyet Devrimi tarafından başlatılan reformların toplumsal dönüşümdeki rolünü yalnızca devlet merkezli bir perspektiften yorumlamıştır. Burada, toplum bu reformlara maruz kalan pasif kitleler olarak görülmektedir.¹⁹⁴ Bu bakış açıları, özellikle sonraki çalışmalarda hâkim literatürü, toplumun belirli kesimlerinin bu reformlara karşı direniş nedenleri ve uygulamaları üzerine yoğunlaşmaya yönlendirmiştir. Bu çalışmalar, tartışmayı yalnızca toplumsal düzeydeki direnişe odaklanmaya yönlendirerek, laikliği siyasi bir ilke bağlamında toplum için yabancı bir

¹⁹² Jean Bauberot, *Laiklik: Tutku ile Akıl Arasında 1905-2005* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2019), 8-9.

¹⁹³ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst&Company, 1998).

¹⁹⁴ See: Şerif Mardin, "Center- Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus* 102, (1973): 169-190; Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (North Humberstone: Eothen Press, 1985).

kavram olarak ele almıştır. Son dönemki çalışmalar, konunun toplumsal bir perspektiften incelenmesi gerekliliğini etkili bir şekilde ele almıştır. Bu çalışmalar genellikle erken Cumhuriyet dönemine odaklanmakta ve toplumu pasif alıcılar yerine anlam üreten aktif özneler olarak değerlendirmektedir.¹⁹⁵

Benim araştırmam, son çalışmalarla uyumlu olarak, laikliği günlük hayatta anlam üreten bir sistem olarak kavramsallaştırmak için çoklu sekülerlikler teorisinden faydalanmakta ve bu anlamın sosyal ilişkileri nasıl şekillendirdiğini incelemektedir. Ayrıca, Pierre Bourdieu'nun bazı kavramsal çerçevelerini ve araştırma tekniklerini, özellikle habitus ve sermaye türleri gibi kavramları da kullanılmıştır. Bu kavramlar, bireylerin sosyal pratiklerini ve sosyal yapı içindeki konumlarını anlamak için yararlı araçlar sunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmada çatışma yerine sosyal entegrasyona odaklanmayı amaçladım. Dolayısıyla, tezimin amacı, Türkiye'deki İslami ve muhafazakâr yaşam tarzlarına ağırlık veren çalışmalara ek olarak 'laik bir yaşam tarzı' olarak adlandırılan olguyu incelemektir. İslami ve muhafazakâr yaşam tarzları, Türkiye'nin laik siyasi rejimi altında nasıl şekillendiklerini tanımlayan çalışmalarda ele alınmıştır.¹⁹⁶ Özellikle kadınlarla ilgili çalışmalarda, Navaro-Yashin (2002), 1990'ların ortalarında başlarını örtmeyen şehirli kadınların, sosyal bilimler araştırmalarının konusu olarak görülmediğini savunmaktadır. İslamcı, elit, Kemalist, Alevi veya kırsal kadınların anlatıları gibi, Türkiye'deki kadın çalışmaları, alt-orta sınıf, işçi sınıfı ve dindar olmayan kentli Sünni kadınların yaşamlarını göz ardı etmiştir.¹⁹⁷

Bu çalışmada, bu çeşitliliği anlamayı ve Türkiye'deki laik yaşam tarzının çeşitli yaşam biçimlerine derinlemesine kök saldığını göstermeyi amaçladım; dolayısıyla bunun,

¹⁹⁵ See: Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey 1923-1945* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016); İlbey C. N. Özdemirci, *Fötr Şapkalı Şih: Cumhuriyet Sekülerleşmesi ve Taşra* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2022).

¹⁹⁶ See: Ayşe Saktanber, *Living Islam: Women, Religion & The Politicization of Culture in Turkey* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002); Aksu Akçaoğlu, *Zarif ve Dinen Makbul: Muhafazakar Üst-Orta Sınıf Habitusu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019).

¹⁹⁷ Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 67.

siyasetin kutuplaştırıcı söylemlerinin bir parçası olamayacağını ortaya koymaya çalıştım. Bu amaca ulaşmak için, kendilerini laik olarak tanımlayan ve Ankara'nın Batıkent mahallesinde, 2000'li yıllardan itibaren çeşitli dini ve kültürel değerleri yaşam biçimi olarak deneyimleyen alt-orta sınıf ailelerin yaşam tarzlarını ve kültürel değerlerini inceledim. Çalışma, Türkiye'deki belirli bir alt-orta sınıf mahallede laiklik ilkesinin çeşitli sosyal, kültürel ve dini değerlerle nasıl etkileşimde bulunduğunu ve bu etkileşimin bireylerin yaşam tarzlarını ve dünya görüşlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini anlamayı amaçladı. Bu doğrultuda, bu çalışmanın odak noktası, farklı dini ve kültürel aidiyetlere sahip bireylerin, laikliği bir siyasi doktrin olarak günlük yaşamlarında nasıl içselleştirdiklerini anlamaktı. Bu konuyu derinlemesine anlamak ve bu bireylerin zihinlerini ve yaşam tarzlarını tanıyabilmek için, Ankara'nın Batıkent mahallesinde 8 aylık bir etnografik çalışma gerçekleştirdim.

Batıkent saha çalışmamı gerçekleştirdiğim alt orta sınıf bir mahalle. Bununla ilgili öncelikle belirtilmesi gereken nokta Türkiye'de ve Ankara'da Batıkent benzeri birçok alt orta sınıf mahallenin bulunduğu; farklı inanç ve mezhepten olan ailelerin bu mahallelerde uzun yıllardır kültürel ya da dini farklılıklarını yaşamlarının ayırım noktası haline getirmeden ortaklaşa yaşam alanları kurmuş olmalarıdır. Batıkent bu nedenle bu mahallelerden sadece biridir ve kişisel ve teknik sebeplerle neticesinde, saha çalışmamı yapmam için kolaylıklar sunduğundan çalışmamı bu mahallede gerçekleştirdim. Batıkent'in kendine özgü özellikleri ise Ankara'nın kuruluş hikayesi ile de bir devamlılık içerisinde ilerlemiştir. Diğer bir deyişle Ankara'nın katmanlı sosyal ve mekansal dönüşüm süreciyle ilişkilidir. Bu tarihsel sürecin bir sonucu olarak, özellikle nüfus yapısını değiştiren göç gibi demografik değişimleri dikkate alarak, bir yerleşim alanı olarak ortaya çıkmış ve bir çözüm projesi olarak kurulmuştur. Ankara'nın Cumhuriyet'in ilk yıllarında model bir şehir olarak yaşadığı dönüşüm sonrasında, Batıkent'in bu tarihsel süreçteki rolü hem mekansal olarak hem de burada yaşayan alt-orta sınıf sakinleri açısından anlam taşımaktadır. Öte yandan, bu bölgeyi seçmemin bir diğer nedeni, cami ve cemevlerinin (Alevi ibadet yerleri) bir arada bulunması ve aktif bir şekilde kullanılmasıdır. Mahalle, Alevi ve Sünni nüfusları içermekte ve ortak bir yaşam alanı sunmaktadır. Aynı zamanda çeşitli meslek

gruplarının isimleriyle adlandırılan kooperatif alanlarıyla organize edilmiş başarılı bir mahalle projesini temsil etmesidir.

Ancak, çalışmamın odak noktası alt orta sınıfın laik yaşam tarzıydı, bu yüzden Alevilik ve Sünnilik sadece inançların çeşitliliğini ve laik yaşam tarzının ortaklıklarını göstermek için alt başlıklar olarak hizmet etti. Çalışmamın en kritik yönü alt orta sınıf ailelerinin karakteriydi.

Batıkent, Ankara'nın merkezi bölgelerine olan uzaklığı nedeniyle, şehrin daha gelişmiş alanlarına kıyasla nispeten düşük konut fiyatları ile karakterizedir. Daha eski bir mahalle olmasına rağmen, Batıkent, bir orta sınıf temsili olan Ankara'nın Çukurambar gibi mahallelerinde görülen gelişmelere benzer şekilde, orta sınıf sermayesinin akışı sayesinde ani bir dönüşüm yaşamadan, yavaş yavaş daha modern alanlarla ilişkilendirilen konforları ve sosyal olanakları edinmiştir. Konut fiyatlarına ek olarak, Batıkent'in demografik yapısı genellikle alt veya alt-orta sınıf ailelerden oluşmaktadır. Düşük gelirli aileler, genellikle kendi sektörleriyle ilgili sendikaların adını taşıyan kooperatiflerde daha sıklıkta yaşamaktadır. Bu kooperatifler, mahallelerin kuzey kısımlarındaki daha yeni ve kaliteli konutlar ile modern yapılarla zıtlık oluşturarak genellikle daha eski yapılardır. Son yıllarda, Batıkent'in artan nüfusu daha fazla orta sınıf aileyi, özellikle Batıkent'in diğer mahallelerine kıyasla daha yeni bir bölüm olan kuzey bölgesine çekmeye başlamıştır. Bu nüfus artışı, genellikle 1+1 dairelerden başlayarak daha büyük birimlere kadar uzanan lüks konutların artışıyla birlikte gerçekleşmektedir. Bu lüks daireler, Batıkent'in daha eski tek katlı bahçeli evleri, apartman binaları ve kooperatiflerden, özellikle Amerikan tarzı mutfaklar gibi modern tasarımlarıyla farklılık göstermektedir. Yine de, bu daha yeni gelişmeler özellikle otomobil sahibi olan veya birden fazla sürücüsü (eşler) bulunan aileler tarafından tercih edilmektedir; çünkü bu konutların etrafında büyük arsa parçaları bulunmaktadır. Bu evlerin emlak ilanlarında genellikle açık alan manzaraları vurgulanmakta, ancak bu yeni konut alanlarıyla uyumlu olarak marketler, çocuk parkları ve yürüyüş yolları gibi çevre düzenlemelerinde de belirgin bir artış gözlemlenmektedir.

Bu gelişmelere rağmen, Batıkent alt orta sınıf bir mahalle olarak kimliğini korumaya devam etmektedir. İlk sakinler ve daha sonra gelenler, genellikle benzer sosyo-ekonomik profillere sahip olup, çoğunlukla kamu hizmeti, öğretmenlik ve diğer kamu sektörü alanlarında çalışan alt orta sınıf ailelerdir; bu gruba emekliler de dahildir. Ev sahibi olmak ve bir araca sahip olmak, bu aileler için temel varlıkları temsil etmekte olup, genellikle uzun vadeli tasarruflar ve taksitler yoluyla edinilmektedir. Emeklilerin, çalışma yıllarında biriktirdikleri tasarruflarıyla bir tatil evi satın almaları da yaygın bir durumdur.

Nitel araştırma teknikleriyle uyumlu olacak şekilde, araştırmamda birincil ve ikincil kaynakların kombinasyonunu içermekte olup, gözlem, mülakat, anket, belgeler ve yayınlar gibi yöntemleri kullandım. Öncelikle, katılımcıların yaş, cinsiyet, gelir, köken ve meslek bilgilerini içeren demografik verileri toplamak amacıyla bir anket formu kullandım. Ardından, araştırma sorusunun alt kategorileriyle uyumlu soruları içeren derinlemesine mülakatlar gerçekleştirdim. Görüşme yaptığım ailelerin heterojen yapısı nedeniyle, belirli yerler ve aktiviteler yerine, çalışmam için anlamlı olabileceğini düşündüğüm çeşitli yerlerde katılımcı gözlemi gerçekleştirdim. Bunlar arasında, yeni doğan bir bebek için düzenlenen geleneksel dua gününe (mevlit) katılmak, Batıkent'teki Pir Sultan Cemevi'nin resmi açılış törenine katılmak, aynı köyden olan insanların kurduğu bir köy derneğine üye kadınlarla 8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Günü'nü kutlamak ve mülakat yaptığım bir kişiyle birlikte Batıkent belediyesi tarafından organize edilen kadınlar için bir ahşap boyama kursuna katılmak yer aldı. Ayrıca, mahalle muhtarı olarak aday olan bir kadınla birlikte bir seçim çadırında birkaç gün geçirdim.

Araştırmam, çekirdek aile tipi olan, bir eş, koca ve çocuk/çocuklardan oluşan aileleri içermekteydi; yalnızca iki istisna vardı: çocuklarının evlerinde yaşayan, çünkü yaşlılık nedeniyle bakıma ihtiyaç duyan iki büyükanne. Aileyi bir analiz birimi olarak seçtim çünkü mesleki/ eğitsel ilişkiler kurma, kamusal/özel alanlarda etkileşim/deneyim yaşama veya çeşitli eğlence etkinliklerine katılma konularında farklı deneyimlere sahip olduklarını ve bunların çalışmam için destekleyici ek bilgiler sağlayabileceğini düşündüm. Aileyi analiz birimi olarak kullanarak, dini/laik değerlerin ve

uygulamaların nesiller arası aktarımına dair içgörüler elde etmeyi amaçladım. Özellikle eşlerden veri toplamaya odaklandım çünkü bunun, kamusal ve özel alanlardaki cinsiyet rolleri bağlamında farklı bakış açılarını karşılaştırmak için daha fazla bilgi sağlayacağına ve belirli günlük yaşam alanlarındaki laik yaşam tarzlarını açıklama şekillerini karşılaştırma açısından daha tamamlayıcı olacağına inanıyordum. Ayrıca, cinsiyet rolleri açısından eşler arasındaki gerilim noktalarını belirlemek için faydalı olacağını düşündüm. Görüşmecilerimi ise kartopu örnekleme ile; belli kişilerin birbirlerine referans olması aracılığıyla ulaştım. 20 aileyle mülakat yaptım. Bu ailelerin 13'ü Alevi, diğer 7'si ise kimliklerini Sünni olarak tanımlıyordu ve bu ailelerden 5'i Alevi ve Sünni bireylerin evliliğinden oluşuyordu. Derinlemesine mülakatlar, ailelerin kültürel geçmişi ve tarihi, iç aile dinamikleri ve değerleri; evlilik, cinsiyet rolleri, çocuk yetiştirme, sağlık ve aile planlaması gibi çeşitli yönleri kapsadı. Ayrıca eğitim ve mesleki konulara da değinildi.

Ayrıca, dini inançlar ve uygulamalar, törenler, gelenekler, inanç özgürlüğü, hoşgörü ve katılımcıların seküler hümanizm üzerine bakış açıları da incelendi. Farklı inanç sistemleriyle etkileşimler, eşitlik, ayrımcılık ve ifade özgürlüğü konusundaki tartışmalar gibi sosyal bağlantılar ve topluluk ilişkileri de konuşmanın bir parçasıydı. Ayrıca, mülakatlar kültürel etkinlikler, ilgi alanları, tüketim alışkanlıkları ve siyasete ve ekonomiye dair bakış açılarını da ele aldı. Mülakatlar, ailelerle yüz yüze gerçekleştirildi ve birkaç istisna dışında ailelerin evlerinde yapıldı. Her bir mülakatın süresi yaklaşık 2-3 saat arasında sürdü.

Derinlemesine mülakat konularım ve sorularım hem Türkiye'de hem de uluslararası alanda sekülerlik ve yaşam tarzı çalışmaları üzerine literatürle şekillendi. Bu bağlamda, soruları günlük yaşam örnekleriyle çerçeveleyerek Türkiye için literatürü işlevsel hale getirmeyi hedefledim.

Ayrıca, mülakat yaptığım kişilere laiklik alkol içmektir' veya laiklik ateizmdir' gibi din ve laikliği Türkiye'de ayrı uçlar olarak algılamaya katkıda bulunan basmakalıp ifadeler hakkında sorular sorarak, literatürde din ve laikliği iki ayrı ve uzlaşmaz kutup olarak sunan metinleri test etmeyi amaçladım. Genel olarak, laikliği alt orta sınıf bir

mahallede yaşam tarzı seçimleri ve tercihleri aracılığıyla nasıl şekillendiğini anlamaya çalıştım.

Bourdieu'nun habitus ve kültürel sermaye kavramlarını, ayrıca din alanındaki güç dinamiklerine dair açıklamalarını ağırlıklı olarak kullandım. Bu seçim, çalıştığım grubun çeşitli dini ve kültürel geçmişlerine rağmen ortak bir kuşak kimliği paylaşmasından kaynaklandı. Bu sosyal kimliği şekillendiren ve anlam üretme kapasitesini etkileyen ortak bir unsur, benzer yıllarda aynı sistemde eğitim almış bireylerin kolektif hafızasıdır; bu bireyler, Atatürk'ün düşüncelerini ve reformlarını içselleştiren bir kuşağı temsil etmektedir. Ayrıca, yaşamları benzer sosyal ve ekonomik koşullar altında şekillenmiştir. Bu bakış açısını temel alarak, günlük yaşamlarını, cinsiyet rollerini, çocuk yetiştirme pratiklerini, dini, kültürel ve sosyal etkinliklerini inceledim. Bu kuşağın, yaşamın bu alanlarına dair perspektiflerini şekillendiren ortak eylem repertuarlarına sahip olduğunu gözlemledim; bu durumu "alt-orta sınıf seküler habitus" olarak adlandırdım.

Son 20 yılda, Türkiye'de kamu ve eğitim alanlarında artan İslami söylem ve faaliyetler, kendilerini laik olarak tanımlayanların yaşam tarzlarındaki benzerlikleri ön plana çıkarmıştır. Bu ortak kavram ve ifadeleri "alt-orta sınıf seküler habitus" olarak adlandırdım; bu kavramlar arasında Atatürkçü olmak, modern bir zihniyet ve davranışa sahip olmak ve eğitime büyük değer vermek yer almaktadır. Bu araştırma, farklı dini ve kültürel geçmişlere sahip alt-orta sınıf bireylerin laiklik konusundaki bakış açılarını aydınlatmayı amaçladı. 'Elit sekülerler' stereotipine meydan okuyarak, bu popülasyon arasında laikliğin kendine özgü bir anlayışını ortaya koydu. Kendi laik yaşam tarzlarını, Atatürkçü değerler ekseninde tanımladılar. Görüşmecilerin ifade ettiği Atatürkçü değerler, modern ve ilerici olmayı, eğitime ve cinsiyet eşitliğine önem vermeyi, özellikle de kadın ve erkek eşitliği olarak tanımladıkları durumu ifade etmektedir.

Katılımcılar, laikliği kişisel ve toplumsal ilerlemenin bir katalizörü olarak görmekte, kadınları güçlendirme ve eğitim yoluyla yukarı toplumsal hareketliliği artırmadaki rolünü vurgulamaktadır. Önemli bir nokta olarak, bu grup laikliği dinsizlikle eşit

görmemekte, aksine dini inançlarının bir güvencesi olarak değerlendirmektedir. Atatürkçülük ve laiklikle iç içe geçmiş kimlikler inşa ederek, bu bireyler Türkiye toplumunda önemli bir karşı anlatı oluşturmuşlardır. Bu araştırmanın, laikliğin ayrıcalıklı bir elite sınırlı olmadığını, Atatürkçülük ve laikliği özdeşleştiren daha geniş bir toplumsal kesimin hayatında derinlemesine yerleşik olduğunu göstererek laikliği daha incelikli bir şekilde anlamaya katkıda bulunduğunu düşünüyorum. Bireylerin yaşamlarının, geleneksel ve dini pratikleri de dahil olmak üzere, modernleşme unsurlarıyla tehdit edilmeden, aksine laiklik tarafından korunarak bir arada var olduğunu gözlemledim. Görüşme yapılanların benimsediği perspektiften bakıldığında, laiklik Türkiye'deki inanç çeşitliliği ve yaşam tarzlarının güvencesi olarak algılanıyordu.

Görüşme yapılanlar genellikle dinin özel bir mesele olması gerektiği fikrini benimsiyorlar ve günlük yaşam akışında dinin yerini özel alan pratikleri aracılığıyla normalleştiriyorlar. Çocuklarının dini pratikler ve gelenekler hakkında, resmi dini eğitim yerine evde gayri resmi aktarım yoluyla bilgi edinmelerini tercih ediyorlar. Aslında, bu durum Türkiye'deki mevcut siyasi iklimi yansıtmakta ve eğitim kurumlarına olan güvenin de bir resmini çizmektedir.

Çocukların resmi eğitim kurumlarında aldıkları din eğitiminin İslam'ın Türkiye'nin laiklik ilkesiyle uyumlu olan uygulaması yerine, çatışan bir versiyonu olarak 'empoze' edilen fikirler olmasından endişe ediyorlar. Kişinin inancının içsel bir kaynaktan gelmesi gerektiğine vurgu yapan ve sadece dindar bir çocuk yetiştirmek değil, aynı zamanda iyi bir insan yetiştirmenin önemine dikkat çeken giriş konuşmalarından sonra, bu alan çalışması sırasında katılımcıların kendilerini bu perspektiften konumlandırmaları ve yorumlarına buradan başlamaları alışıldık hale gelmişti.

Resmi din eğitimi ve okullardaki dini sembollerle konusunda öne çıkan yaklaşımlar, söylemler ve okul tercihleri, okul kuralları ile öğretmen uygulamalarının Atatürkçü değerlerle ne kadar örtüştüğünü değerlendirmek etrafında dönüyordu. Bu yaklaşım, çocuklara belirli dini fikirler veya davranış modelleri dayatmanın yanlış olduğunu,

verilen resmi din eğitiminin laik değerler ile çatışmaması gerektiği üzerinde yoğunlaşıyordu.

Ev dışında verilen dini eğitim, okullarda sağlanan dini eğitim perspektifi, dini temalı okullara yönelik tutumlar, öğretmenlerin ve eğitimcilerin dinle olan ilişkisi ve bu eğitimin nasıl verildiği, katılımcıların bakış açısında siyasetle ilişkilendirilmektedir. Çocuk eğitimi söz konusu olduğunda, dini derslerin niteliği ve bu derslerin eğitim sisteminin bir parçası olup olmaması önemli konular haline gelmektedir. Son dönemde, öğrencilerin ikamet ettikleri bölgede bir okula gitme zorunluluğu gibi uygulamalar ve birçok devlet okulunun çeşitli mahallelerde İmam-Hatip okullarına dönüştürülmesi, din ve siyaset arasındaki açık ilişkiyle ilgili tartışma konuları olmuştur. Bu ailelerin tercih etmedikleri ama 'ya mecbur kalırsak' diye endişelendikleri bir durum haline gelmiştir.

Görüşülen bireyler arasında en sık tekrarlanan kavram, çocukları "dayatılan" fikirlerden koruma arzusudur. Güneş-Ayata ve Acar (2002), İmam-Hatip okullarının özelliğini şöyle tanımlar:

Okulun kültürünün baskın özelliği, bütüncül bir dünya görüşü ve felsefenin varlığıdır. Burada, en azından kasıtlı olarak, öğrencinin hem okul içinde hem de dışında tamamen kontrol edilmesi istenmekte ve bu yönde çaba sarf edilmektedir. Öğretmenlerin bu felsefeyi iyi içselleştirdiği ve öğrencilerle olan genel tutum ve davranışlarında bunu yansıttığı görülmektedir. Sıklıkla, kendilerini bu tür bir kontrolün tek aktörleri olarak algılamaktadırlar.¹⁹⁸

Dayatılan fikirler," katılımcıların zihinlerinde, öğrencileri ailelerinin yaşam tarzlarından koparacak bir dünya görüşü içinde dönüştürme kapasitesine sahip bir lise türü olarak İmam Hatip okullarıyla sıkça ilişkilendirilmektedir. Benzer şekilde, zorunlu dini derslerin içeriğine dair görüşler, eğitim sisteminin siyasetle olan ilişkisi ve çocuklar üzerindeki dönüştürücü gücüne dair endişeleri yansıtan "dayatılmış" terimiyle ifade edilmektedir.

¹⁹⁸ Feride Acar and Ayşe Ayata, "Discipline, Success and Stability: The Reproduction of Gender and Class in Turkish Secondary Education", in *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 94.

Görüşmecilerin çoğu, zorunlu dini eğitime karşı olduklarını ifade ettiler. Türkiye'deki dini eğitimin artık tarafsız olmadığını ve belirli fikirlerin çocuklara dayatılmasına dayandığını düşünüyorlardı; özellikle de çocukların çok genç olduğu ve kendi seçimlerini yapma yeteneğine sahip olmadığı bir dönemde. Örneğin bir görüşmecim, dini derslere karşı olan görüşlerini ifade ederken, daha gençken bir Kur'an kursuna gittiğini anlattı; ancak şimdi çocuklarını bu tür kurumlara göndermekte tereddüt ettiğini belirtti. Tarikat etkinliklerinin genişlemesini, güven eksikliğinin bir nedeni olarak öne sürdü. Diğer bir görüş ise, dini derslerin seçmeli hale getirilmesinin gerçeği tam olarak yansıtmadığı üzerinedir. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın yeni bir uygulamasına göre, öğrencilere sistem üzerinden seçmeli derslerin bir listesi sunulmakta, ancak din dersi bunlar arasında halihazırda seçilmiş şekilde olduğu belirtilmektedir. Ayrıca, çeşitli etkinliklerin seçmeli ders içeriklerine dahil edilmesi beklenmesine rağmen, öğretmene ve okula bağlı olarak, konu başlıklarının bir şekilde dinle ilgili aktivitelere ait olduğu belirtilmektedir.

Diğer bir husus ise, bu çalışmada, laik bir yaşam tarzı sürdürmenin Türkiye'de yalnızca dinsizlik veya ateist olmakla sınırlı olmadığını vurgulamış olmamdır; aksine, bireylerin laik, dini ve geleneksel referansları günlük pratiklerine entegre ettikleri ve yaşamlarını buna göre şekillendirdikleri geniş bir yaşam tarzı yelpazesini kapsadığını belirttim. Bu bakış açısı, klasik sekülerleşme tezini—toplumlar modernleştikçe dinin öneminin azaldığı—farklı bir şekilde yorumlamama yol açtı. Görüştüğüm bireyler arasında dini pratiklerini sürdüren Sünni ve Alevi bireylerin yanı sıra, kendilerini ateist olarak tanımlayan fakat kültürel olarak geleneksel dini pratikleri benimseyenler de yer aldı. Bu çeşitlilik içinde, dinin rolünün azalıp azalmadığını tartışmak yerine, dinin modernleşme ile birlikte değişimine odaklanmak daha anlamlı olacaktır. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'nin modernleşme tarihinin din ve geleneksel yapılarla dışlayıcı bir şekilde değil, dönüşümsel ve uyumlu bir şekilde etkileşimde bulunduğunu gözlemledim.

Alevi katılımcılar arasındaki laiklik tartışmaları, dini inançlarına karşı hoşgörü, zorunlu din eğitimi konusundaki endişeler ve yasal tanınma talepleri gibi meseleler etrafında şekillendi. Özellikle, çoğu zaman Aleviliği Sünnilikle karşılaştırarak tanımladılar; bu karşılaştırmalar, kadın özgürlüğü ve aydınlık, modern bir toplum olma

gibi konuları içeriyordu. 'İyi' Sünni özelliklerini, benim "alt-orta sınıf laik habitus" olarak adlandırdığım unsurlara referansla tarif ettiler. Ayrıca, 2000'ler Türkiye'sinin siyasi bağlamının, Alevi ve Sünni vatandaşlar arasındaki diyalogların içeriğini yeniden gözden geçirmek için bir zemin sağladığını gözlemledim; çünkü sıklıkla onları birleştiren ortak noktaları tanımladılar.

Ayrıca, kendilerini laik olarak tanımlayan ve çeşitli kültürel ve dini arka planlardan gelen alt-orta sınıf ailelerin, birbirleriyle etkileşimlerinde ve farklı inançlar ve kimliklerle karşılaşmalarında farklılıklarını nasıl ifade ettiklerini inceledim. Bireylerin kendilerini başkalarıyla ilişkileri üzerinden nasıl tanımladıklarını, özgürlüklerini nasıl ifade ettiklerini, komşuluk ilişkilerine nasıl dahil olduklarını ve en çok vurgulanan çalışma ortamı gibi kamusal alanlarda dinlerini nasıl uyguladıklarını araştırdım. Bunlar arasında, iş yaşamında dini pratikleri bir gösteri olarak kullanmak, iş etiğinin bütünlüğünü zayıflatarak liyakat sistemini sorgulamak ve dini pratikleri başkalarının iş yükünü artıracak şekilde istismar etmek en belirgin olanlardı. Komşuluk ilişkileri açısından, katılımcılar, dini boyutlar kazanan komşuluk ilişkileri hakkında kendileri için keskin sınırlar koymuşlardı. Özellikle, farklı inançlar arasındaki ibadet tarzları ve dini kimlikler üzerindeki sözsözsel önyargıların ve basmakalıp fikirlerin etkisini araştırdım.

Bu bağlamda, Alevi katılımcıları, onlara karşı ayrımcı söylemleri yorumlarken iki gruba ayırdım. İlk grup, eğitim yoluyla yukarı yönlü hareketlilik yaşamış katılımcılardan oluşuyordu; özellikle geçmişlerinden örnekler vererek ayrımcı söylemleri açıklıyor ve bunları cehalet ve eğitim eksikliğine atfediyorlardı. İkinci grup ise marjinalleşme ve ayrımcı söylemlerle ilgili olarak, ikinci sınıf vatandaş olma duygularını ifade ettiler. Bu durum, eğitim ve gelir düzeyleri düştükçe daha belirgin hale geldi. İkinci grup olarak sınıflandırdığım Alevi görüşmeciler, devletin belirli bir dini (Sünni İslam) benimsemesi nedeniyle toplumda yalnızca sınırlı bir konuma yükselebileceğine inanıyorlar ve bu nedenle Türkiye'deki laikliğin tam anlamıyla uygulanmadığını düşünüyorlardı. Alevi katılımcıların ayrımcılıkla başa çıkma yollarını, örneklerin sıklığına dayanarak iki kategoriye ayırdım: kimliğin gizlenmesi ve kimliğin savunulması. Kimliğin gizlenmesi, Ramazan ayında oruç tutuyormuş gibi

davranmak veya kendilerini Sünni Müslümanlar gibi tanıtmak için çaba harcamak gibi örnekleri içeriyordu. Kimliğin savunulması ise, Sünni Müslümanlara karşı ayrımcı söylemlere başvurarak kimliklerini meşrulaştırma çabası ve AKP döneminde daha da güçlendiğine inandıkları mezhepsel aidiyet duygusuydu.

Öte yandan, Sünni katılımcıların Aleviler ile ilgili yorumlarında üstü kapalı bir tür üstünlük pozisyonu farkettim. Örneğin, Sünni katılımcılar Alevilerin nasıl ibadet etmesi gerektiğini, cemevlerini nasıl kullanmaları gerektiğini veya Alevi uygulamaların ve dini liderlerin İslam içindeki yerini tartışılar; tüm bunları yaparken Alevileri desteklediklerine düşünüyorlardı. Özünde, Alevi dini ritüellerini ve uygulamalarını Sünni İslam'daki ritüeller ve uygulamalara referansla yorumladılar. Fakat tüm bu yorumlar, her ne kadar farklılıklar üzerinden şekilleniyor olsa da katılımcıların gündelik hayatlarını şekillendiren büyük etkiler olarak yer almıyordu. Farklılıklarına rağmen, katılımcıların alt-orta sınıf laik habitus olarak adlandırdığım özellikleri—Atatürkçü olmak, modern olmak, cinsiyet eşitliğini savunmak ve hem kız hem de erkek çocuklar için eğitimi önceliklendirmek gibi—aynı zamanda Alevi ve Sünni olarak ortaklaşa çizdikleri yaşam tarzları açısından sınırlarını oluşturuyordu. Bireyleri bir araya getiren bir alan olarak evlilikler, özellikle farklı mezhepler arasında kurulanlar, aileler arasında karşılıklı anlayışı kolaylaştırıyor ve günlük hayatta ortak uygulamaların ortaya çıkmasıyla birlikte stereotipik inançların çözülmesine de olanak tanıyordu. Ayrıca, Batıkent'te yaşayan Sünni ailelerin alt-orta sınıf durumu ve nispeten daha sosyal demokrat eğilimleri, Sünni-Alevi evliliklerinde gerilim azaltıcı faktörler olarak işlev görmekteydi. Bu nedenle, Alevi ve Sünni bireylerin birbirleri hakkında bildiklerini, ne beklediklerini ve belirli ortak siyasi ve kültürel değerler üzerinde nasıl müzakere ettiklerini tartıştıkları yolları, alt-orta sınıf laik habitus olarak adlandırdığım ortaklıklar repertuarına dahil etmek oldukça mantıklıydı.

Katılımcıların, alt-orta sınıf içinde özellikle laiklik etrafında kimliklerini inşa ettiklerini gözlemledim. Bu katılımcılar, 'AKP seçmeni' olarak tanımlanmak gibi dini alanın yeni sembolik kodları ve dinle siyasetin artan ilişkisi nedeniyle dini alandan dışlandıklarını, diğer bir deyişle, inanca, dindar ya da Türkiye toplumunun dini ve kültürel değerlerine yabancı olarak nitelendirildiklerini ve yaşadıkları ekonomik

kayıpları ifade ettiler. Pierre Bourdieu'nun dini alanı bir güç alanı olarak anlama biçiminden yola çıkarak, kendilerini laik olarak tanımlayan katılımcıların, AKP'yi eleştirdikleri ve ona oy vermedikleri için dinsiz olarak görüldükleri için dini alandan dışlandıklarını düşündüğünü anladım.

Başka bir deyişle, onların alt orta sınıf laik habitusu, AKP'nin düzgün veyahut makbul bir Müslüman tanımıyla örtüşmüyor ve bu nedenle din alanından dışlanıyorlardı. Bu bağlamda, siyasi tartışma, AKP üyelerinin son zamanlarda ne kadar servet biriktirdiği, sadece kendilerini destekleyenlere mali destek sağladıkları ve kendilerine oy vermeyenleri nasıl marjinalleştirdikleri ve ayrımcılığa tabi tuttıkları etrafında döndü. Benzer şekilde, AKP döneminde dini tarikatların özellikle eğitim ve sağlık alanındaki artan gücü, hem Alevi hem de Sünni katılımcılar tarafından sert bir şekilde eleştirildi. Ancak birçok katılımcı, görüşlerini özgürce ifade edemedikleri bir siyasi atmosferin yarattığı korkudan bahsetti. Bu durum, korumaya çalıştıkları yaşam tarzlarını tehdit eden bir şey olarak tanımlandı. Daha net bir şekilde ifade etmek gerekirse, katılımcıların sosyo-ekonomik konumları, seçimlerini ve yaşam tarzlarını sınırlamaya başlamış olarak yansıtıldı. Ekonomik olarak, kimlik ve yaşam tarzı açısından kendilerini dışlayan sisteme karşı durabilmek için yoksulluk politikalarının Türkiye'de öncelik kazanması gerektiğini vurguladılar. AKP'nin inançlarına, kültürel aidiyetlerine veya yaşam tarzlarına dayalı olarak vatandaşları kutuplaştırdığı bir siyasi ortamda, ana muhalefet partisinden beklentiler, AKP tarafından belirlenen söylemden uzaklaşarak yoksulluk meselesine odaklanması gerektiği üzerineydi.

Gorski (2000), Reformasyon (1300-1770) öncesi ve sonrası Batı Avrupa'daki dini yaşamı incelemesinde, bu dönemdeki sosyal yapı ve dini deneyimdeki değişimlerin, geleneksel veya modern paradigmanın öne sürdüğünden çok daha karmaşık olduğunu savunmaktadır. Aslında, bu iki paradigma, savunucularının sıklıkla iddia ettiği kadar çatışan veya uzlaşmaz değildir. Batı toplumunun daha seküler hale geldiğini, ancak yine de dini inanç ve uygulamaları sürdürdüğünü belirtmenin önemini vurgulamıştır.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Philip S. Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000): 138-167.

Görüşmecilerin çok farklı kültürel ve dini geçmişlerden gelmelerine rağmen, aralarında gözlemlediğim bir ortak nokta, Cumhuriyet reformlarının ve Türkiye'nin modernleşme tarihinin kendi geçmişlerini ya da dini inanç ve uygulamalarını dışlamadığına dair inançlarıydı. Türkiye'nin modernleşmesinin geleneklerine veya inançlarına zarar verdiğini düşünmüyorlardı. Aksine, Cumhuriyet reformlarının bu uygulamaları güçlendirdiğini ve çerçevelediğini, özellikle de bu uygulamaları koruyup muhafaza ettiğine inanıyorlardı.²⁰⁰ Gerçekten de Türkiye'nin modernleşme reformları, İslam için Türkiye'ye özgü bir çerçeve oluşturarak bunu başarmış ve Türkiye'yi diğer İslam ülkelerinden ayırmıştır. Laik kimlikleriyle kendilerini tanımlayan ve dini pratiklerini uygulayan ve inanan vatandaşlar için laik Müslüman olmak ya da bir görüşmecimin ifade ettiği gibi "normal Müslüman" olmak, kendilerini konumlandırmalarına ve dünyadaki diğer Müslümanlar ile mesafe oluşturmalarına yardımcı olan bir kimlik anlamına geliyordu.

Bu tezin bulgularından edindiğim izlenimlere dayanarak, Türkiye'nin farklı sosyal sınıflarından ve bölgelerinden kendilerini laik olarak tanımlayan bireylerle benzer çalışmaların yapılmasının, dini inanç ve pratiklere ek olarak yaşam tarzlarının çeşitliliği konusundaki literatüre katkıda bulunacağını düşünüyorum.

²⁰⁰ Benzer bir görüş için: Richard Tapper and Nancy Tapper, “‘Thank God We’re Secular!’ Aspects of Fundamentalism in a Turkish Town”, in *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism*, ed. Lionel Caplan (Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 51-78.

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