

**NEW MUSLIM MALE SUBJECTIVITIES: MASCULINITIES IN THE HIZMET
MOVEMENT**

by

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MOVEMENT**

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*To my family,
the old and the new one*

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ABSTRACT

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Cultural Studies, MA Thesis, 2011

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Keywords: The Fethullah Gülen (Hizmet) Movement, masculinities, religion, Islam, gender, subjectivity, agency, Turkey

This thesis aims to examine how a specific Islamic organization called the Hizmet Movement constructs the codes of masculinities with particular features. In addition to the discourse analysis of Fethullah Gülen's writings and sermons, his position of a male leader is rethought in this thesis. Another special feature of the community as structuring the movement with the *abi*¹ system which designates an elder guide for the followers is examined to understand how masculinity codes are conveyed through generations. By understanding the huge network of the Hizmet Movement as a new form of kinship substituting for the families of the followers, a new model of Muslim man that crystallized after the 28th February process is observed to understand the political implications of new codification of Muslim man in the Hizmet Movement. This study also tries to observe how individuals act within a well organized religious community by resisting or negotiating hegemonic discourses about masculinities by also revealing the gender regime constructed by the Hizmet Movement in a specific historical context.

¹ *Abi* is a title used for elder guiders appointed to assist students in student houses and dormitories. While the term *şakirt* denotes disciples, *abi* designates elder guiders.

ÖZET

YENİ MÜSLÜMAN ERKEK ÖZNELİKLERİ: HİZMET HAREKETİ'NDE ERKEKLİK

İbrahim Tevfik Karatop

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Anahtar Sözcükler: Gülen (Hizmet) Hareketi, erkeklik, din, İslam, toplumsal cinsiyet, öznelilik, eylemlilik, Türkiye

Bu tez Hizmet Hareketi'nin inşa ettiği erkeklik kodlarını, farklı özellikleri ile incelemektedir. Hizmet Hareketinin lideri olarak tanımlanan Fethullah Gülen'in yazılarının ve vaazlarının söylem analizi yapılarak, cemaat içindeki erkek lider pozisyonu yeniden düşünülmektedir. Hareketin bir diğer özelliği olan abilik sistemi, erkeklik kodlarının nesiller arasında nasıl aktarıldığını anlamak için incelenmektedir. Hizmet Hareketinin kurduğu devasa iletişim ağı ile takipçilerinin ailelerinin yerine geçen yeni bir kurgusal aile bağı oluşturduğu savunulmaktadır. Bu tez, ayrıca, 28 Şubat sonrası belirginleşen yeni Müslüman erkekliğin politik etkilerini tartışmaktadır. Tüm bu bağlamlarda, Hizmet Hareketi'nin oluşturduğu toplumsal cinsiyet rejimini ortaya koyarak, bireylerin çok iyi örgütlenmiş bir dini cemaatte nasıl hareket edip, hegemonik söylemler karşısında kendilerine hangi şekillerde direniş ve pazarlık alanları oluşturduğu gözlemlenmeye çalışılmaktadır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My early memory goes back to the day that I experienced weeping with other men. From elementary school to high school, I was educated in conservatively oriented schools supported by the biggest Muslim community in Turkey, the Hizmet Movement. With the pious repertoire inherited from my family, the common codes of being Muslim were guiding my childhood with other children coming from similar backgrounds. All of a sudden, the pious climate of my school was distracted by the political implications after the ultimatum of the Turkish army on the 28th February 1997. During this period, while considering myself as a Muslim and practicing Islam in my daily life, I was also confused with the idea that Muslims were against the secular regime as individuals. Thus, the Muslim identity which was the source of my honor suddenly transformed into a feature of mine which shouldn't be revealed not just in public or on the street, but also in the school itself. While we (students, teachers and administrators) considered ourselves as pious Muslims, after a certain point, our identity became unspoken for everyone.

After a while, this silence was broken by a drastic change in our lives. We were used to seeing our mothers, sisters and female teachers covering their hair with headscarves as a common practice of piety. Yet, the new government, established after the collapse of Islamic government in 1997, decided to enforce the headscarf ban strictly for teachers within private schools.² Even today, I remember the first day when our literature teacher came to class without covering her head. At this moment, the mainly male populated class just started to cry together. Everyone was crying without any exception. Today, I cannot say the exact reason of our weeping but I certainly remember the comfort of crying collectively with men.

Another anecdote from my childhood may be seen as a glimpse of ongoing struggle and mutual stereotyping between secularist and pious Muslims in Turkey, especially those are affiliated with Islamic communities. After two years of education in a state school

² The headscarf ban was also a controversial practice before this period, but the 28th February process after the ultimatum, led to strict enforcement of the ban.

providing nationalist and secularist education, my parents preferred a more conservatively oriented school supported by the Hizmet Movement. Today, I remember my parents' secular friends' reaction to their decision and my fears stemmed after their criticisms against my new school. According to these family friends, these religiously oriented schools were using *sharia* based curriculum which is compelling students to wear traditional Sufi clothes in a school decorated with Islamic calligraphy. With my previous secular education, these keywords were signaling so-called the dark days of Ottoman Empire and the enemies of our secular state. In a short time, these stereotypes were erased with my experience in the new school providing more professional education. More importantly, this story reflects the inveterate stereotyping against the Muslim individuals. This thesis also aims to challenge mutual misunderstanding between secular and Muslim individuals which can be also observed in macro-political history of Turkey.

Although anthropology historically studied “other” cultures, in recent years it has become increasingly reflexive, paying attention to the personal experience of the researcher, including the researcher studying her own society. Indeed, my personal journey in Turkey, as a young researcher surrounded with pious sensibilities at home, at school and on the street, initiated my interest in the anthropology of Islam and the cultures shaped within Islam.

As one of the most written about topics, studies on Islam and Muslims resemble one of the most intense endeavors in the social sciences, especially right after 9/11. Another trendy topic for the Western intellectual tradition and Turkey's academic intelligentsia has been the question of woman in Islam. Today, it is not hard to find accounts on women's rights in Islam, veiling, headscarf ban, Islamic feminism in the context of Turkey. However, still, masculine constructions and narratives of Muslim men could not find as an intense voice as women's studies within the studies on Islam and Muslims.

Definitely, two complimentary components of the gender constructions, women and men studies are in the agenda of social scientists, by generally focusing on the women part as formulated within the feminist agenda. Both analytically and politically, feminist social scientists have preferred to deconstruct social systems as producing and

are being produced by patriarchy. In this context, patriarchy is defined as the male dominance in material and discursive dimensions of sociabilities and sensibilities of Muslim selves.³ However, both material and discursive constructions of masculinities remain understudied.

The academic silence about masculinities comes with political implications. By not being interested in masculine constructions, feminist literature presented a monolithic picture of manhood. In other words, up until the last twenty years, masculinities studies in the feminist literature have failed to analyze the multiplicity and the complexity of masculine constructions of selves embedded in power relations. The silence in the literature was partially challenged by new approaches of R. W. Connell.⁴ Similar with the studies on Islam, Muslim men were perceived with the current stereotypical constructions based on generalizing and simplifying discourses.⁵

By attempting to further challenge this silence within the social sciences, this thesis aims to examine how a specific Islamic organization called the Hizmet Movement constructs the codes of masculinities with particular features. In addition to the discourse analysis of Fethullah Gülen's writings and sermons, the head of the Hizmet Movement, his position of a male leader will be rethought in this thesis. Another special feature of the community as structuring the movement with *abi*⁶ system which designates an elder guider for the followers will be examined to understand how masculinity codes are conveyed through generations. By understanding the huge network of the Hizmet Movement as a new form of kinship substituting the families of the followers, a new model of Muslim man crystallized after the 28th February process will be observed to understand political implications of new codification of Muslim

³ Kandiyoti, D. (1991), *Islam and Patriarchy: A Comparative Perspective*; In Keddie, N. and Baron, B. (eds) *Women in Middle Eastern History: shifting boundaries of sex and gender*, Yale University Press, Pp.23-45

⁴ Connel, R. W. (1995), *Masculinities*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁵ Ewing, K. (2008), *Stolen Honor: Stigmatizing Muslim Men in Berlin California*: Stanford University Press, p.4-5.

⁶ *Abi* is a title used for elder guiders appointed to assists students in student houses and dormitories. While the term *şakirt* denotes disciples, *abi* designates elder guiders.

man in the Hizmet Movement. This study, also, tries to observe how individuals operate/act within a well organized religious community by resisting / negotiating / modifying hegemonic discourses about masculinities by also revealing the gender regime constructed by the Hizmet Movement in a specific historical context.

1.1. *Cemaat*: The Hizmet Movement of Turkey

The Hizmet Movement, also known as Gülen Movement, defines itself as a *cemaat*⁷ or a civil society,⁸ or a social network.⁹ The Hizmet Movement, by constructing its legitimacy on previous *Nurculuk* movement initiated by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, is led by Fethullah Gülen, who is also named as *Hocaefendi* meaning the respected scholar.

According to Bekim Agai, by 1999, the followers of the Hizmet Movement were running approximately 150 private schools, 150 *dershanes* (university exam preparatory courses) and an even larger number of student dormitories. By 1997, more than 250 inspired educational institutions in nearly all parts of the world enrolled more than 26,500 students.¹⁰ Especially after 2002, the political climate was normalized for Islamist communities so these numbers increased to much larger figures. As figures demonstrate, the Hizmet Movement expands its networks into Turkey and into different countries by generally establishing educational institutions.

In such a vast organization, the Hizmet Movement was able to create the two biggest components in *cemaat* to maintain these massive educational initiatives in all over the

⁷ *Cemaat* has been historically used to define religious/ethnic group in the Ottoman State, such as *Rum Cemaati* (Greek Community). The Hizmet Movement prefers to utilize this term to differentiate itself from historical Sufi Brotherhoods, *tarikats*. Among followers, the community is generally called as *cemaat*.

⁸ Turam, B. (2007), *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement*, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, p.67.

⁹ Özdalga, E. (2005), *Redeemer or Outsider? The Gülen Community in the Civilizing Process*, *The Muslim World* Vol.95, p.435. (429-466)

¹⁰ Agai, B. (2008), *Discursive and organizational strategies of the Gülen movement*, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/conference-papers/294-the-fethullah-gulen-movement-i/2132-discursive-and-organizational-strategies-of-the-gulen-movement.html> p. 4 (27.04.2011)

world. For today, thousands of new graduates in Turkey have chosen to work as teachers in all over the world, by considering this duty as *ilayi kelimetullah*.¹¹ Another large group consisted of entrepreneurs able to support these institutions financially. This group of traders, industrialists, and middle sized entrepreneurs are called *esnaf* in the vocabulary used within *cemaat*. Moreover, the Hizmet Movement is still able to attract many followers from distinct backgrounds with distinct occupations, besides these two core subgroups within *cemaat*.

Another significant activity of the Hizmet Movement can be counted as media initiatives in Turkey and in different countries. Among the dozens of TV channels, radio stations, newspapers and magazines, Zaman is the most known newspaper with its power in the media. Today, Zaman, which is published daily in both Turkish and English, has the biggest selling figures in Turkey.¹² Although it is established through the funds of volunteers of the Hizmet Movement, Zaman is a self sustaining company in Turkey's media market. More strikingly, Zaman is the only newspaper sold using a subscription system. If we consider its sales of approximately one million in Turkey, Zaman's subscription system, backed by followers, shows how this network is vast and is working hard to run media wing of *cemaat*.

1.2. Cemaat --- Not Tarikat

Underlining the disengagement from traditional Sufi Brotherhoods, the Hizmet Movement deploys the term, *cemaat* to signify their community. In this regard, according to Bekim Agai:

Unlike the Sufi brotherhoods, the *cemaat* has neither the requirement of formal membership nor a rite of initiation nor does it need any specific room to convene. Becoming a member is a process rather than a specific single act and the *cemaat* evolves wherever its members come together.¹³

¹¹ *İlayi kelimetullah* is generally denoted in Fethullah Gülen's writings and sermons as the holy duty of Islam which aims to reach God's name to everyone.

¹² According to Yay-sat and Turkuvaz Distribution, Zaman is approximately sold 851.368 by the 18th July. <http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazar.do?yazarno=1030> (27.04.2011)

¹³ Agai, Bekim. 2008. Discursive and organizational strategies of the Gülen movement. <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/conference-papers/294-the-fethullah-gulen->

However, like *tarikats*¹⁴, *cemaat* is based on a common discourse as well as the acceptance of and submission to the hierarchical order of the social relations within *cemaat*. The more these are accepted and the more a person works for the cause of *cemaat*, the stronger his inclusion into *cemaat*.¹⁵ At this point, the historical background has generated new Islamic communities which can be elaborated to analyze the Hizmet Movement.

In short, this thesis aims to analyze a specific Islamic community with its peculiar hierarchical structuring between men of different ages. By observing the intergenerational relationship between male followers of the Hizmet Movement, a new focus can be articulated into the ongoing literature about Islamic communities, and Muslim experiences by genderizing a specific community. In this anthropological inquiry, I consider my position as tackling between inside and outside as I'm not an actual follower with ten years' education in a *cemaat* supported school. By focusing on masculinities within the Hizmet Movement, this thesis aims to analyze the role of the contemporary Muslim man in Turkey with its new identities crystallized after a milestone in the political arena in Turkey, the 28th February process.

movement-i/2132-discursive-and-organizational-strategies-of-the-gulen-movement.html
p.2 (27.04.2011)

¹⁴ *Tarikat* denotes Sufi brotherhoods in Turkish

¹⁵ Mardin Ş, (2006), *Religion, Society and Modernity in Turkey*, New York: Syracuse University Press, p.23

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. From *Ulema* to *Cemaat*: The Historical Evolution of Islamic Communities

The Ottoman State, situating its legitimacy on the claim of caliphate¹⁶, had demographically evolved into a secular state with Muslim majority. In a very well known historical analysis, the Ottoman state, from the 18th century, attempted to modify legal and administrative systems within the state.¹⁷ More significantly, the Western ideologies became relevant mindsets for the Ottoman intelligentsia, in these reformation plans.¹⁸

*Ulema*¹⁹, as one of the powerful administrative classes, historically legitimized its existence by carrying the posts of *şeyhülislam*²⁰ and *müfti*²¹ in urban spaces and *kadı*²² in rural areas.²³ Besides the official class interpreting the *sharia* law, Islamic communities, especially Sufi lodges and groups, resembled the other form of political power by attracting local Muslims, state officials and Sultans.

¹⁶ *Halife* is a religious and administrative post, historically utilized from Prophet Muhammad to the last Sultan of Ottoman Empire.

¹⁷ Özkul, O. (2005), *Gelenek ve Modernite Arasında Ulema*, İstanbul: Birharf Yayınları, p.186-187.

¹⁸ Zürcher, E. J. (2004), *Turkey: A Modern History*, Imprint London: I.B. Tauris, p.21-30.

¹⁹ The educated class of Muslim legal scholars in the Ottoman State.

²⁰ The post of governor dealing with religious affairs of the Ottoman State.

²¹ The interpreter of Islamic jurisprudence.

²² Local judges trained in the sharia law.

²³ Inalcik, H. (1973), *Learning, the Medrese, and the Ulema*; In *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300–1600*, New York: Praeger, pp.165–178.

With the changes in the political arena from the mid-19th century, *ulema* and traditional religious communities became the core of political debates, under the effect of modernization process.²⁴ Towards to the end of the century, along with nationalism and Ottomanism, Islamism evolved into a promising motive for the political project aiming to transform Ottoman state, by defining new legitimacy over the caliphate and *ummah*.²⁵ While Turkish nationalism, Ottomanism and Islamism were competing with each other, in 1908, The Young Turk Revolution legitimized the rule of the new group of intelligentsia who had been trained in professional and secular schools. In this period, the new concept of civilization defined by modern ideals led to the re-evaluation of the social structure and of principles and priorities.²⁶

The Young Turk Revolution was translated into a new Republic in 1923, after the resistance movement against the Western invasion of Anatolia. Although the generals associated with Young Turks managed to mobilize masses against Western invaders by utilizing Islamic motivations, a totally different policy began to unfold right after the war. By the establishment of Republic of Turkey, Islamist ideologies and Islamic communities were marginalized and were legally prohibited by the Law 67, on the 30th November, 1925.²⁷

As the official abolishment of Islamic communities demonstrates very well, the secular state has always been in a conflict with Islamists, and Islamic communities in general. In the literature focusing on the history of modern Turkey, the political rivalry between religiously motivated movements and the secular state was utilized as the explanatory analytical framework. Although the political rivalry was generally dominated by the secular state, Islamic communities have managed to survive by modifying their strategies in different political processes.

²⁴ Mardin Ş, (2006), *Religion, Society and Modernity in Turkey*, New York: Syracuse University Press, p.88-89.

²⁵ Mardin Ş, (2006), *Religion, Society and Modernity in Turkey*, New York: Syracuse University Press, p.179-180.

²⁶ Göçek, F.M. (1999), *Burjuvazinin Yükselişi İmparatorluğun Çöküşü: Osmanlı Batılılaşması ve Toplumsal Değişme*, Ankara: Ayraç Yayınları, p.261-262.

²⁷ <http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/677.13.text.asp> (Retrieved on 16.04.2011)

From the early days of Republic, *Nurculuk* has constituted one of the most significant Islamic communities with its broad branches.²⁸ After the death of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, 10 different branches within the community were established by the disciples of Said Nursi.²⁹ In 1960s, although Fethullah Gülen was not an actual disciple of Said Nursi, he managed to take over Said Nursi's tradition by establishing his own *cemaat*, called the Hizmet Movement. In this thesis, the Hizmet Movement will be utilized as a self-designated term used by the followers themselves. *Cemaat* as an Arabic word meaning community, is also used throughout the thesis to signify the Hizmet Movement.

2.2. *Nurculuk*: New Islamic Community

Nurculuk, as established by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi may be counted as one of the striking examples of how an Islamic community, by deriving its particular strategies³⁰, managed to expand its activities throughout Turkey. Şerif Mardin, in his account on Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, sets the historical background paving the way to *Nurculuk* in Turkey, to the post-*Tanzimat* period of the Ottoman State. The political clash between *ulema* and new bureaucrats (educated in the Western style) marks the historical background for the rising Islamic communities which are becoming alternative or emerging powers in today's Turkey.³¹

In my opinion, Said Nursi's personal history may be considered as an amplification of Islamic experience in Turkey. As a nascent Islamic community differentiating itself from established Sufi *tarikats*, the *Nurcu* movement expanded its networks into Anatolia, and prepared the ideational and organizational basis of the Hizmet Movement. In this regard, *Nurculuk* distinguished its community from traditional *tarikats* by

²⁸ Mardin Ş. (1989), *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, New York: State University of New York Press, p.2.

²⁹ Yavuz, H. (2003), *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.179.

³⁰ Yavuz, H. (2003), *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.151-179.

³¹ Turam, B. (2007), *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement*, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, p.6-10

claiming to be a social movement rather than a Sufi brotherhood. A social movement can be understood as a “collective challenge by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities”.³² In this regard, social movements gather individuals around symbols, beliefs and values restructuring everyday life practices.³³ *Nurculuk*, from Bediüzzaman Said Nursi to Fethullah Gülen’s neo-*Nur cemaat*, may be considered as an example of how traditional *tarikats* managed to evolve into new social movements or civil societies by aiming to modify not just political arena but everyday lives of followers.

2.3. Islamic Revivalism: The Portrait of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi

Said Nursi was born in 1876 in a village of Bitlis province of Northern Kurdistan in Turkey.³⁴ His traditional education shaped Said Nursi’s social and ethical thought, as a religious scholar. Said Nursi was both attending *medrese*³⁵ lessons and Sufi groups³⁶ to maintain the necessary education for scholarship in Islam. Although Nursi remained critical in some aspects of Sufi traditions, he was intensely influenced by Nakşibendi and Kadiri *tarikats*.³⁷ More significantly, Said Nursi was vocalizing the need of change in Ottoman-Islamic tradition of knowledge production. In 1907, just before the coup of Young Turks in 1908, Said Nursi visited Sultan Abdülhamid II to propose a new university in Van which was planned to provide Islamic education reconciled with the scientific reasoning. Although he was rejected by the Sultan, Said Nursi continued his

³² Tarrow, S. (1998), *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p.3-4.

³³ Yavuz, H. (2003), *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.23.

³⁴ The term Kurdistan is used as a historical designation throughout the paper.

³⁵ Religious schools teaching philosophy, law, Quran sciences with other traditional realms of sciences within Islamic tradition.

³⁶ Arslan, E. (2004), *Social and Ethical Thought Of Bediüzzaman Said-i Kurdi*, İstanbul: Sabanci University, Faculty of Art and Social Sciences, unpublished thesis, p.23-24.

³⁷ Yavuz, H. (2003), *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.151-179

interest in reconciling Islam with scientific reasoning by not establishing a university but writing books as guidance for his *şakirts*³⁸, and forming a religious community.

Actually, Said Nursi's life is very complicated to summarize due to his intense efforts in politics, in war making and in Islamic knowledge. In addition to giving details about his political life, I would prefer to historicize how Said Nursi's work made possible a new mode of Islamic thinking. In my understanding, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's most significant claim was overcoming positivism by reconciling scientific reasoning with Islam. In the late Ottoman period, traditional Islamic thinking was challenged by positivism.³⁹ In this effort to challenge positivism, Said Nursi compiled his books under the name of *Risale-i Nur*.

More interestingly, Said Nursi managed to create an excellent distribution network which allowed his work to reach many different towns of Anatolia. While he was living in exile in various towns of Anatolia, he attracted local people, although he was accused with the claim that his books were against the secular regime. In his living quarters, some *şakirts* – used as synonym for disciple-- transcribed his speeches and copied them for distribution. Some of his *şakirts* were carrying these papers to other followers in Anatolia. After his death in 1960, *Nurcu* movement survived under different groups established by different disciples of Said Nursi.⁴⁰ For today, Fethullah Gülen and his *cemaat* constitutes the biggest *Nurcu* movement in terms of the amounts of followers and the scale of activities.

³⁸ Nurcu Movement utilizes the term *şakirt* for disciples of Said Nursi.

³⁹ Arslan, E. (2004), *Social and Ethical Thought Of Bediüzzaman Said-i Kurdi*, İstanbul: Sabancı University, Faculty of Art and Social Sciences, unpublished thesis, p.5

⁴⁰ Yavuz, H. (2003), *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.23.

2.4. Fethullah Gülen: New Face of *Nurculuk*

Fethullah Gülen was born in the village of Korucuk, near Erzurum, an eastern Anatolian province, on April 27, 1941. He defines his family as the most influential foundation in the formation of his personality and thinking. The regional culture of Erzurum has also significant impact on Fethullah Gülen's personality and understanding of Islam. Erzurum was a zone of conflict between Russia and Ottoman state, which also witnessed the massive deportation and the massacre of Armenian community. In this historical setting, Muslim-Turkish community was shaped by the defense of the community and Turkish nationalist motivations. These factors, surely, transformed Fethullah Gülen's understanding of Islam and its relationship with nationalism and nationalist state.⁴¹

After he received his informal education in Islamic traditions with formal education in state schools in Erzurum, Fethullah Gülen was appointed as a state preacher (*vaiz*) in Edirne, where a larger number of Balkan Muslims living in the border between Greece and Turkey. Until 1966, Gülen attracted hundreds of Muslims with his eloquence in preachings. Starting in 1966, he was appointed as the official İzmir preacher and also worked at Kestanepazarı Quran School in İzmir. In these days, Fethullah Gülen initiated his new *Nurcu* agenda in İzmir, which is an old city, previously populated with Greeks and is known with the majority support for the secularist state. In 1960s, changes in the political and social settings of Turkey were also reconfiguring the conditions for Muslim communities.

2.5. New Opportunities for Islamic Communities: The Post-1960 Coup Period

The post-1960 coup in Turkey has a significant impact for political Islam, Islamic communities and Muslim religious people in general. In this period, the constitution was re-written, putting more emphasis on human rights and political freedom by also underlining the urgency of secularism against political Islam. Yet, political violence in 1970s paved the way to a new coup in 1980. During the post-1980 period, Islamic

⁴¹ Yavuz, H. (2003), *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 180-181.

communities benefited from open-economy and the call for democracy, despite the hard political climate for Islamists and Islamic organizations.⁴²

With the effects of changing historical conditions in the world and Turkey in particular, being religious or pious gained new meanings and re-defined itself in politics, economic and social life in a new mode of knowledge production, organization and capital accumulation. During the arrival of new modernities, the Hizmet Movement was able to carve out a political space with its depoliticized language and informal network building processes, by not claiming Islamic state and differentiating itself from other Islamist parties and organizations.

Although Islam and Muslim identity were at the stake in the power struggle and of every aspects of social/economic life for a long time, the period after the 1960 coup remarked new modalities of knowledge production by religious scholars, new ways of capital accumulation and post-modern ways of organization. Newly established schools, *dershanes* (university exam preparatory courses), dormitories, charities, think tanks, newspapers, magazines and TV-radio channels are striking examples of how the Islamic communities in Turkey utilized the very modern means of contemporary world. More significantly, the Hizmet movement, by new interpretations and the perception of Islamic ideals, has generated new discourses built on Islamic values but articulated with secularist and pluralistic ideologies.

During this period, the Hizmet Movement has played a significant role as a transnational civic society with millions of followers. Especially after the 1980 coup, the Hizmet Movement expanded its network into the whole of Turkey and as well as other countries by especially the informal organization of a civil society, covering almost every segment of the society.⁴³ Although the movement's discourses generally share epistemological and ontological foundations with previous Islamic movements, the Hizmet Movement managed to create a new eclectic language between modernism and Islamism, between secular and religious, between science and religion. In this era,

⁴² Toprak, B. (1996). Civil Society in Turkey, in A. R. Norton, ed, *Civil Society in the Middle East*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, pp 87-118.

⁴³ Ebaugh, H. R. (2009), *The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam*, Springer Press.

Muslim communities as rising powers in both political and social spheres played a key role in the historical conflict between secularist state bureaucracy (generally represented by the Turkish military) and Islam. The 28th February Ultimatum revealed this conflict by the victory of the army against Islamist Welfare Party.

2.6. Turning Point: 28th February 1997, Military Ultimatum

In both my personal history and the broader history of Turkey, the evening of the 28th February 1997 marks an ominous time for the lives of Islamists, and pious Islamic groups in general. On this evening, while TV news was still waiting for the National Security Council⁴⁴ meeting to finish, my whole family was waiting for the declaration after the meeting. Until this crucial day, Turkey's controversial debate on secularism and Islam was led by the coalition government of Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) and Right Way Party (Doğru Yol Partisi), established after 1995 general elections.

In this evening, Turkish military declared an ultimatum against the government by urging to protect secular system of Turkey. After a short while, the coalition government collapsed and the Welfare Party was banned from the politics in Turkey. The whole process, initiated after the ultimatum against the government, is called the 28th February process. During this process, the new government established by another right wing party called the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi) initiated the political operation against political Islamists and Islamic communities. Up until the national election in 2002, 5 years marked the intense pressure on Islamist, Islamic communities and pious Muslims associated with these communities.⁴⁵ Especially with new laws and inspection attempts, the state opened a new phase in the clash between secularist state and Islamic communities.

⁴⁴ National Security Council is a state body entitled with the consultancy for security issues. The council is established after 1980 coup, is consisted of president, prime minister and army generals. Although its duty is defined as consultancy, NSC has served as military control over the civil politics.

⁴⁵ Bayramođlu, A. (2007), *28 Şubat Bir Müdahalenin Güncesi*, İletişim Yayınları: İstanbul, p.14-15.

Although this historical setting suppressed the activities of Islamic communities, the Hizmet Movement flourished into the biggest Muslim community in Turkey, by enjoying the quick shift in the political arena by the new Islamic government established in 2002. In this historical transformation period, the Hizmet Movement was also transformed through the changes in masculinity codes. In the next chapter, the methodology of this research will be explained to analyze the fieldwork data.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

During my academic education, I have been always interested in both Muslim cultures and gender issues in general. Moreover, my personal history enabled me to read primary sources shaping the ideational level of the Hizmet Movement, by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen himself. When I was searching for a research topic, I realized that combining my main two inquiries, Muslim cultures and gender-masculinities issues, may generate a contribution to the literature on Islam, Muslims and masculinities.

After a quick glance at the social science literature on the Hizmet Movement, I was surprised by the fact that most studies focus on the organizational strategies or analyze the Hizmet Movement to inform the so-called conflict between secularism and Islam in Turkey. These studies were analyzing the Hizmet Movement by generally questioning how Fethullah Gülen manages to synthesize positive sciences with Islam or secularism with Islam.⁴⁶

Strikingly, in the literature, the followers themselves are mentioned only in terms of numbers. Although they have been the active agents of all activities, they have been portrayed in a way that neglects their agencies or their negotiation and resistance strategies. Furthermore, I was able to find very limited sources attempting to grasp gender issues related to the Hizmet Movement.^{47 48} From this point, I decided to conduct research on masculinity issues by working with individuals from the Hizmet Movement.

⁴⁶ Gülay, E. N. (2007), *The Theological Thought of Fethullah Gülen: Reconciling Science and Islam*, unpublished thesis.

⁴⁷ Hällzon, P. (2008), *The Gülen Movement: Gender and Practice. Islam in the Age of Global Challenges: Alternative Perspectives of the Gulen Movement*, November 14-15, 2008 at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁸ Curtis, M. (2005), *The Women's Side of the Coin: The Gulen Movement in America, a New Turkish American Community Taking Root*, Islam in the Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement in Thought and Practice, Houston Texas: Rice University.

3.1. Fieldwork

Between February and April 2011, I participated in various meetings of different dormitories and student houses in Istanbul. Actually, my fieldwork is not limited into three months of anthropological inquiry, as my previous experience within the *cemaat* initiated my interest in studying masculinities. From my childhood years to my university education, I have met with different men in different spaces of male sociability based on fellowship of *cemaat*. From dormitories to student houses, supported by *cemaat*, men have lived in all cities of Turkey, also in different locations of the world.

Besides witnessing male sociability and intimacy within the student houses and dormitories, I also well remember the 28th February process as a political milestone in Turkey, which modified both individual and collective lives of Muslims and followers of Islamic communities. In my preliminary observations, it was striking to observe this massive change in daily life and gender codes of men living together. Departing from these preliminary observations, I determined my thesis topic as observing masculinities in the Hizmet Movement, an Islamic community highly debated in Turkey's agenda regarding Islam and secularism. After determining the research topic, I spent one month reading some primary sources written by Fethullah Gülen to clear my mind about the possible research questions. Moreover, it was the best decision to attend some meetings organized by local groups to determine possible themes to for my interviews.

At that point, it was very easy to me to reach different local networks and individuals within *cemaat*. Students living in the student houses and dormitories were very welcoming about my fieldwork. They were sincerely inviting me to their *sohbet*⁴⁹ gatherings or *istişare*⁵⁰ meetings without any hesitation. Surely, my previous history

⁴⁹ *Sohbet* means casual talk in Turkish. In local *cemaat* groups, in student houses and dormitories, followers get together to listen a preacher and discuss religious issues. *Sohbet* meetings are generally designed interactively by allowing participants to comment and ask questions.

⁵⁰ *İstişare* is an Arabic rooted word in Turkish. In this context, it is utilized as consultancy meetings of local groups.

with *cemaat*, as a graduate from a high school supported by *cemaat*, eased my job during the fieldwork as the interlocutors considered me as an insider.

3.2. Ethnographic Authority: Insider or Outsider?

Personally, I would not call myself as an insider or a follower of the Hizmet Movement. Moreover, the simple dichotomy of insider and outsider becomes irrelevant in some cases like my situation in *cemaat*. Especially, for the Hizmet Movement, the dichotomy of insider-outside is very simplistic to explain followers' affiliation with *cemaat*. This issue will be analyzed in a more detailed manner in coming chapters.

Yet, my position as an ethnographer was not as a classical anthropologist arriving to a "native" group to observe them. As a concomitant to my education history in *cemaat*, I have always been considered as an insider or sometimes sympathizer by followers with whom I met.⁵¹ However, for now, I personally do not contribute any activity of *cemaat* but also I cannot ignore my long years as being educated within the schools and the dormitories supported by the Hizmet Movement. In other words, as an ethnographer and an individual, I stay in the gray area between inside and outside. In the blurry area of the borders between inside and outside, I would consider my position as the outcome of dialectic between inside and outside. While I am able to follow main threads in *sohbet* meetings and the narratives of my interlocutors, I frequently step back to analyze these threads with my education in social sciences. I truly believe that, participant observation, as the main tenant of my research inquiry, has become more fruitful with this dialectic.

In my opinion, my position as tackling between inside and outside contributed my analysis as I have been thinking about these issues as a direct witness. On the other hand, my academic education and theoretical readings assisted me to situate my observations into theoretical and analytical frameworks.

⁵¹ *Dost* in Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's words. This point will be explained broadly in coming chapters.

3.3. Participant Observation

As James Clifford sketched, participant observation is continuous tacking between the inside and outside of events: on the one hand the ethnographer grasps the sense of specific occurrences and gestures empathetically, on the other hand s/he steps back to situate these meanings in wider contexts.⁵² In my position as an ethnographer, I always tried to maintain this dialectic to obtain the best possible knowledge from the field. With an intense background in this specific field, I was very able to grasp notions, terms and concepts informing the daily life and knowledge processes' of the Hizmet Movement followers. At the same time, with my academic education in social sciences, I was trying to step back to have meaningful paradigms and explanatory frameworks to analyze my observations. Surely, interlocutors and their narratives were the main guides in this dialectic process of analysis. As an ethnographer, I claim my position is not a researcher of a community but rather this thesis may be considered as an account written with my interlocutors. My position, here is one of vocalizing and analyzing the narratives of my respondents.

3.4. Why Male Followers?

According to Patrick Hallzon, for a researcher, men are more visible than the women in the movement.⁵³ In my observations, men are holding the higher organizational posts compared with female followers while female followers are very active participants in the Hizmet Movement.⁵⁴ In my fieldwork, I encountered many different male and

⁵² Clifford, J. (1983), *On Ethnographic Authority*; In *Representations*, No.2, p.127. pp.118-146

⁵³ Hällzon, P. (2008), *The Gülen Movement: Gender and Practice. Islam in the Age of Global Challenges: Alternative Perspectives of the Gulen Movement*, November 14-15, 2008 at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. p.2.

⁵⁴ Curtis, M. (2005), *The Women's Side of the Coin: The Gulen Movement in America, a New Turkish American Community Taking Root*, Islam in the Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement in Thought and Practice, Houston Texas: Rice University, p.3.

female participants of *cemaat* in several activities organized by *cemaat*. However, as a male researcher, it was always easier to meet and conduct interviews with male followers in *cemaat*. Obviously, it was very hard to attend meetings organized for women or stay in student houses for the female followers. I also academically claim the urgency of understanding the masculinity constructions and practices among Muslim men, especially those participating in the Hizmet Movement's activities. Departing from these practical and theoretical reasons, I started to search for possible respondents, who are good story tellers and are open to talk about their lives.

3.5. Interlocutors

During three months in the field, I participated in numerous *sohbet* gatherings and *istişare* meetings in different student houses and dormitories for male followers. Besides attending these meetings, I tried to spend time with my respondents in their houses by also staying overnight. Throughout this experience in the field, participant observation was the way of witnessing daily lives of several followers within the Hizmet Movement. While in-depth interviews were reflecting the interlocutors' discourses on various issues analyzed in coming chapters, participant observation contributed to my whole discussion of *abi* system and *cemaat* as a new form of kinship.

All contacts were reached through the snowball sampling method, which I believe enabled the diversity that I had desired from the beginning of the research. Thanks to fruitful observations before starting interviews, I determined nine different male respondents as representing different class, ethnic origin, and family backgrounds. In my analytical approach, I believed that these factors may generate more comparative outlook to analyze common and varying factors to understand masculinity constructions, discourses and practices. By conducting research with individuals from different personal backgrounds, I was concerned about reflecting an array of different discourses and practices of masculinity. However, this thesis still focuses on the subjectivities of these nine men rather than claiming to generalize about the whole community. Still, I consider myself able to follow main threads and themes noticeable in the multiple experiences of male follower in the Movement.

Moreover, the practice of Islam and attending an Islamic community's activities are not enough explanatory factors to understand gender constructions. Analyzing the narratives and practices of respondents, by just considering themselves as *cemaat* members, simplifies the multiple, fluid, and multifaceted identities and practices within the Hizmet Movement. In other words, along with some other factors such as ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and family's religiosity are other meaningful points complementing to Islamic discourses and practices.

In this sub-chapter, background information on family, education, and occupations about my respondents is elaborated by utilizing my fieldwork notes. All names in the following are changed to pseudonyms. Also, in the coming chapters, all quotations are transcribed with my interlocutors' local dialects in Turkish.

Mehmet

Mehmet (24), is a recent graduate of Medical Sciences, living in Istanbul. He has been affiliated with *cemaat* from his secondary school years. According to Mehmet, he was always familiar with the Islamic duty of delivering Prophet's message, because his parents were supporters of Islamist Welfare Party. Thus, he considers himself as familiar to attend religious meetings which enabled him to be very active in *cemaat*. Mehmet has served in *cemaat*, as many different positions of *abi* posts, in several different dormitories and several student houses in Istanbul.

Sermet

Sermet (25) is a fresh graduate from one of the biggest universities of Istanbul, and has been just admitted to a PhD program in Princeton University. Sermet's family is an ordinary family of Anatolia, according to him, coming from Konya which is one of the conservative cities of Anatolia. His extended family is very familiar with *tarikats* and *cemaats*, as considering themselves as followers of these organizations. Even, although his grandfather didn't call himself as a *şakirt* of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, he personally had a chance to meet with him, in his exile years. According to Sermet, his nuclear family was the poor one among others in the extended family. Throughout Sermet's narrative, his mother seems very influential and active character supporting Sermet's

education and career. Throughout his experience in *cemaat* from his primary school years, Sermet's mother considered *cemaat* as educating his son and is preparing a bright future for him. One of the first student houses established in Konya, according to Sermet, was supported by his father by renting his house for female students affiliated with the Hizmet Movement. Sermet's personal journey starts with this *ablas*⁵⁵ and other several *abis*, later on. During his experience within the Hizmet Movement, Sermet has served as an *abi* in different student houses, in his university years.

Salih

Salih (24) is another new graduate from a reputable university in Turkey and is planning to work in *cemaat* supported newspaper, *Zaman*. According to him, Salih's family, likewise Sermet's family, is an ordinary family, living in Istanbul. According to Salih, parents are both retired as factory workers. Salih, among his friends, is known with his perfect memory and intelligence. His interview was one of the most fruitful one as explaining his dormitory years, and his relationship with his *abis*, in a very detailed manner. Salih has served as an *abi* in different student houses, in his university years.

Mustafa

Mustafa (24), was born in Kayseri, which is another Anatolian town known with conservative families. After high school, Mustafa decides to come to Istanbul for the university education. Thanks to his *cemaat* experiences, Mustafa's narrative was able to demonstrate Anatolian experience by also comparing with Istanbul experience. For now, as a new graduate in social sciences from a reputable university, Mustafa is working for *Zaman* newspaper in a high position. Mustafa's family is generally familiar with Islamic communities but they were always hesitant to be active followers. With his nationalist background, Mustafa's father has always tried to protect his children to affiliate with any kind of organizations. Even for today, Mustafa's family is not very happy with Mustafa's great dedication to the *cemaat*.

⁵⁵ Female version of *abi*.

Veli

The interview with Veli (25) was the most enjoyable one for me. Especially, his cheerful style of speaking eased me to complete three hours interview. Veli, is coming from Erzurum, the hometown of *Hocaefendi*. Veli's family has been actively participating to local activities in Balıkesir, the town in the Western Anatolia. Veli's personal story with *cemaat* is very complicated as he reflected in his narrative too. In his narrative, Ali is considering himself as dedicated to *cemaat* while he is also criticizing and blaming some *abis* as discouraging him in *cemaat* activities. Alternative to casual dressing style of *cemaat* followers, Ali's style may be defined as more hippie style with his casual jeans and light colors.

Halil

Halil (24) is Zaza from Diyarbakır and lived in Balıkesir from childhood to university years. Halil's life is a good example of how *cemaat* is successful to guide smart students for their career, as Halil is carrying the 1st rank in the University Entrance Exam. Halil is continuing his PhD education after he rejected a PhD program in Stanford University. Halil's interview was very mind clearing with his theoretical contributions in my analysis.

Osman

Osman's (26) family is coming from Turkistan region of China. His father migrated to Istanbul in 1981 and established his family in Istanbul. Osman's family is one of the most significant families supporting *cemaat* with their financial means and network abilities. For instance, Osman's uncle is one of the doctors of *Hocaefendi*, visiting him frequently in Pennsylvania. Osman is also affiliated with *cemaat* from his early ages and was sent to *cemaat* supported schools. After he completed his education in a reputable university in Turkey, Osman is working for a multinational aviation company. His main difference from other respondents is that Osman's family resembles somehow upper-class component of *cemaat*.

Rasim

Rasim (24) is coming from a working-class family living in a little town of Denizli, one of the biggest cities in the Western Anatolia. Rasim is another example displaying the class shift via university education. After his education in *cemaat* supported schools, Rasim was also ranked in a high place in University Entrance Exam. Rasim is continuing his works in a reputable university in Turkey and is planning to move the United States for his PhD education. In his narrative, his previous experiences with nationalist movements and other Islamic communities were guiding me to trace new themes about the Hizmet Movement.

Mithat

Mithat (22) is a Kurdish student from Iğdır, a little city populated with Kurds, Zazas and Azeri Turks, in the Northern Kurdistan. As grown up in a Kurdish village whose name was changed into a Turkish name, Mithat had his education in several different cities of Turkey such as Zonguldak and Istanbul. Mithat has also achieved a great success in the University Entrance Exam and recently participated in a project in Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Mithat, from his early ages, is very familiar with other *Nurcu* groups besides the Hizmet Movement. In his narrative, Mithat never called himself insider, but he is very active in different activities of *cemaat*. For instance, he was a lecturer and a volunteer in an institution established by *cemaat* in Boston, Massachusetts.

3.6. Reactions to the Research

During the whole fieldwork, two potential interlocutors rejected my request to record our interviews with the reason that voice and video recordings may be exploited by different agents, such as media and public prosecutors. Because of the previous fears from the early days of Republic to the 28th February process, these two possible interlocutors avoided to make any voice recordings that can be used as material for public prosecution by the claim of threat against the secular system. Besides these two interlocutors, people were generally comfortable about voice recording but were asking me to keep recordings private.

In the nature of an anthropological research, interlocutors are free to protect their privacy with any kind of request. In this context, however, their attitude can be seen the particular effects of the 28th February process and fears among Muslim individuals. Especially, as being followers of Islamic movements, these individuals and organizations have learned to be careful with their personal stories that can be viewed as a threat by the secular system. Still, I believe that my positioning helped erase these fears during the fieldwork.

3.7. Interviews

Personally, I always supported the idea that too concrete questions and comments before the fieldwork may generate more biased outcomes. Although every form of research activity can be considered as biased with the researcher's own agenda about the fieldwork⁵⁶, I tried to lessen the effects of my preliminary inferences during my fieldwork. To do so, I designed semi structured interviews to obtain knowledge on various questions.

I conducted semi-structured, open-ended, and in-depth interviews with the participants. Although I had previously prepared a list of interview questions, I did not strictly follow the questions or ask the exact same questions on the list. Even throughout my fieldwork experience, I modified some questions while adding some new ones in order to focus on some main themes. Marriage, intergenerational relationships, family background, narratives about student houses and dormitories, and other questions were raised through the interviews.

⁵⁶ Bourdieu, P. (1977), *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

CHAPTER 4

THE IDEALIZED MUSLIM MAN: *HOCAEFENDİ*

4.1. A New Model of Islamic Subjectivity: The “Golden Generation”

Throughout his different sermons and books, *Hocaefendi* calls for a new “Golden Generation” of Muslims.⁵⁷ Among the followers of the Hizmet Movement, Fethullah Gülen is named with the term *Hocaefendi*, meaning the respected scholar. In the codification of this new golden age, *Hocaefendi* describes the Golden Age of Islam and the Ottoman state, as especially productive periods of the state. This new generation, according to Gülen, identical with the first Muslims and Ottoman warriors, is required to combine and practice the Islamic message with the means of modern life. However, while making this discursive claim, Gülen nevertheless Islamizes modern techniques of knowledge production, capitalism, democracy, and even secularism by giving examples from Quran and from Hadith traditions. Moreover, Gülen also stresses the significance of *ijtihad* [interpretation], a way of interpretation according to the necessities of current times.⁵⁸

In general, to cultivate this new generation, Fethullah Gülen synthesizes or just merely mixes different, even contradictory forms of discourses. Throughout *Hocaefendi*'s scholarship, Islam, for example, is redefined by reference to Turkish nationalism, secularism, modern science⁵⁹, democracy, human rights⁶⁰, and dialogue with non-Muslims.⁶¹ From a scholarly perspective, various studies of the Hizmet Movement

⁵⁷ Gülen, F. (1977), *Altın Nesil Konferansı*, <http://tr.fgulen.com/content/view/7835/108/> (Retrieved on 21.04.2011).

⁵⁸ Gülen, F. (2010), *Kur'ân'ın Mânâsındaki Çok Yönlülük*, <http://tr.fGülen.com/content/view/18598/3/> (Retrieved on 20.04.2011).

⁵⁹ Özipek, A. (2009), *Cultivating a Generation Through Education: The Case of Gülen Movement*, Unpublished Master thesis, Budapest, pp.16-30.

⁶⁰ Especially Kurdish rights in Turkey context.

⁶¹ Kalyoncu, M. (2008), *A Civilian Response to Ethno-Religious Conflict*, New Jersey: Light Publications.

focus on these new forms of synthesis. In this thesis, it is not attempted to trace this synthesis in detail as it is quite vast subject matter discussed through the various studies by numerous scholars with distinct academic backgrounds. Rather, in this chapter, I will investigate the gendered aspects of the new Muslim subjectivity as constructed in Gülen's writings and sermons..

In my readings of Gülen's literature, the new definition of the Muslim man can be partitioned into two related levels. In this scheme, upper order discourses sketch their boundaries with Sunni Islam through its heterogeneous nature.⁶² This level of discourse-making, with its heterogeneous nature, becomes *sine qua non* for the ideational level of the Movement binding all followers. For instance, in one of his question-answer sermons published weekly on his website, Gülen draws the boundary of his dialogue as the principles of Sunni Islam with its distinct positions.⁶³ Gülen gives the examples of Ahmed bin Hanbel and Imam Shafi who had interpreted Quran verses even in contradictory interpretations. In his speech, Gülen acknowledges the relevance of different interpretations of Islam as defining contemporary Muslimhood. Hence, the boundary of new Muslim is sketched through Sunni Islam traditions, but in a more heterogeneous way, accepting all the different schools and interpretations within Sunni Islam. By doing so, he leaves the door open for alternative or even contradictory interpretations which become acceptable in the Hizmet Movement.

At this point, one particular example would be marriage articulated by Fethullah Gülen. Throughout his books, Gülen underlines the significance of the heterosexual family as the nucleus of Muslim society. The Islamic chastity, before and after marriage, is defined as a responsibility for all Muslim individuals, men and women. The Islamic code of dress⁶⁴ based on chastity, is defined as compulsory for all men and women as outlined in Sunni Islam tradition, while they may choose any kind of dressing within this border. Besides the egalitarian definition of “*iffet*”⁶⁵ and “*tesettür*”⁶⁶ for all men and

⁶² Gülen, F. (2010), Toplumda Çoğulculuk ve Ailede Beraberlik, http://www.herkul.org/bamteli/index.php?article_id=7981 (audio recording).

⁶³ Gülen Ibid.

⁶⁴ Denoted as *tesettür* by Gülen.

women, Gülen does not address head covering as the most significant duty for women likewise daily praying or fasting. By not dealing with the headscarf issue which is frequently defined as the most significant duty of Muslim women, Gülen thus does not complicate the ongoing discussion and therefore makes it possible for uncovered women to be part of the different institutions of the Movement and its inner hierarchy. Although this example is less relevant for male followers, it exemplifies Gülen's strategy, leaving some points as unmentioned or ambiguous.⁶⁷

In addition to this, Gülen's definition of the family generally does not address the conventional role of the man as breadwinner and the woman as housekeeper. Rather, the family is sketched as a contract between two individuals who share same responsibilities. For example, in one of his sermons about family, Gülen mentions equal responsibilities for men and women and even urges men in the Movement to adjust their career plans according to their wives' career paths.⁶⁸ Especially in economic issues, Fethullah Gülen stresses men's and women's equal rights. For instance, Gülen welcomes women as working citizens and underlines the importance of equal rights in inheritance. Still, Muslim subjectivities are bound to fulfill Islamic modesty for both genders require them to be pious and protecting the body for both man and woman.⁶⁹

Sharing very similar epistemological foundations with Ottoman Islamic tradition, the upper order of his discourses, setting normative bounds for the followers of the Movement, constructs itself on welcoming egalitarian approaches and alternative interpretations of contemporary Sunni Islam. In this major set of discourses which facilitates the inclusion of new people into the community, minor discourses varying in

⁶⁵ Islamic chastity for all men and women.

⁶⁶ *Tesettür* determines the codes of dressing based on chastity. With various interpretations, various parts of the body are considered as *ziynet* that should be covered for Muslim men and women.

⁶⁷ Agai, B. (2009), *Discursive and Organizational Strategies of the Gülen Movement. Islam in the Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement in Thought and Practice*, The Boniuk Center for the Study and Advancement of Religious Tolerance at Rice University of Houston on 12-13 November 2005, p. 5. (pp.1-18)

⁶⁸ Gülen Ibid.

⁶⁹ Gülen Ibid.

different contexts shed light on Gülen's methodology. In addition to major sets of discourses binding every single follower, in more particular levels of discourses, different ideological and contemporary values become relevant categories to define the ideal subjectivity of this Golden Generation. In other words, in more particular levels which appeal to vary in different geographical, political and social contexts, alternative forms of knowledge and ethics are utilized to sketch the gender level of Golden Generation.

In this thesis, to observe the gender aspects of these discourses and the practices of followers, interlocutors' narratives will be analyzed. To do so, *Hocaefendi* can be analyzed as the most significant male character with his distinct features to understand more micro-level intergenerational relations rendering the transmission of masculinity codes. Besides these, a new way of kinship substituting the family will be rethought to pave a way to observe political implications of new codification of Muslim man.

4.2. *Hocaefendi* as an Idealized Male Leader

The Hizmet Movement, very similar to other religious organizations in Turkey, is led by a powerful male character educated with traditional Islamic education. However, Fethullah Gülen, as a state-imam served in various towns of Anatolia, differs from other religious leaders⁷⁰ as a state officer⁷¹ and a leader of a *cemaat*, at the same time. In this self positioning, he is able to attract millions of people without carrying any traditional title such as a *şeyh* of a rooted Sufi community, called as *tarikât*.

Fethullah Gülen, continuing within the legacy of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, governs the power of discourse making processes and of organizational matters of *cemaat*. His books and videos are circulated among followers as respected sources about worldly and ethereal life. *Hocaefendi* defines his position with in the *cemaat* as not a leader but a respected advisor for Anatolian people.⁷² Thus, his sermons, as relevant advice on

⁷⁰ Such as religious leaders (*şeyh*) of Nakşibendi and Kadiri communities (*tarikât*).

⁷¹ Today, imam's as symbolic religious leaders for congregations are monopolized as state officials in Turkey.

many different issues from the economic life to marriage, religious obligations to Islamic philosophy, have been followed by the followers over thirty years.⁷³ In addition, he is very active in decision making and review processes of different activities of the institutions supported by *cemaat*.

Besides his authority over secular and religious issues, *Hocaefendi* resembles the highest position of hierarchy structured by thousands of volunteers⁷⁴ in all over the world. In this hierarchical scheme, decisions related to *cemaat* supported institutions are taken through the consultancy meetings *-istişare-* which is somehow mandatory in all levels of the hierarchy. For instance, a *cemaat* maintained student house is seen as a subgroup and its own matters are governed by a micro level council with the attendance of all living students in the house. This system expands into to the highest point of the hierarchy from the local *istişare* groups to the circle around *Hocaefendi*. Based on a verse of the Quran and a legitimate *hadith*⁷⁵ appraising consultation among Muslim fellows, the organizational structure is thus governed by relatively a democratic system.⁷⁶ God asks Muslims to consult in the following Quran verse which is used as the legitimate reference point for consultancy meetings:

So by mercy from Allah , [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah . Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him].⁷⁷

⁷² Gülen, F. (2001), *Cemaat ve Tarikat*, <http://tr.fgulen.com/content/view/2344/141/> (Retrieved on 16.04.2011)

⁷³ _____. (1999), *İlk Vaazı 14 yaşında Verdi*, <http://tr.fgulen.com/content/view/14784/107/> (Retrieved on 16.04.2011)

⁷⁴ In many contexts, followers are defined as volunteers.

⁷⁵ Quran, 3:159.

⁷⁶ Gülen, F. (2003), *İstişare Etmenin Faydaları*, <http://www.sonsuznur.net/fethullah-gulen-terbiye-ve-kavramlar/24-fethullah-gulenin-eserlerinde-kavramlar/3610-fethullah-gulenin-eserlerinde-kavramlar-istisare-etmenin-faydalari.html> (Retrieved on 16.04.2011)

⁷⁷ Translation from, <http://quran.com/3/159> .

In addition to the tradition of consultancy, governing the organizational matters related to the millions of followers living in thousands different local groups, *Hocaefendi* is considered as the legitimate religious leader with a charisma affecting followers. Again, by rendering the principle of pudency appreciated by Islam, *Hocaefendi* mentions his lack of charisma, so he is not a leader but merely a fellow among others in the *cemaat*.⁷⁸ However, during my fieldwork and visits to various institutions situated in different cities of Anatolia, *Hocaefendi* is generally narrated as a charismatic person that should be taken as a guide. In other words, Fethullah Gülen --as a religious leader and as a pro-active character involved in structural matters of *cemaat*—is currently functioning based on both religious (traditional) and charismatic authority. While Gülen is considered as the legitimate religious leader, he also intervenes into some decisions about the necessities of secular life which should be governed by the religious outlook.

4.3. Messianic Charisma of Fethullah Gülen

Fethullah Gülen, named as *Hocaefendi* by the followers of the Hizmet Movement, marks the messianic charisma promising the revival of Sunni Islam in Turkey and for the whole world with rendering the claim of universality of Islam. In a Weberian sense, Fethullah Gülen can be seen as a male character with a form of traditional authority. In Max Weber's codification of authority, among three ideal forms of authority (charismatic, rational-legal and traditional authority), Weber dwells upon charismatic authorities of history as have been holders of specific gifts of the body and spirit; and these gifts have been believed to be supernatural, not accessible to everybody.⁷⁹ In this scheme, the narratives explaining both Fethullah Gülen's and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's authorities generally refer these special gifts by also designating traditional titles of Islam, like *imam* and *hoca*. In other words, their power of authority can be named as both charismatic and traditional authority.

⁷⁸ Gülen , F. (2001), *Cemaat ve Tarikat*, <http://tr.fgulen.com/content/view/2344/141/> (Retrieved on 23.05.2011)

⁷⁹ Gerth, H.H. and C. W. Mills. (1958), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York: Oxford University Pres, p.245-248.

In most interviews during my fieldwork, *Hocaefendi*, along with Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, has been defined as a new face of Islam claiming to revitalize traditional Islamic values by reinterpreting with the needs of contemporary conditions. By referring to a *hadith*- saying by Prophet Muhammad- quoted in Abu Davud's famous *hadith* collection, *Sünen*, followers of the Hizmet Movement credit religious legitimacy for Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen as resembling the promised person with the duty of revising Islam. The aforementioned *hadith* appraises the revival of Islam in every coming century by revising the ongoing traditions.⁸⁰ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi defines himself and his books as today's revivalist by referring this *hadith*⁸¹:

Indeed God will send a revivalist at the head of every one hundred years to revive the religion of Islam.⁸²

One of my interlocutors, Osman, voices his perception of Hocaefendi as the promised revivalist by remembering a story referring the *hadith* mentioned above:

Osman: Ben Hocaefendi'nin her yüzyıl gelen büyük insanlardan biri olduğuna inanıyorum. Bunların da hepsinin Peygamber Efendimiz'e bağlı olduğunu düşünüyorum ki örnekleri çıkıyo.

Tevfik: Örnekleri?

Osman: Örnekleri derken mesela en son Üstad Bediüzzaman'ın talebelerinden bir tanesi, İbn-i Arabi ile rüyada mı bişeyde görüşüyo bi şekilde, diyor ki Üstad'ın emaneti var, ben bunu kime vercem diyo Arabi'ye, diyo ki Muhammed Fethullah diye İzmir'de biri var, onu bul ver diyo. Ondan sonra gidiyo, Muhammed Fethullah diye birini arıyo, buluyo, bakıyo gencecik bi çocuk, ya diyo ben daha yaşlı birini bekliyodum, Üstadın da bitmeyen bir 25 lirası varmış, herkes bilirmiş, sonra Hocaefendi çıkartıyo o paraları gösteriyo, bunlardan mı diyo, O da bende de var diyo, öyle anlaşıyorlar, şifre gibi. Onun harici bissürü rüya örnekleri var filan. O yüzden benim için özel bi insan.⁸³

⁸⁰ Muhakkak ki, Allah bu topluluğa her yüzyılın başında (veya sonunda), dinini yenilemek için birini gönderir.

⁸¹ Nursi S. (1995), *Barla Lahikası*, İstanbul: Envar Neşriyat, p. 169-170.

⁸² Ebu Davud (?), *Sünen-i Ebu Davud Terceme ve Şerhi*, Şamil Yayınevi 5/100.

⁸³ Osman: I believe that Hocaefendi is one of the biggest people coming in every age. These people are all associated with Prophet Muhammad. There are many examples of this association.

Tevfik: Examples?

Acclaimed by millions as a revivalist of Sunni Islam, Gülen is also mystified with extraordinary features. As Weber defined the nature of charismatic authority as carrying special gifts of the body and spirit and these gifts have been believed to be supernatural, not accessible to everyone, *Hocaefendi* resembles charismatic authority.⁸⁴ For instance, some followers visit Gülen to stay in his house in Pennsylvania, and to attend periodical *sohbet* gatherings. Two of my interlocutors well remember meeting with him. In those narratives, legendary features are attained for *Hocaefendi*, who is sent for the revival of Islam:

Osman: İlk gördüm, yani çok ihtişamlı, göz göze gelemiyosun hiç zaten, böyle kafasını çevirdiği zaman gözler aşşa iniyo. Çok ilginç bişi yani, ben kimsenin öyle kolay kolay göz teması yapabilceni sanmıyorum, çünkü adamda böyle bir güç var, görüyorsunuz, çok etkileyici yani. İlk başta yanımda şöyle geçti bi zaten, çok ihtişamlı yürüyo zaten. Baya değişik bişeydi.⁸⁵

As inheriting the message of Islam *ilay-i kelimetullah* –holy duty given of carrying the name of God-, *Hocaefendi* is also seen as an actual Muslim model both delivering preachings and living based on Islamic principles translated into contemporary conditions. Although the leaders of Islamic movements rely on the absolute power of shaping ideational level of their communities, *Hocaefendi* bases his power on both governing discourse making processes and as actual living character for followers. As the legitimate revivalist of Islam, *Hocaefendi* is taken as the ideal model of Muslim

Osman: For instance, one of the disciples of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi sees Ibn Arabi in his dream. Ibn Arabi asks him to find Muhammed Fethullah living in İzmir and give the inheritance of Said Nursi to him. Then, the disciple finds Muhammed Fethullah as a young boy and says I was expecting an older man. Then, Hocaefendi reveals 25 Lira same with Said Nursi's inheritance which does not end up by spending. It's like a password among them. Besides this, there are many examples of dreams. So, *Hocaefendi* is a significant person to me.

⁸⁴ Gerth, H.H. and C. W. Mills. (1958), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York: Oxford University Press. P.245.

⁸⁵ Osman: When I saw him for the first time, he was really magnificent. You cannot have an eye contact with him, when he looks at you; you just cast your eyes down. It is really an interesting thing. Nobody can have an eye contact with him because he has such a power, he is very impressive. At first, he just passed me, he was walking grandly. It was really an unusual thing.

subjectivity guiding Muslims in these historical conditions. Thus, *Hocaefendi*, as a Muslim among other Muslim fellows, is also a model displaying ideal gender constructions and practices for followers, especially for male ones.

However, *Hocaefendi*, as a male Muslim in the actual life, sometimes deviates from principles which are delivered in his preachings. Marriage is always underlined through Gülen's literature as the legitimate form of relationship among man and woman.⁸⁶ Yet, *Hocaefendi* prefers to stay unmarried, which is imitated by some followers as well. In other words, traditional discourse on marriage runs parallel alongside an alternative construction of masculinity normalizing an unmarried existence. Both codifications survive together: while marriage legitimizes itself based on traditional Islamic values, Gülen's practice of the single life carves a space in this hegemonic form of relationship. Gülen legitimizes his choice by again referring to Islam; this time, however, through a lifestyle absent of sexual relations, he thus avoids the possibility of *zina*, the sin of adultery. In other words, he revisits Islamic discourse to justify a lifestyle preference, which some could argue as being discordant with tradition.

Besides creating an alternative lifestyle to the marriage advice of traditional Islam, *Hocaefendi* continues his life as a man living alone in his room with his students and doctors. Throughout his career, as a state imam in various Anatolian towns, housekeeping is maintained by *Hocaefendi* himself who is able to cook and clean by also advising the realization of same duties by followers, especially those living in *cemaat* houses. During my interviews, I encountered many different stories about how an important Islamic duty is to keep clean *cemaat* houses. The duty of "living clean" in Islam is translated into a man who is responsible for housekeeping and cleaning. In my visits to student houses, every week was scheduled for cooking, dish-washing, and cleaning. In other words, thousands of men congregate in their houses detached from their family by also normalizing practices identified as "women's work".⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Gülen, F. (1992), *Dinimize Göre Bekârlık ve Evlilik Mevzuu*, <http://tr.fgulen.com/content/view/15273/155/> (Retrieved on 22.05.2011)

⁸⁷ Abu Lughod, L. (1986), *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Furthermore, this striking example shows how some parts of Gülen's life have become a relevant model for many followers.

4.4. Pious Muslim: *Crying Man*

Along with fulfilling housekeeping and staying unmarried, *Hocaefendi* in recorded videos –circulating through cassettes, websites, and *cemaat* supported bookshops– distinguishes himself from other contemporary Islamic leaders as a frequently crying man. In all interviews, my interlocutors responded my questions about Fethullah Gülen as mentioning famous video recordings showing him as crying which is traditionally associated with women. For instance, some interlocutors narrate their first encounter with *Hocaefendi*'s videos as showing a crying man who is very different from other men in their lives. Sermet remembers the first experience of watching one of the *Hocaefendi*'s videos as follow:

Sermet: Ağlaması bana çok garip geldi, çünkü ben bir hocanın ağladığını ilk defa gördüm. Ama çok da samimi geldi, bu adam harbiden ermiş dedim yani. Yalan söyleyeceği hiç aklıma gelmiyo. Bu adam samimi yani. Beni çok etkiledi zaten. Çok sevdim zaten, o halde görünce çok sevdim yani. Ve şey yani beni etkileyen şey şu, şunu şu kadar okuyun değil, adam harbiden bişeylerin derdinde, ben o zaman anlıyorum.⁸⁸

Besides valuing *Hocaefendi* as truthful, Osman laughs while he is telling his first experience of watching his video cassettes:

Osman: Etkileyici bişey. Yani ıııı garip bişey. Erkek adam ağlamaz tabirini yıkıyo biraz. Ulan adam ağlıyorsa harbiden bişey vardır diyosun. (gülüyor)⁸⁹

In Gülen's writing, the ability of crying is valued as a prophetic virtue and realized through the practice of *vaaz*⁹⁰ giving ceremony by *Hocaefendi*.⁹¹ Most voice and video

⁸⁸ Sermet: His weeping was really weird for me because it was the first time that I saw a religious man as crying. However, it was really sincere. I said this man is really a saint. I didn't think that he would be lying. He is a sincere man touched me a lot. I loved him when I saw him as crying. Actually, he touched me because he was not advising prayers to read, but he was suffering.

⁸⁹ Osman: It was touching; I mean it's a weird thing. He is undermining the saying "Men don't cry". If a man is crying, so there is something important. (laughing)

recordings employ the rhetorical strategy of crescendos and weeping while he is mentioning various issues. During my fieldwork, I have participated in various meetings organized for watching videos or for listening sound recordings by Gülen. Generally, a *sohbet* meeting starts with watching an excerpt of a video or reading a passage from his writings. In some of these meetings, especially bigger ones organized on religiously significant days, dozens of men generally start to cry with the effect of Gülen's eloquence. Even in video recordings, camera turns to record hundreds of men crying in a mosque with *Hocaefendi's* crescendos in his voices with weeping in some biggest mosques of Turkey, such as Süleymaniye and Sultanahmet.

By taking *Hocaefendi* as an example, many *abis* and followers gather and cry together while watching video as an activity to update their religious mood. *Sermet* remembers his first *abis* in his secondary school ages. In his perception, these *abis* seem very similar to women characters of his family with whom he got along very well:

Sermet: Evet, bana ilginç gelmişti, çünkü bizim abiler baya ağlıyolardı yani, hüngür hüngür ağladıklarını hatırlıyorum. Büyük bir erkeğin ağlamasını ilk defa görmüştüm. Ya bana çok değişik gelmişti demek ki. Yani kadınların ağladığını görüyorum da sürekli ama erkekler ağlamazmış modunda yaklaşmışım yani. Ya şimdi bizim benim hep böyle gördüklerim kadın ve erkeğin de aslında kadınsal özelliğini görmüş olmak beni rahatlatmıştı yani. Onlarla iletişime geçebileceğimi anlamıştım daha doğrusu. Çünkü mesela bakıyorum ben küçükken annemin teyze kızları, annemin dayı kızları, hep bunlarla, sürekli hayatımda bunlar var.⁹²

The videos, which date back to 70s, are highly circulated among followers to reach his opinions on various aspects of secular world and Islam itself. Throughout these videos, the message of the movement as carrying the name of Muhammed, is intensely

⁹⁰ *Vaaz* is Persian word used in Turkish for sermon.

⁹¹ Gülen, F. (?), *Kuran ve Ağlama*, [video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5125583226145653457](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5125583226145653457) (Retrieved on 23.04.2011)

⁹² Sermet: It was really weird because my *abis* were frequently crying. I remember them as weeping their heart out. It was the first time that I saw a grown man crying. It was interesting because I always witnessed women as crying. I thought men never cry. Actually, it was relaxing to see female feature of the man. I realized that I can communicate with these men because I have always communicated with other women in my family, like my female cousins.

underlined. Among those video clips, the video called *Nam-ı Celli Muhammedi*⁹³ was one of the most frequent videos watched within *cemaat*. In this nine minute long clip, Gülen receives a question about a *hadith* harbingering the arrival of Islam into everywhere that the sun reaches. In the video, some scenes from the schools established by *cemaat* and an emotional music are utilized while *Hocaefendi* instructs the followers to lift the Islamic message up. During the video, *Hocaefendi* starts to cry as he is describing the *hadith* instructing today's volunteers (*gönüllüler*) to carry Muhammad's name over to whole world. To put in another way, *Hocaefendi*, who is idealized as a role model, displays a man who is both crying and carrying the Islamic message for the world.



In his renowned ethnography, Charles Hirschkind observes the cassette sermons of Islamic revivalist scholars frequently listened to by Egyptians. According to Hirschkind, the cassette sermon has become an omnipresent background of daily urban life in most Middle Eastern cities, “accompanying and punctuating the mundane toils of men and women”⁹⁴. Furthermore, cassettes that are easily reachable by listeners, help one to maintain a level of self-scrutiny (*muraqaba*) in regard to one's day-to-day activities and, when possible, to change or modify one's behavior.⁹⁵ In this scheme, many followers (especially *abis* who have become part of hierarchal organization as responsible for a house or a dormitory) determine daily schedules of listening or

⁹³ This phrase is Arabic and widely used by Hocaefendi as meaning “The Bestowed name of Muhammed”.

⁹⁴ Hirschkind, C. (2006), *Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, New York, NY, USA: Columbia University Press. p 18.

⁹⁵ Hirschkind Ibid. p 87.

reading from *Hocaefendi*. Thus, video recording –which are more easily accessible than sermon cassettes through internet- have become a medium to attain discourses on many different issues. Besides the content of videos, the sketch of a man who is crying becomes normalized, although this feature is generally considered as feminine. In other words, codes of men and women are reconfigured while a feature labeled as feminine, significantly becomes a feature of male followers from Fethullah Gülen to an ordinary follower.

To understand how weeping is considered as feminine, it may be worth observing a couple of cartoons sketching Fethullah Gülen. Crying is used by his opponents to criticize and caricature Gülen. During the February 28th process, *Hocaefendi* was generally sketched by the army and the opponents of *cemaat* as a crying man hesitating to reveal his hidden agenda of establishing a *sharia* state. Even today, Gülen is caricatured and criticized by underlining the so-called feminine attitude. In the following, there are some recent depictions by Penguen and Gırgır⁹⁶, weekly humor magazines:

Zaman Gazetesi Ahmet Şık'ın 19 ay önce 'performansı düşük' olduğu gerekçesiyle Radikal'deki işinden çıkarıldığını, aslında büyük gazeteci olmadığını yazdı.



In short, a feature generally labeled as feminine, becomes an Islamic virtue realized by Gülen in his preaching by also affecting the whole community. Muslim men, gathered within a *cemaat*, organize video watching sessions to cry together. Men from different

⁹⁶ Gırgır: 18-25 May 2011, Volume 21, İstanbul, p.3

generations and backgrounds cry together for hard days up until now. Thus, tears of millions also mark the coming day of the restoration of power by modifying the hegemonic power mechanism.

The Hizmet Movement, which claims to be the chosen *cemaat* to carry the Islamic message, takes Gülen as a living example. As a man, *Hocaefendi* may be considered as a role model in two interrelated levels. In the first level, *Hocaefendi*'s preachings based on Sunni Islamic tradition with new interpretations determine the borders of gender discourses for a follower who is taking *Hocaefendi* as a legitimate scholar. Secondly, Fethullah Gülen's personal life also signals alternative practices, which are also legitimized by Sunni Islam. Moreover, through the specific organizational mode governed through the hierarchical structuring, the *abi* system functions as a mechanism to convey specific modes of masculinities in various spaces such as dormitories, schools, university exam preparatory courses and so on. While Fethullah Gülen resembles a more phantasmal construction of the Muslim man, *abis* become more "real" models for their disciples.

CHAPTER 5

ABIS LIVING TOGETHER: THE BIG FAMILY OF MEN

5.1. Conveying Masculinity: *Abi* Tradition

From the early traditions of preliminary groups of *Nurcular* informed by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, these communities have deployed the concept of *şakirt* as an Arabic word meaning student or disciple. The first followers were called as *şakirts* of Quran who were entitled to distribute written pieces by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, generally called as *Risale-i Nur*.⁹⁷ In those days' political climate, the written texts of Said Nursi were distributed by an underground network of *şakirts*. The prototypical structure of the first *Nurcu* communities maintained the organizational basis for the Hizmet Movement. In the hierarchical structure, followers are codified as servers or disciples of Quran both being educated with Said Nursi's and Fethullah Gülen's writings. Although *cemaat* is organized in a hierarchical structure, all followers are considered as *şakirts* of Quran, who have been also called as servers⁹⁸ and volunteers in different contexts. At the same time, the hierarchal designation of the Hizmet Movement defines elder brothers as *abi* who are responsible guiders of groups of students.

At this point, analyzing a book called *The Portrait of Man of Service: The Features of Devoted Man*, written by a scholar considering himself as an insider of *cemaat*, İbrahim Özübüyük, can pave our way to understanding how an ideal *abi* is formulated by the scholars within *cemaat*.⁹⁹ It is very easy to find these kind of books as guide for followers in bookshops called NT supported by *cemaat*, which is the biggest bookshop network in Turkey, in terms of branch numbers. Here, İbrahim Özübüyük is chosen as an example to understand how discourses of an ideal "devoted" follower are created within the literature of Hizmet Movement scholars.

⁹⁷ Epistles of Lights.

⁹⁸ *Hizmet insanı* and *hizmet eri* are other concepts utilized in the literature. Especially *hizmet eri* denotes a man as a server of Quran.

⁹⁹ Özübüyük, İ. (2010), *Hizmet İnsanın Portresi*, Işık Yayınları: İstanbul.

The book calls followers to devote their lives to Quran whose message was upheld by *cemaat* at this time. In this frame, *cihad*¹⁰⁰, *irşad*¹⁰¹ and *tebliğ*¹⁰² as signaling the same concept of reaching God's name to everyone, are defined as the main duty of serving Muslims. Besides codifying *cihad* in peaceful terms as carrying the God's name by educational initiatives, the author underlines the significance of *temsil dili* and *hal dili*¹⁰³ as meaning being a model by practices and activities. Instead of talking with people, a Muslim should be an acting model for everyone. In other words, an *abi* carrying the Islamic message is envisioned as an exemplar for his disciples with his practices.¹⁰⁴

Especially during the political climate after the 28th February process, *cemaat* used this interpretation of *cihad* more confidently as a more secure way. While people were legally charged with the claim of acting against the secular system, being a model was not necessarily requiring carrying God's name through speaking which may cause a follower to be jailed or legally prosecuted. Still, this strategy represents the practical dimension of the *abi* - disciple relationship. In order to observe how a relationship between men based on exemplary practices, the informal structure of *cemaat* should be elaborated.

5.2. *Abi* System: Formal and Informal Structures

The Hizmet Movement is generally known by its universities, schools and dormitories expanded into over a hundred different countries. At least for thirty years, many young university graduates have chosen to work as teachers or administrators in the schools established in America, Africa, Asia and Australia along with every single country in the European continent. For today, thousands of volunteers¹⁰⁵ are educating local

¹⁰⁰ Holy war of Islam.

¹⁰¹ Spritiual guidance.

¹⁰² Conveying Islamic message.

¹⁰³ Manner/ language of representation.

¹⁰⁴ Özübüyük, İ. (2010), *Hizmet İnsanın Portresi*, Işık Yayınları: İstanbul, p.115.

people through the investments of other volunteers, *esnaf abis*, maintaining the material sources of activities.¹⁰⁶ Although *cemaat* welcomes everyone from different occupations, the core activities are undertaken by the teachers and the traders-industrialists financing these activities.

As *cemaat*-related publications generally underline the worldwide educational activities, organizations and people related to education are a promising starting point to genderize the Hizmet Movement, since these activities are central to the community. To put it another way, educational organizations and people related to those activities may tell reflective gender stories due to fact that education is the most intense activity of *cemaat*.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, education is the main means of male socialization which is leading the internalization of gender codes. From this respect, focusing on the educational system and the narratives belonging to those years may generate a more fruitful account to understand masculinity constructions.

Throughout my relations with some followers and my education in a college supported by *cemaat*, the organizational structuring of schools, dormitories and *dershanes* (university exam preparatory courses) have recurred within two interrelated organizational structures. The more formal structure was organized as an ordinary school organization consisting of hierarchical teacher positions such as administrators and their deputies. The school is managed by a director with the assistance of deputy directors maintaining the education and discipline within the school. Besides ordinary structuring, these institutions function through a more informal hierarchy which is aiming to introduce the Islamic message to everyone. Such a structure does not imply an illegal underground organization, but rather a new dimension of hierarchy maintaining the intergenerational relationship between men. In other words, such a

¹⁰⁵ *Gönül erleri, ışık süvarileri* are other concepts used in various texts.

¹⁰⁶ Ebaugh, H. R. (2009), *The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam*, Springer Press.

¹⁰⁷ Agai, B. (2008), *Discursive and organizational strategies of the Gülen movement*, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/conference-papers/294-the-fethullah-gulen-movement-i/2132-discursive-and-organizational-strategies-of-the-gulen-movement.html> (Retrieved on 27.04.2011)

relationship gains a secondary level –besides the ordinary relationship between teacher and student- which is able to penetrate into more personal issues.

In this system, students from secondary schools to universities are assigned to an “*abi*” who is generally a university student. In Turkish, *abi* (ağabey) means elder brother and is used among men of *cemaat* to signal intimacy with respect. In this case, an elder man who is defined as *abi* becomes the most intimate person to guide and assist students which is codified as “being concerned” (ilgilenmek). In this system, the designation of an *abi* for a follower can be seen in all levels and local subgroups. However, my interlocutors generally remember their secondary or high school years while they narrate their stories about *abis*. For this reason, despite the fact that the *abi* system is a more encompassing tradition within the *cemaat*, I will particularly focus on the *abi* system in educational institutions supported by *cemaat*.

5.3. *Abi* at School, Dormitory and Home

Generally, an *abi* is responsible for a group consisting of classmates or roommates. In this relationship, dormitory and school become the spaces of a relationship governed through the respect and intimacy between men. As a recurring theme in my interviews, narratives on dormitories may be significant examples to show how very close and intimate relationship within the group is defined with anecdotes related to an *abi*.

In his secondary school years, Mehmet remembers his first *abi* who was inviting him to *cemaat* house. The relationship is established through his *abis*' assistance in his school lessons:

Mehmet: Hepsi üniversite öğrencisiydi. Mesela belli başlı dersleri başkası anlatıyordu, branşıyla alakalı daha iyi anlatabileceği, hepsiyle aynı sofraya oturuyoduk. Hepsiyle bir samimiyetimiz vardı. Primer olarak bir abi bizimle ilgileniyo gibiydi ama hepsi ilgileniyodu aslında. Bitanesi işte, telefonla görüştüğümüz, ailemle muhattap olan, hani ders çalışıp çalışmadığımı okul nası gittiğini soran bir abi. Diğerleri de arkadaş gibi sorardı, arkadaş gibi muhabbetimiz vardı. İlgilenmekten kastım, derslerin

anlatan oydu, bize yemek hazırlayan oydu, diğerleri yardımcı olabiliyodu gerek olduğunda.¹⁰⁸

All my interviewees have continued their relationship with *abis* from their secondary school years (starting from 12-13) or high school years (15-18) up to recent years. When they narrate first encounters with *abis*, a common nature of this relationship arises as recurring emotion with meeting an *abi*. In this system, a student in his early ages meets an *abi* through an institution related to *cemaat* or just through the connection of a friend or a relative. As generally coming from religious, conservative or Islamist families, children are generally acquainted with the concepts of *cemaat* and service for God's religion.

In this regard, the phrase “*adam yerine koymak*” by interlocutors is widely utilized literally as “holding one in high esteem” or “taking someone as a grown man”. The term *adam* is an Arabic word meaning an adult and disciplined man.¹⁰⁹ Throughout the narratives, respondents traveled back to childhood years and expressed how they were shocked when their *abis* held them in esteem as if they were grown men. Sermet receives a bursary from a *cemaat* supported college and meets with his teachers who generally function as *abis* outside school times:

Sermet: İlkokul 4e başladık, Hocalarım bana bir garip geldi. Teneffüste gelip benle muhabbet ediyo, yani sen nası hocasın. Rahatsız oluyorum yani. Öyle havadan sudan nasısın iyimisin, öyle konuşurduk yani çok da iyi hatırlamıyorum ama hakaten muhabbet ediyolardı yani. O yaşta adam çocukla nası muhabbet ediyo hala hayret ediyorum yani. Çünkü ortaokul talabesiyle zor iletişim kuruyorum şu anda. Çocuğa ne bahsetcem onu bilmiyorum. Hoşuma gidiyo. Şaşırtıcı geliyo ama çok da şaşırtıcı geliyo. Çünkü hakaten çok fakiriz. Sülalenin içerisinde bir yerimiz yurdumuz yok. Dışlanan modundayız. Ve burda adam yerine koyuyolar. Hakaten biri gelip benle konuşuyo, değer veriyolar bana. Bu benim çok hoşuma gitti.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Mehmet: They were all university graduates. They were assisting in the lessons with which they are familiar. We were sitting together around a table. We were intimate with each other. My *abi* was the primer one, but others were also dealing with us. My *abi* was calling home and was talking with my family whether I study or not. With other *abis* we were like friends, we were chatting like friends. What I mean dealing with me, he was preparing food, assisting in my lessons but others were also helping in any cases.

¹⁰⁹ *Adam olmak* is commonly used for becoming a grown man.

¹¹⁰ Sermet: I started to the 4th grade in primary school. My teachers were weird. They were coming and chatting with me during breaks. How kind of teacher are you? I was

As a meeting space for hundreds of men, an informal hierarchy is established through different generations. All *abis* are situated into a hierarchy consisting of men who are responsible to *abis* in upper positions. In these intense hierarchies, the idealization of *Hocaefendi* comes into existence and is realized by a living *abi* in micro levels of power relations. In other words, the legend of an ideal man, *Hocaefendi*, has been exemplified through a designated *abi* who is also an idealized man imitating *Hocaefendi* in his actual life. Surely, *abis* are not same and perfect realization of the fantasy of ideal Muslim man, yet some of them are idealized by the subjects themselves in various micro level relations among men.

The consolidation of the image –*abi* as the ideal one- generally goes back to childhood and adolescence. Many interlocutors and people that I met in various institutions generally remember their *abis* in early ages of adolescence while they are narrating the first encounter. In many narratives, along with conflict stories, *abis* in early encounters of children are idealized as a role model in social and religious life. For instance, Salih who is responsible for the dozens of students now, mentions his first *abis* as follows:

Salih: Çok kafası çalışan insanlardı. Bu adamlar kendi çaplarında yıldız adamlar, popüler adamlar, ilgiyi üzerinde toplayan adamlar otomatik olarak. Ekstra bişey ortaya koymaya gerek olmaksızın, zaten sevecen insanlar. Üstüne geliyolar bu adamlar seninle ilgileniyolar, din diyanet adına bişiler anlatıyolar ufuk gösteriyolar. Kaygılarını senle paylaşıyolar. İster istemez hoşuna gidiyo atmosfer.¹¹¹

As a striking component of idealization, *abis* are generally advised to be an example with their practices rather than just talking about religion. Gülen even preaches the *ilayi kelimetullah* with body language and requires followers to set their personal life as a

feeling uncomfortable. We were talking on casual things but they were actually chatting with me. How a man at this age could talk with a little boy? Today, it is very hard to communicate with secondary school students, for me. I liked their attitude and it was shocking, because we were really poor. We haven't had a place in our extended family. Really, a man was coming and chatting with me. I really liked that.

¹¹¹ Salih: They were really smart guys. They were stars and popular guys in their quality. Without doing more, they were kindly guys. Additionally, they come and deal with you. They were showing a horizon by telling things about religion. They are sharing their concerns. Inevitably, you like this atmosphere.

model for people that are held in esteem.¹¹² In other words, men living together jointly perform the gender constructions based on the idealization of a certain man, Fethullah Gülen, in general, and their *abis* in particular. Mustafa frequently underlines the effects of his *abis*:

Mustafa: Ben ortaokuldaki hocalarımdan örnek alma açısından daha çok etkilenmişimdir. Niye çünkü yaşayarak gösteriyodu bana. Saygı meselesini mesela yaşayarak gösteriyodu veya işte allah korkusu vs. yaşayarak göstermek zorundaydı. Çünkü başka bişey yok.¹¹³

While designating *Hocaefendi* as carrying supernatural features, students sometimes situate their *abis* by detaching them from real life to beatify their idealized role:

Salih: Ya işte öğrenciler abilerini şey gibi görürler, abiler için biraz daha farklı bir ideallik var. abi uyumaz abi yemek yemez abi sevişmez işte.
Tevfik: sevişmez?
Salih: Hah. Günaha girmez yani. Kimse biz günahsız demez ama imaj öyle.¹¹⁴

Veli's story about his *abi* is striking to understand how the power of *abi* authority is construed through references to supranatural events and practices that are proving that *abis* are legitimate actors to interfere in and guide one's life. While Veli was talking about the death of his *abi*, he considers his death as martyrdom:

Veli: Okul takımında oynuyorum, Anadolu lisesindeyim, bizim bi abimiz vardı Sinan Abi, bugün böyle halı saha maçı yapıyoruz, abi aradı muhakkak yurdun üst katına gelin, sohbet var, sizden son bişi istiyorum diyip

¹¹² Gülen, F. (2001), *İlayi Kelimetullah veya Cihad*, http://www.fgulenkitap.com/Kitap/cihad/12_mumin_her_seviyede_cihadla_butunlesen_insandir.htm (Retrieved on 04.03.2011)

¹¹³ Mustafa: I was really affected by my teachers as taking them as exemplars during secondary school years because they were teaching me by living. For instance, they were showing respect by doing it. They had to show by living because they didn't have anything else.

¹¹⁴ Salih: Students see their *abis* in a different way. An *abi* doesn't sleep, eat and have sex.

Tevfik: Sex?

Salih: Yes. He doesn't commit sin. Nobody says that I'm not committing any sin. But, this is the image of *abi*.

duruyodu. Çıktık yukarı, benim arkadaşlarım var okul takımından, akşam işte abilerde kalcaz halı saha maçı var, işte sohbet sırasında, sohbet hocası da biyoloji hocası Hüseyin hoca, sohbette benim gözümün içine bakarak, ne kadar rahat yaşıyoruz yaz gelmiş falan, ölmicek gibi karıyla kızla geziyoruz, benim gözümün içine bakıyo, bende şey düşünüyom gördü mü acaba lan falan, sonra kafasını benden çevirip Hasan'a bakıp, nerden biliyoruz ki biz şu kapıdan çıkıp kamyon altında kalmicamızı dedi, sonra Hasan'la gülüştük çıktık falan filan. Sonra Namık hoca aradı, Veli dün gece Sinan Abi'yi kaybettik, vefat etti gelin dedi, sonra öğrendimki Sinan Abi, Hasan maça geliyolar, gelmeden önce Susurluk'a gidelim bi tost yiyelim demişler, yolda dönerken kamyonun altında kalıp vefat ediyo ikisi de, şu kapıdan çıktığımızda kamyonun altında kalıp kalmicamızı kim bilebilirki diyen ve Sinan Abi vefat ediyo. Ki bu misal cemaate özgü bişi, yani biz bu insanların şehit olduğunu düşünüyoruz, hissediyoruz yani.¹¹⁵

More significantly, as Sinan Abi's example shows, the idealization of *abi*hood, on the claim of being member of a God-oriented *cemaat*, overlaps with the claim of *abi* who has religiously defined distinctions. Thus, the power of intergenerational hierarchy between two men, *abi* and his disciple consolidates itself by referring to *abi*'s sainthood. Furthermore, *abis* are also seen as discipliners who have the ability to instruct students spiritually and guide in personal decisions over university choice, marriage, and family matters.

5.4. Power and Self Encounter

The narratives on the nature and remembrance of *abi*-student relationships are the longest components of interviews during the fieldwork. Close relationships between *abi* and student crystallizes power in certain spaces. The moment of encounter with *abi* resembles the realization of discourses built on the Sunni ideals preached by Hocaefendi. Yet, the idealization of an *abi* cannot be perfect without any conflict. In

¹¹⁵ I was playing for the Anatolian high school's football team. We had an *abi* called Sinan Abi. One day, we had a match; Sinan Abi called me and ask us to come to the dormitory. There was a sohbet gathering in the dormitory. He was telling me this is the last thing that I asked from you. We went to the upstairs. We were planning to stay with abis that night with my friends from the school. During sohbet, our biology teacher Hüseyin Hoca, looked at my eyes and told me that "we are walking around with girls, as if we are not gonna die". I was wondering if he saw me or not. Than he told us that who knows, maybe we will be crushed by a truck and die, after leaving this room. After that, we left the room by laughing. Than Namık Hoca called us: We've lost Sinan Hoca, come here. Than we learnt that, they were crushed by a truck on the way to Susurluk. This is special for cemaat, we believe they are martyrs, we feel that.

other words, the perfect imitation of the *abi*'s life cannot be realized by any student. In the nature of this relationship, conflict emerges in many occasions. In this regard, the multiplicity of *abis* coming from different backgrounds (ethnic, class and family background) should be introduced to grasp the very nature of *abi*-student relations.

Every student meets various *abis* throughout his life journey because of the fact that students may change cities or simply dormitories throughout their education. Thus, *abis* with different backgrounds, attitudes and interpretations of *Hocaefendi*'s discourses, construct the distinct forms of *abihood*, which surely converges within same ideational mindset.

Within the multiplicity and more complicated nature of this relationship, the conflict arising between *abi* and student was eloquently narrated in the interview with Veli who is very different from other followers in his choice of dressing and his lifestyle . While Veli is working on visual design and communication, he also prefers to wear hippie-style clothes, as he says. In addition, Veli comes from Denizli (a town in the Western part of Turkey) with roots from Erzurum, the hometown of *Hocaefendi*. In his journey within *cemaat*, Veli met many distinct *abis* with different characters and backgrounds. In some parts of the interview, Veli criticizes a couple of his *abis* as not concerned with him and their discouragement of his deep dedication to *cemaat*. According to Veli, Hamit Abi who is an asocial character expects the same performance from Veli, which is unsuitable for his character:

Veli: Mesela çok iyi abiler var, harbiden inanılmaz abiler var. Ama 2 sene önce Hamit Abi vardı, bu adam hiç evinden çıkmayan, 24 saat kitap okuyan, gel diyince gelen, git diyince giden adamdan da aynı performansı bekliyodu, benden de aynı performansı bekliyodu. Ya benim kız arkadaşım var biliyosun, olmaması gerekiyo ama var yani, ben mesela Orhan Pamuk okurum, Elif Şafak okurum, işte Barış Bıçakçı okurum yani arada sırada Hocaefendi okurum. Benim okulum var, ben çalışıyorum, benden aynı şeyi nasıl beklersinki? ¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Veli: For example, there are very good *abis*, they are unbelievably good. But, there was an *abi* called Hamit Abi, who was not leaving his home at all, he was reading books for 24 hours, he comes when he is asked. He was expecting me the same performance. You know, I have a girlfriend, I shouldn't have one but I have a girlfriend. I read Elif Şafak, Orhan Pamuk and Barış Bıçakçı and sometimes I read *Hocaefendi*. I'm attending school and I'm working, how would you expect me to do same things?

Hamit Abi asks Veli to attend a New Year program which aims to prevent followers from attending other parties with alcohol and adultery:

Veli: Yılbaşı programında herkes olmazsa bilmem ne bilmem ne, yılbaşı programı dediği ne? Sızıntı¹¹⁷ bilgi yarışması, yıllardır aynı, yani abi böyle birşey olabilir mi? Ben orda olmayınca napıyorum? Evimde oturup takılıyorum. Ben yılbaşı akşamı dışarı giden de bi adam diilim, ben de zaten cemaat kültürü var, o zihniyet yerleşmiş bana, ben biliyorum zaten Taksim'e gidince orda eğlenmiyeceğimi, ben gidip kariya kıza pandik atcak adam değilim, alkol alacak adam da değilim, ha ha zıplıcaak adam da değilim, gitmicem, senin yanında napcam ben?¹¹⁸

However, Veli's other *abi*, Osman Abi, depicts a more tolerant attitude towards Veli. While Hamit Abi insists on the traditional programs, Osman Abi creates his alternative program within the borders of Islamic discourses:

Veli: Değiştirmeye çalışan abiler var, şu an bi Osman Abi var, adam inanılmaz komik ya, yılbaşında napalım diye istişare ediyoruz, pastadan şakirt çıkaralım dedi. Nası dalga geçiyo adam, görsen yobaz tıknaz Hizmet abisi dersin yani ama adam kafada çok orijinal yani. Yılbaşında da çok alternatif bir program yapmıştı. Bizi şeye götürmüşlerdi, lüks bir restorana götürmüşlerdi, orda yemek yedik, erken vakitte, esnaf abiler vardı, bi masada da hanımları vardı, yemek yedik, abi mikrofonu eline aldı, dedi bikaç soru sorcam, bilenlere hediye vercem. Dedi ki işte Hz. İsa'nın annesinin adı nedir? Ablalara sordu bilenere kitap verdi, verirken de şey yapıyo, abla diyo ki bu kitap bizde var, bizde de çok var kakalamamız lazım bunları diyo. Arada mesafe yok da, var da sınırları aşmıyo işte. Biz sonra abiden parasını alırız, enişteden alırız. İşte komik adam, biz orda eğlendik, yemek yedik. Bir soru sordu mesela, haram aylar nedir diye, ben bildim onu, bana gel lan buraya falan dedi, bakın dedi bu adamın tipe bakın, bildiği cevaba bakın dedi.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ The oldest magazine published by *cemaat*.

¹¹⁸ Veli: Everyone should attend New Year program blah blah blah. What is New Year Program? Sızıntı Quiz show (questions are asked from the oldest magazine of *cemaat* called Sızıntı) It is same for years, how may it possible? What do I do if I don't attend the program? I just sit at home; I don't go out during New Year. I have cemaat culture, I internalized this mentality. I already know that I shouldn't go to city center and harass women or drink alcohol or dance around. What am I gonna with you(Hamit Abi)?

¹¹⁹ Veli: There are some progressive abis trying to change something. There is an *abi* called Osman Abi. He is unbelievably funny. We were talking during a istişare meeting, he proposed to scoop up a şakirt from a cake. You cannot imagine how he makes fun of it. If you saw him you would say he is fanatic and stumpy *abi* but his mind is very original. He organized an alternative program for the New Year. He invited us to a very

Veli's depiction may be a striking example of how different backgrounds -such as geographies, family backgrounds and training processes- pave way for various constructions of *abihood*. While Hamit Abi insists on the traditional programs, Osman Abi opens up the possibility of alternative programs. Veli, as differentiating himself from ordinary *cemaat* followers, idealizes his relation with Osman Abi and some other *abis* who keep him as an insider.

5.5. Resistant Agent

Moreover, Veli, acknowledging his agency in the decision processes, carves a space for negotiation in his life. The story about his bermuda shorts exemplifies a negotiation ground in his daily life. Hamit Abi, sketched as a more conservative character, asks Veli to change his shorts as inappropriate for a Muslim man. Veli continues his story as follows:

Veli: Hamit Abi, bu dediğim abiden farklı, bizi anlamadı hiçbi zaman, biz o yüzden soğuduk, yani ben bir gün sohbete gittim, bermuda giymişim, diz altı, dini kurallara uygun. Abicim sen içeri girme böyle git üstünü değiştir gel. Ya sen kimsin ya, dedim ben gidersem gelmem. Gelmezsen sen kaybedersin dedi, dedim hiç bişey kaybetmem, falan feşmekan. Sonra içeri girdim Gaziantep'ten abiler gelmiş, oranın esnaf abileri, abi dedim bölüyorum ama bişi sorabilirmiyim, buyur kardeşim dedi, dedim abi ben içeri girerken bermuda şortum var diye siz rahatsız olurmuşsunuz, siz nasıl talebeler okutuyosunuz, kime burs veriyomuşuz dersiniz diye Hamit abi rahatsız oldu, benim eve gidip üstümü değiştirmem gerektiğini söyledi dedim. Gel kardeşim dedi böyle, bakiim dedi kıyafetine, bizim sizin gibi adamlara ihtiyacımız var, bizim size verdiğimiz para da helal olsun dedi. Ben de şey dedim. Abi Allah rızası için, şu zihniyete bir dur diyin dedim. Bizim başımıza bu abiyi koymuşsunuz, sonra biz hizmet etmiyor oluyoruz, hizmette aykırı oluyoruz dedim, zamanla bişiler değişir demişti O da.¹²⁰

fancy and expensive restaurant. There were *esnaf abis* and their wives. After the dinner, he took the microphone and asked who the mother of Prophet Jesus is. He asked to *ablas* and gave some books. When he was giving the gifts, he was making jokes. There was no distance between him and *ablas* but he also was not crossing the border. He was telling that take this book, I'm gonna take the money from *esnaf abi*. Look, he is a funny guy, we had our dinner and had fun. He asked me a question and called me. Look at him, you cannot expect a guy in this style to answer this question.

¹²⁰ Hamit Abi is different from Osman Abi, he never understood us, so we alienated from *cemaat*. Once, I went to a *sohbet* meeting, I was wearing my bermuda shorts. It

In my opinion, it is very striking to see how Veli's achievement in subverting the *abi*'s practice eloquently indicates the resistance mechanism adopted by an agent to resist against the power mechanisms of *abihood*. Still, Veli's own strategy legitimizes itself towards the principle of Islam-which is dictating the covering of certain parts of the body between knee cap levels to belly button-while he is able to distort Hamit Abi's practices built on his power envisioned by *abi* system.

However, it was not easy to find resistant strategies by many followers of the Hizmet Movement, during my fieldwork and my previous acquaintances. To derive a new outlook understanding how men acquire subjectivities, throughout their practices and rituals, and to define agency in new terms, we may try to understand how a specific *habitus* based on religiosity is construed in micro-level spaces of the Hizmet Movement.

5.6. Religiosity as *Habitus*

Generally, in the climate within the dormitory or student house, the man finds himself in a unique *habitus* (referring not to class motives but religiosity) which is shaping the gender "beliefs" and practices as well. The term *Habitus* that I utilize throughout the thesis, is defined by Pierre Bourdieu as "a deeply buried structure that shapes people's dispositions to act in such ways that they wind up accepting the dominance of others, or of the system without being made to do so".¹²¹

was under my knee cap so it was appropriate by religious rules. He asked me to change my shorts and to come back. I asked him "Who are you?" If I go now, I won't come anymore. He said me "you are gonna loose", I replied "I won't loose anything". Then I entered to room, there were some esnaf abis from Gaziantep. I told them Hamit Abi warned me that you may feel uncomfortable about me and asked me to change my clothes. Esnaf Abi called me and looked at my clothes. Then he said: "We need guys like you. The money worths for you." I told him, "Please *abi* stop this mentality. You send this *abi* and then we are considered as not serving, and repugnant to *cemaat*. He replied me, some things change through time being.

¹²¹ Bourdieu, P. (1977), *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

In different dormitories and houses, I witnessed the phrase *cemaat havası* signaling the certain modes of social climate shared with other followers. Many respondents underline the similarity of this climate within different institutions. Today, a follower is able to find the same *habitus* in different institutions established in all over the world. Mustafa mentions *cemaat* atmosphere (*cemaat havası*) as follows:

Mustafa: Zaman ve mekan içerisinde bir grupta birlikte cemaat havası solumak farklı bişey. Yani benim gördüğüm en azından bu cemattin bu hareketin yada neyse adı, bir tarikattan en büyük farkı birliktelik aslında gündelik hayatta daha az olması. Ama hep aynı kaynağa referans vererek yaşandığı için bu şekilde bişiler oluyo yani. Mesela ben ordan üniversiteye geldim. Üniversite’de kolejlerden çocuklarla hemen birbirimizi bulduk. Çünkü hepimiz aynı formasyonu almışız.¹²²

Anthony Giddens envisions the idea of *habitus* by discussing “the dialectic of control” in which he argues that systems of control can never work perfectly, because those being controlled have both agency and understanding and thus can always find ways to evade or resist.¹²³ In this scheme, while Bourdieu assumes *habitus* as a deeply internalized structure powerfully controlling and largely inaccessible to consciousness, Giddens emphasizes the individual as at least partially knowing. From these distinct attitudes toward to *habitus*, the question of freedom and agency can be elaborated in detail.

In my fieldwork, I was puzzled by different narratives of my respondents to the question whether an individual is embedded in a “structure” or *habitus* by the disciplinary power of *abi* system or is enabled to subvert these mechanisms by resistance strategies. Although my interlocutors generally normalize the hierarchical scheme of *abi* tradition by appropriating religious motives, they generally question the practices of different *abis* by the values and discourses maintained by the unique *habitus* of *cemaat*, generally envisioned by *Hocaefendi*. For instance, counseling meetings, *istişare*, open this space to question the practices of *abis* in local areas. I also

¹²² Mustafa: In a certain space and time, it was really different to breathe jointly in *cemaat* atmosphere. For me, the main difference of this *cemaat* or movement, whatever you call, from a *tarikât*, is that you are not living together with others in daily lives. But, you live by referring the same source. For instance, I came to the university and found other college students because we all have same formation.

¹²³ Ortner, S. (2006), *Anthropology and Social Theory*, Duke University Press. P.5-6.

encountered the fact that followers were able to carry their dissatisfaction to the upper counseling groups governing bigger areas.

In Veli's subversion of power relations by inserting new actors more powerful than Hamit Abi, it was striking to see how individuals created their strategies to revert ongoing mechanisms of power maintained through *abi* system. In other words, some individuals were able to subvert hegemonic practices of power holders and to deploy other discourses for their own agendas.

5.7. Resistant or Docile Agent

Besides the counter hegemonic practices, however, another outlook may be more promising to understand how intergenerational relationships among men construct a power scheme through the idealization of *abi*hood. In the embeddedness of a hegemonic discourse normalizing *abi* authority over the students, we may direct our attention to individuals themselves to dwell upon gendered subjectivities of followers. In addition to observing power scheme among men, remarking the practices of piety or practices to be proper *cemaat* follower may assist us to understand how self becomes an ethical subject. In this regard, a very puzzling question of freedom of *cemaat* follower as embedded in an intense hierarchy may become clearer.

At this point, Saba Mahmood's critique on the universality of desire and the definition of freedom as applying to everyone within different contexts, can pave the way to understand how the self becomes an ethical subject through particular practices. Saba Mahmood constructs her argument on Butler's explanation that gender and gender distinctions are inherently unstable and always discursively constructed through constant performance and reiteration.¹²⁴ Yet, Mahmood criticizes Butler's assumption that performances contain the possibility of resistance.¹²⁵ According to Mahmood, while we are defining agency, we may turn our attention to two contrastive conceptions

¹²⁴ Butler, J. (1999) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge: NewYork, P.171-190

¹²⁵ Mahmood, S. (2001) *Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival*,” *Cultural Anthropology*, 6(2):202-236, 2001. p. 205-210

of agentival action to think of agency not only as the capacity for progressive change but also, as the capacity to endure, suffer and persist.¹²⁶

In my observations throughout my fieldwork, I wouldn't say my interlocutors are either searching for liberal freedom (as detached from a community life and responsibilities) or unable to create individual space to act on their desires. In this setting, individualized rituals and reading sessions become the practical climate for the consolidation of docile bodies. In other words, along with Mahmood, I prefer to direct my analysis to the specific ways in which followers perform a certain number of operations on thoughts, body, conduct and ways of being, in order to "attain a certain kind of state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality".¹²⁷

In this context, what I mean is that patterns of religious actions prescribed by Fethullah Gülen, are not simply rules followers have to follow, but powerful and effective discourses that make followers specific kinds of individuals with specific emotions, desires and sensibilities.¹²⁸ In my specific argument, common rituals such as reading sessions which can be done in a group or individually, signal the practices of becoming docile selves. As a common ritual within cemaat, certain activities such as reading books of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen, or reciting a special prayer book called *Cevşen* after daily prayers can be easily observed in every segment of the community. Halil's friend in his dormitory shows us how these practices become main tenents of self-construction in the early ages of manhood:

Halil: Bizim bi üst dönem, abi geceleyin kalkıyorum tuvalete gidicem, bakıyorum adam açmış orda geceleyin yatağında ranzasında Cevşen okuyo, ufak bir lambası var, geceleyin sahurda elma sirkesi içiyo sünnet diye. Yani

¹²⁶ Mahmood, S. (2001) Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," Cultural Anthropology, 6(2):202-236, 2001. p 217.

¹²⁷ Foucault, M. (1997) Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth, vol. 1. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984. Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: The New Press.

¹²⁸ Vicini, F. (2007). Gülen's Rethinking of Islamic Pattern and Its Socio-Political Effects. Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement" was held at SOAS University of London, House of Lords and London School of Economics on 25-27 October, 2007. p.440

böyle adamlar vardı. Bunlar baya gaz, şöyle bişi diim mi ben sana, bunu düşünüyorum yani, dünyayı değiştirmek iddiasındaysan böyle psikopat olman lazım ya, adamlar yani harbiden yani düşünüyosun, bi çocuk abdest tazeliyo falan, geceleyin 3te kalkmışız sahur, biz gecenin bir yarısı yurttan, yurtla okul yanyana, okula doğru gidiyoz, baktık okulda mübarek Abdullah dalga geçtiğimiz bir çocuk var, adam çok mübarek, gecenin bir yarısı 3te oturmuş bir sınıfta kitap okuyo. Lise çocuğu yani, hani böyle insanlar vardı yurtlarda.¹²⁹

As the quotation demonstrates, reading passages and book chapters from Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen is ritualized as a daily activity by the followers. At home, dormitory or during special programs are organized for reading *Risale-i Nur* by Said Nursi or books of Fethullah Gülen. More interestingly, many followers prefer reading pieces from *Risale-i Nur* in the original Ottoman language with Arabic and Persian words. Although numerous later editions simplified the text changing Arabic and Persian words with Turkish synonyms, many followers have continued to read the books of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi in Arabic. Besides informing various dimensions of daily life, the ritual becomes a way of generating piety or becoming a proper server of *Risale*, thus of the Quran itself. In other words, repeating the chapters of *Risale* and other accounts by *Hocaefendi* resembles a way of attaining a mode of ethics both individually and with the community at large.

In this new mode of ethics, bodily practices and reciting certain sacred texts become the means of constructing certain subjectivities based on this ethicality, which is also informed by other factors such as generation, family, ethnic identity, and sexual orientation. Especially, I hope to contribute to the literature on Islamic communities, especially Saba Mahmood's arguments, by utilizing a new dimension to take intergenerational relationships into account. In the next chapter, I will try to analyze how these men construct a new type of kinship substituting for their families. In this new mode of family, masculinities of those men are crystallized through relationships within this family.

¹²⁹ Halil: There was a guy from the upper class. One night I wake up for toilet, he was reading *cevşen* in his bed. He was drinking apple vinegar because it was a *sunnah*. There were men like this guy. I think if you are in the claim of changing world, you should be psychopath like this guy. Imagine, he was refreshing his ablution during night. Once, we wake up with a friend for *sahur* (meal before starting fast) and were going to school from dormitory. We witnessed a man reading a book at 3 am in the morning. We were calling him as *mübarek* (saintlike). This is a high school boy.

5.8. A Big Family: *Cemaat* as a New (Fictive) Kinship

The Hizmet Movement, structuring itself on the tenets of Sunni Islam, promotes gender segregation in schools, dormitories and houses. Back to the 28th February process, *cemaat* was forced to modify its schools into gender mixed ones. The historical changes during the 28th February process marks the macro changes in the political arena, but also daily life of common people was affected by the enforcement of new sanctions. For instance, the new government prohibited gender segregated schools by targeting schools initiated by Islamic communities which were designed as boys' or girls' schools. During the process, *cemaat* solved this problem by accepting female students into their schools. Throughout the interviews, respondents frequently refer the hard days of the 28th February process, defining their relationship with new girls as a challenging experience. In order to observe the effects on followers' lives, the bond between men will be evaluated with reference to the narratives of the respondents.

In this chapter, it is argued that men bound with religious bonds form a new kinship which substitutes for their family. A new kind of kinship which is not based on "blood relations"¹³⁰ as commonality between individuals but builds itself on sharing the same ideals, practices and more importantly the ultimate duty of a Muslim, *ilayi kelimetullah* is constructed. Even the common narratives concerning the family's fear that students are stolen or taken from their family may reflect the ongoing power struggle over students' lives and belonging in a certain social group, whether the family or *cemaat*.

Until now, I have heard many fears of families whose children are affiliated with *cemaat*. The main fear was basing itself on the claim that *cemaat* "steals" or alienates the students from their families. Mustafa mentions his story with his father:

Mustafa: Mesela ben lise 3'teydim ÖSS'ye hazırlanırken. İşte babamla muhabbet ediyoz, ne seçiceksin. Ben fen liseliyim, sonuçta işte sayısal bi bölüm, mühendislik bekliyolar. Ben dedim ki işletme mi seçsem acaba, tamamen fikir yani. Bir anda olay şeye evrildi, abiler istedi demi senden?
Tevfik: Abiler istemiş miydi?

¹³⁰ Carsten, Janet, ed. (2000), *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Mustafa: Hayır. Bir kere abiler işletme istemez, öğretmenlik falan ister. Diyorum ki yok böyle bişi. Yok sen söylemiyon bizden saklıyorsun. Böyle ilginç gerilimler yaşadık süreç içerisinde.¹³¹

Like the story of Mustafa, some families are hesitant to “send” their children to the schools, dormitories or university exam preparatory courses affiliated with *cemaat*. However, in conversations, some interlocutors were prioritizing their families over the *cemaat* while others even were not mentioning their family members that much compared to their *abis*. However, the motives related to family or home are frequently utilized in the narratives of my interlocutors. For instance, most interviewees associate their dormitories or student houses with their family houses. Salih’s first day in the dormitory may be a good starting point for the analysis:

Tevfik: Hatırlıyo musun kolejde ilk gününü?

Salih: İlk akşamı hatırlıyorum. Zaten çok aşınası olduğumuz bir atmosferdi. Herhangi bir yabancılik hissi duymadığımızdan zaten.

Tevfik: Nerden geliyo tanıdıklık?

Salih: Birincisi orta sondaki o paylaştığım atmosferdi. İnsan onu hissedebiliyo. En basitinden şunu hissedebiliyorsun yani bir giriyosun yurda, yurdun girişinde ayakkabılarını çıkarıyorsun. Bütün yurt halı kaplı. İşte hani biliyosunki namaz kılıcsın hemen şurda namazına durabilsin diye temizlik algısı var sonuçta. Temizliğin ötesinde insanların onu yadırgamayacağını bildiğin bir atmosfer var. Daha sonrada çok yaşadım. farklı şehirlerde, farklı hizmet evlerine gittim, ve hepsinde kendi evim kadar rahattım, hiçbir zaman yadırgamadım.¹³²

¹³¹ Mustafa: I was studying for the university exam. We were chatting with my father about possible programs that I may apply. I was a student in a science schools so they were accepting met o go a science program like engineering. I asked them to go management program, it was just an idea.

Tevfik: Did they ask you to go management program?

Mustafa: No. First, they don’t want me to choose management school, maybe education stuff. I told my parents, there was not such a thing; they didn’t ask me to go management school. They told me, “No, you are hiding” We had these kinds of tension in the process.

¹³² Tevfik: Do you remember your first day in the college (high school)?

Salih: I remember the first evening. I was already familiar with the atmosphere. I didn’t have any unfamiliarity.

Tevfik: Where does this familiarity come from?

Salih: Firstly, because of the atmosphere during secondary school years. I felt the same feeling. At least, you can feel this: when you enter the dormitory, you are leaving your shoes at the front. The whole dormitory is furnished with carpets. You know that you can start to pray wherever you want, it is about being clean. Besides being clean, no one

The motive of “carpet” and “leaving shoes at the door” are recurring themes that designates the spatial similarity between the dormitory and the family home. Mehmet remembers their visit to those dormitories as associating the dormitory as home by comparing two different types of dormitories, a state governed dormitory and a *cemaat* supported dormitory:

Mehmet: Atatürk Fen Lisesi yurduna ayakkabıyla giriyo insanlar, ranzalar falan. Büyük bina, yüksek. İşte az ışıklı, renkler daha mat koyu renkler, her sene boyanmıyo belli. Eski büyük camlar. Bina itibariyle bildiğin eski binalar. Her yere ayakkabıyla giriliyo. Halının rahatlığı yok.

Tevfik: Kolej?

Mehmet: Binaya ilk girdikten sonra yurda ayakkabıları çıkarıyon halı her taraf. Koltuklu oturma odaları var. Geniş odalar. daha rahat bir ortam. Tabi evi anımsatıyo ister istemez.¹³³

In this space of intimacy substituting the family house, dozens of men live together who are bounded with hierarchical designations as *abis* or *şakirts*. Especially anecdotes mentioning the period before the 28th February process underline the comfort of men living together. Sermet through the interview generally remembers his days spent in dormitory in a nostalgic manner. The practice of *teshibat* which is a special praying performed collectively after daily praying, *namaz*, enhances the comfort living men together. Thus, constant activities make Sermet’s life more enjoyable in the dormitory:

Sermet: Abilerle yaşamak daha zevkli benim için.

Tevfik: Neden?

Sermet: Çünkü sürekli aksiyon var.

Tevfik: Mesela?

Sermet: Tesbihat mesela. Toplu bişey yapıyosun yani. Böyle arada bağırdığın yerler falan oluyo, zikir hoşuna gidiyo. Kitap okuyolar o da

finds this climate as odd. I witnessed this frequently, later on. Whenever I go to different *cemaat* houses in different cities, I’ve always felt like I’m home.

¹³³ Mehmet: People were entering to the dormitory of Atatürk Science High School (is the best state established science school) with their shoes, there were bunk beds. Huge building, very tall. Not to lighted, dark and sober colors, it is not painted every year. Everyone is entering with shoes. You cannot find the comfort of carpet.

Tevfik: How about the college?

Mehmet: When you enter to the dormitory, you leave your shoes at the front, everywhere was covered with carpets. There were big rooms with couches. Very large rooms. It inevitably reminds me my home.

hoşuma gidiyo. Ciddi meselelerden bahsediyolar, oturup devlet meselelerinden bahsediyolar. Onlar kendi aralarında konuşuyo, ben dinliyorum.¹³⁴

In a broader sense, with its intense and highly developed network establishing abilities, *cemaat* resembles a bigger family. Today, many *cemaat* followers are able to find accommodation, translation, and guidance services from Texas to Melbourne, from Cape Town to Moscow. Throughout the interviews, the interlocutors mention their visits to different countries, especially to the United States, and their comfort about accommodation and socializing with the other followers who are sharing similar cultures with them. Mustafa mentions his comfort as follows:

Mustafa: Yalnız olmama şeyi ve gittiğim her yerde güven. Mesela ben üniversiteye gelirken o kadar güveniyodum ki babam bana hiç sormadı nerde kalcağın diye. Nasıl olsa biliyo. Birini bulurum ben burda. Şu an mesela kalkıp bir şehre gitsem, desem ki orda biri var mı görüşebilcem, yanında kalabilcem, illaki birini bulurum. Toplumda güvenle yaşama şeyi veriyo.¹³⁵

5.9. Conveying Sexual Knowledge

Besides the comfort aspect of living together with other men, the silenced terrain of sexual knowledge is another emerging theme which comes up as the respondents articulate their experiences in dormitories or student houses. Actually, the sexual knowledge may not find its way in the *abi*-student relationship but it was very common to deploy sexual jokes to explore male sexuality. In other words, in the big

¹³⁴ Sermet: It is more enjoyable living with *abis*.

Tevfik: Why?

Sermet: Because, there is always an action.

Tevfik: For example?

Sermet: For instance, *tesbihat* (a special prayer after daily prayers). You are doing something collectively. You are yelling in some parts. You like *zikir* (repeating God's names). They are also reading books that I love about them. They are talking about serious issues, such as state issues. They were talking among them and I was listening them.

¹³⁵ Mustafa: It is about not feeling alone. Wherever you go, you feel safe. For instance, while I was coming to Istanbul for the university, my father didn't ask me about accommodation. He knows that I'm gonna find someone. For instance, If I decide to go another city, I ask them a person who can meet me and host me. I will find someone for sure. It gives me security about living in a society.

family of *abis* and şakirts, sexual knowledge is transmitted through joke-making both verbally and physically. According to Salih, *abis* leave this terrain untouched by just pointing the primary sources of Islam sketching the proper practices of Muslim subjects:

Salih: Ya ben cinselliğin çok başarılı aktarıldığı bir örneğini bilmiyorum. Genellikle insanlar el yordamıyla buluyolar o meseleyi. Yani işte şu var, temel kaynaklara işaret ettikten sonra, temel kaynaklar da ilmihaller oluyo vesaire. Dinin pratik hayattaki uygulamalarıyla ilgili bir sorunuz olduğunda ilmihale bakın dersin öğrenciye, namaz işinde olduğu gibi cinsellik işinde de böyle olur. Sonrası için rehberliğe ihtiyaç görülmüyo zannediyorum.¹³⁶

However, among peers, jokes become an alternative discursive frame to talk about sexuality and transmit sexual knowledge which is coming from their previous experiences before the dormitory life. According to Salih, sexual connotations are the most popular topic among peers in the dormitory:

Salih: Daha maskülen bir ortam olayı herhalde. Yapılan esprilerden tut da konuşulan mevzulara kadar.

Tevfik: Espriler?

Salih: İşte hani belaltı espri, çok yapılan birşey. Karışık bir ortamda ya da aile ortamında konuşamayacağın şeyler hakkında konuşuyosun.

Tevfik: Nasıl bişey belaltı espriler?

Salih: Daha çok cinsellikle ilgili. onun dışında kızlarla ilgili yapılan espriler de girer. Bunun içine cinsellekle ilgili espriler de girer. İşte ben sana kaydım, o bana soktu gibi mevzular

Tevfik: Arkadaş arkadaş?

Salih: Evet. Espri yapmanın küfretmenin ötesinde çağrışımı olan bişey yok.

Tevfik: Cinsellik konuşulabilen bişey mi?

Salih: Muhtemelen en çok konuşulan şey.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Salih: Actually, I don't know the perfect example of conveying sexual knowledge. Generally, people reach this information intuitively. However, *abis* point out primary sources which are called as *ilmihal* (books of catechism) . When you have a problem in the practice of religion, you can check *ilmihal* books. If you tell students to do so, they can find information about sexuality likewise daily prayers. Besides this, I guess *abis* don't see any need of counseling.

¹³⁷ Salih: It is about being more masculine. You can think about jokes and other issues.

Tevfik: Jokes?

Salih: I mean blow deck jokes. The jokes that you cannot talk in gender mixed spaces or with your family.

Tevfik: How are these blow deck jokes?

Although these institutions are basing their education on religious and traditional moral values (such as gender segregation, discouraging adultery etc.), the new adolescents use newly invented terminology to subvert the unspeakability of sexuality . For instance, *geyik muhabbeti* as meaning the casual talk between fellows become a possible means of speaking of sexuality.. *Kamyon devirme*, as a recurring phrase throughout the interviews, substituted for masturbation or orgasm by referring to orgasm during the sleep which is not considered as a sin in their understanding of Islam.¹³⁸ For *kamyon devirme* refers to an “accident” during the sleep while masturbation practiced consciously is considered unacceptable. Rather than revealing the practice of masturbation, many students prefer to use *kamyon devirme*:

Mehmet: Mesela rahatlıkla 31 çektim demezdi kimse, kamyon devirdim, herkes biliyo zaten, herkes erkek. Kamyon devirmek irade dışı bişi olmuş, anlatmak ahlak içindeydi.

Tevfik: kamyon devirme meselesi nasıl

Mehmet: kazara oldu. Ortada bir kaza var. O daha ahlaklı geliyo o şekilde söylemek. Bir de şöyle bişi vardır yani, açıktan söylemenin övülmediği bir sistemde yaşıyoruz. İnançımız itibariyle günahı da açıkça söylemek makbul bişi değil, günahına tövbe etmek kendi kendine.¹³⁹

Besides verbal jokes, physical jokes become a practical means of conveying sexual knowledge. In dormitories and student houses, besides the performance of daily rituals such as praying together and the recitation of *cevşen*, different men display masculine power through the performance of group jokes. Many interlocutors refer to a physical

Salih: They are generally about sexuality. There are also jokes about girls. (Here there are sexual connotations signaling sexual intercourse between men.)

Tevfik: Between friends?

Salih: Yes, There is no intention besides making jokes.

Tevfik: Is sexuality effable?

Salih: Probably, most common topic that is spoken.

¹³⁸ Fatih openly considers masturbation as sin

¹³⁹ Mehmet: For instance, nobody says that I have masturbated but uses *kamyon devirmek*. Everyone knows *kamyon devirmek*, everyone is male. *Kamyon devirmek* is out of your control, it is morally correct to use *kamyon devirmek*.

Tevfik: How is *kamyon devirmek*?

Mehmet: By an accident. There is an accident. It was more morally correct to use this notion. Actually, we live in a system promoting not to talk openly about sin. Talking about your sin is not appropriate behavior in our faith. Not to talk but to repent.

joke (*karambol*) while answering the questions about living with men collectively. In this performance, one of the students starts to shout another one's name and everyone throws down the man whose name was called:

Mehmet: Yurdun klasiği en başta karambol muhabbeti vardı. Birini yatırıp üstüne çöküyo herkez. Bizim ilk dönemlerde yiyenlerden biriyim ben, üst dönemler yapıyo tabi bunu ama herkes atlıyo. Ya böyle komikti yani kimse orası burası kırılacak modda diildi, zevkli bişeydi. seni bi şekilde yere düşürüp halıya, üstüne atlıyolar. hiç maçlarda görmedinmi?¹⁴⁰

5.10. Erol: The Legend of a Homosexual Student

While masturbation is codified as a sin in the discursive space of the dormitory, the students appropriate a new language which paves the way to talk about sexuality without reference to sin. These jokes, however, can be deployed as disciplinary tools by creating legends about the sexuality. To put it another way, power holders produce some legends to warn subjects without directly telling the story. According to three interlocutors, senior students tell the legend of Erol, a student expelled from the school due to sexual intercourse with another man. Actually, no one knows whether Erol actually existed or not, but the main structure of the story is generally convergent in different narratives. I personally heard these stories in several different dormitories. Although the dormitories are in different districts, the story replicates itself with differentiated details. Salih explains the legend of Erol which he encountered in his high school years:

Tevfik: İbne geyiği dönermiydi?

Salih: Şöyle bir geyik vardı bizim zamanımızda. Eskiden yurtta olmuş öyle bir geyik vardı.

Tevfik: Nolmuş yurtta?

Salih: İşte iki tane öğrenci fiili hal üzere yakalanmış filan. Onlardan bitanesi müdüre bıçak çekmiş falan. Ondan sonra onlardan bi tanesi okuldan atmışlar birini başka okula sürmüşler. Geyikti yani.

Tevfik: Kim anlatıyo bunu

Salih: Üst dönemlerimiz anlatıyo

Tevfik: Onlara kim anlatmış

¹⁴⁰ Mehmet: *Karambol* is the classic for dormitory life. Everyone lay you down and flop down on you. I had *karambol* in my early days by upper classes. It was very funny, none of us was hurt. Didn't you see during football matches?

Salih: Onlara da üsttekiler anlatmıştır(gülüyor). Ama bizim arkadaş şeyi check ettirdi, öyle bir karakter var sürülen. Bizim okuldan giden bir Erol karakter yaşamış. Olay böyle gerçekleşmemiş olabilir ama ya olay gerçek.

Tevfik: Peki bu erol meselesini anlatma biçimi nasıl?

Salih: Ee tabi dalga geçerek anlatıyo. anlatan da lise 2 öğrencisi lise 1 öğrencisine anlatıyo. İşte şöyle olmuş puhahah falan. Bir taraftan işte Erol senin gibi bir tip falan diyo.¹⁴¹

Sermet tells the same story about the same dormitory:

Tevfik: Ne bu Erol muhabbeti?

Sermet: Çocuğun gey olma ihtimali. bize anlatılanı anlatıyorum. Bu hikaye hiç değişmedi. bu çocuk gey, erkek arkadaşı var, sonra bir haftasonu erkek arkadaşını odaya alıyo, oda boş. Sonra müdür nasıl olduysa o kata giresi geliyo, o kata giriyo sesler geliyo. Gidiyo ikisini yakılıyo yatakta, çocuğu direk okuldan postalıyo. Erol'u da gönderiyolar.¹⁴²

5.11. The Outsiders of the Family: Women

In the education system of Turkey, until 1997, schools were allowed to establish boarding schools for boys and girls. The Hizmet Movement generally had preferred to open schools based on gender segregation. Although some primary schools were gender mixed, most primary schools, secondary schools and high schools affiliated with the Hizmet Movement had just accepted boys or girls. During the 28th February process,

¹⁴¹ Tevfik: Have you heard anything about queers?

Salih: There was a funny story (geyik), happened before us in the dormitory.

Tevfik: What happened in the dormitory?

Salih: Two students were busted while they were in practice. One of them tried to stab the principle. Then one of them was expelled from the school. The other one was sent to another school. It was fun talk.

Tevfik: Who tells the story?

Salih: Guys from upper classes.

Tevfik: Who told the story to upper classes?

Salih: Probably their upper classes. But, our friend checked and found a character like this. There is guy called Erol lived in our school. Maybe, the whole story is not like that I told, but the event happened for sure.

Tevfik: How do they tell the story? In which manner?

Salih. Of course, by making fun of it. High school students are telling the story each other. By laughing. Making fun like this: you look like Erol.

¹⁴² Tevfik: What is Erol story?

Sermet: He was probably gay. I'm telling you what I heard. This story has always been same. He is gay and has a boyfriend. During a weekend, he invites his boyfriend to his room. Then the principle busts them, voices came from Erol's room. The principle sees them in the bed. Erol was immediately expelled.

the National Education Law was modified and gender segregated schools were prohibited in Turkey. Up until to these days, very well established high schools were designed as gender segregated in Turkey such as Galatasaray Lisesi, İstanbul Erkek Lisesi etc.

From 1997, the Hizmet Movement was forced to accept girls to boys' schools and vice versa. During my fieldwork, many students responded to my question about their relationship with women by referring to this change. My interlocutors were generally educated in boys' schools until secondary school. In this picture, the experience can be divided into two main kinds, men born after 1987 were generally educated in gender-mixed schools since the law already passed before they started secondary school. Yet, men born before 1987 were educated in boys' schools until the law change. When the law was changed, their schools were converted into "*ilköğretim*" (primary) schools rather than "college"s.¹⁴³ In this complicated picture, many schools produced solutions against the enforcement of the law change. A school was designed within two interrelated schools. While the college part (which is a boys' school) remained, another "*ilköğretim*" school was established in the same building and under the same name.

In this historically specific time, many boys started to live with girls who were not their relatives. I experienced the former experience as we were educated in gender-mixed schools. From this stage, the Hizmet Movement had two different type of schools, *ilköğretim* schools that are merely gender mixed and colleges with both boys' (or girls') schools with gender mixed schools in the same building. Sermet narrates his experience as follows:

Sermet: Bizim dönem için önemli bir ayırım noktası, malum olduğu üzere biz Anadolu Lisesi sınavına gireceğimiz zaman, 5. sınıftan sonra 28 Şubat'ın ertesinde zorunlu eğitimi 8 yıla çıkardılar ya. Öyle olunca 2 dönem üst üste binmiş oldu, 86'lılar hazırlık okumuş oldular. Biz hazırlık okumamış olduk, aynı sene sınava girmiş olduk Lise Giriş sınavına. Aynı senede işte hep aramızda 86lılar 87liler diye bir ayırım oldu, o da vardı yani.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ College was used for boy or girl high school differentiating them from state schools

¹⁴⁴ There was an important distinction within our term. As you know, 8 year education became compulsory after 28th February process. We didn't have the language

While the encounter between these men with different education experiences created a conflict, another encounter between male and female students was somehow confusing for every student. Until the arrival of new comers to the “family” of male students, contact with girls was generally seen as taboo:

Salih: Bir kere şunun farkında olmak lazım. Kızlarla konuşmak tabu tamam mı, böyle bir tabu var. İşte sonuçta dini hassasiyeti olan insanlar hepsi. Okul öyle insanlardan ziyade. Beklenen bir tavır var.¹⁴⁵

In this regard, Sermet’s personal story with his friends demonstrates the confusion in these days.

Sermet: Hazırlıkta kızlar yoktu. ama orta 1de illköğretim tarafı açıldı. kızlar geldi orta 1de sıkıntı çıkmadı ama orta 2-3te bizim kızlarla gönül ilişkisi başlayınca kesmeler falan yapıyoduk, kızı kesiyoduk filan. Nurdan diye bi kız vardı, bizim bütün kolej tayfası aşığı kız.

Tevfik: Sen aşık mıydın?

Sermet: Herkes aşığı. ona aşık olmayan kolejli olmazdı. onun muhabbeti illa yapılacak. Orta 3’de bir arkadaş gidip helallik istemişti, hakkını helal et ben sana aşığıtm diye.¹⁴⁶

In an extreme case about incoming female students, Salih’s class can be seen as a representative case of confusion with female students:

Salih: Sınıfta kızlar vardı. Var mıydı yok muydu belli değildi abi (gülüyor). İşte arana mesafe koyacaksın. Bizim arkadaşlar da sağolsunlar çok

preparatory year. So, students were born in 1987 coincided with the ones were born in 1986. So, we always had this distinction among us.

¹⁴⁵ Salih: We should realize that talking with girls was a taboo. They are all people with religious sensitivities. Actually, it’s not about people but the school. You are expected to behave in a certain form.

¹⁴⁶ Sermet: There were no any girls in the language preparatory year. They came during the first year of the secondary school. During second and third term, we started to ogle girls. There was a girl called Nurdan, everyone was in love with her.

Tevfik: You?

Sermet: Everyone was in love with her. To be a college student, you should be in love with her. In the third year, a guy apologized her.

abarttılar. İşte dini hassasiyetleri ön planda olan bir okuldasın, bir taraftan karma bir eğitim veriyosun. Bu ciddi bir gerilime sebep oluyo. Konuşmak istiyolar. İnsanlar ya da bilmiyorum istiyolar mı istemiyolar mı. İletişim kurcaksın ama kuramıyosun. Bir gerilim var. Kızlar bundan rahatsız oluyo. 4 kişiler, sadece kimse iletişim kurmuyo. Hatta kızın bir tanesinin bizim arkadaşına gidip benden neden nefret ediyosunuz demesi vardı.¹⁴⁷

Shortly, the male followers of the Hizmet Movement construct their new kinship based on religiosity and the common goal of *ilayi kelimetullah*. In this scheme of kinship, female students are generally seen as outsiders. In the next chapter, this issue will be elaborated with the changes in the Hizmet Movement, during the post-28th February process.

¹⁴⁷ Salih: There were girls in the class. Actually, I don't know whether they were here or not. (laughing) You shouldn't be very close to girls. But my friends exaggerated this issue. You have religious sensibilities and the education at gender mixed classes. This is a serious source of conflict. I don't know if my friends want to talk with them but there is a tension between male and female students. Girls are uncomfortable about this. Even, one of them cam and ask a guy "Why do you hate me?"

CHAPTER 6

NEW MUSLIM MAN

In a broader context, the 28th February process marks the hardest period for political Islam, Islamic communities and Muslims in general as a direct political campaign was directed against them by the military intervention. Although the previous coups in 1960 and 1980 (with the ultimatum of 1971) were suppressing the Islamic communities by consolidating the state authority which is strictly considered as secular and anti-*irtica* (*irtica* refers to what are viewed as religious reactionary movements), the 28th February process was the “post-modern coup” directly acting against political Islam and Islamic communities. In this context, *irtica* has been frequently deployed in political arena by the state institutions, politicians and the military as referring "going back to old dark days". *Mürteci* as designating the person who desires *irtica* was widely used to sketch Muslims in this political climate.

In these days, the country's agenda was invaded by various images of *mürteci* Muslims with headscarves, beards and traditional clothes of Sufis. At this time, the bearded Muslim male with traditional Sufi dress was the stereotypical image which was also generalized for all Muslim men, during the political activities against Islamic communities. In this political conflict, the Hizmet Movement, as one of the biggest movements in terms of amount of followers and the power of networking, was also chosen as a scapegoat to destroy the political and social power of Islamic movements. For months, every single evening, TV news was announcing the arrival of new video recordings by Fethullah Gülen as examples of his hidden agenda of Islamic revolution. Besides this propaganda, Gülen was prosecuted in various court cases and was forced to go into exile in the United States.

After the 28th February process initiated political campaign against Islamic communities, owning a cassette by Fethullah Gülen was enough reason to be prosecuted. Sermet, throughout his narrative, generally refers the hard days of the 28th February process, which he claims changed in his life: Tefvik: Bahsettiğin 28 Şubat süreci nasıldı, sen hatırlıyomusun?

Sermet: Ben hatırlıyorum. Zaten 28 Şubat sürecinde biz Hizmet'teydik.

Bizim evin içi kaset falan doluydu, kaset dediğim video kasetleri.

Tevfik: Hocaefendi'nin kasetleri?

Sermet: Aynen öyle. Biz onları imha etmiştik.¹⁴⁸

One of the immediate memories about the 28th February process is about Sermet's father:

Sermet: Babam namaz kıldığı için fişlendi.

Tevfik: Petrol Ofisi'nde çalışmaya devam ediyoy?

Sermet: Petrol Ofisi'nde. Babama karakoldan yazı geldi, 6 ayda bir imza verceksin diye

Tevfik: Neden?

Sermet: Neden bilinmiyo. Babamın bir arkadaşının söylediğine göre müdür, işte mesai saatleri içerisinde memurluğa sığmicak davranışlarda bulunuyo diyo, namaz kılmasına refer ederekten yazı gidiyo.¹⁴⁹

6.1. New Muslim Codes: The Post -28th February Process

It is important to note the difficulties in the daily lives of Muslims during the 28th February process, especially those affiliated with Islamic communities. Yet post-28th February witnessed the restoration of power in Islamic communities by the change in the government. After the severe economic crisis in 2001, the newly founded Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) was able to come to power with the majority vote. AKP, self-identified as a democratic conservative party, was

¹⁴⁸Tevfik: How was the 28th February process, do you remember?

Sermet: I do remember. We were in the Hizmet. The house was full of cassettes. I mean video cassettes.

Tevfik: Hocaefendi's cassettes?

Sermet: Exactly. We destroyed them.

¹⁴⁹ Sermet: My father was on the blacklist.

Tevfik: Was he working for Petrol Ofisi (in those time, PO was state owned oil company)

Sermet: Yes, for Petrol Ofisi. My father received a document from police station obliging him to sign a document in every 6 month.

Tevfik: Why?

Sermet: We don't know. According to one of fathers friend told us, his manager reported him that he is doing inappropriate things during working hours which is referring to daily prayer.

established by ex-members of the Islamic Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP) which managed to win both national and local municipal elections in 1994 and 1996. After the 28th February ultimatum, the Welfare Party was forced to resign from the coalition government with the right wing party called Right Way Party; subsequently the Supreme Court dissolved the Welfare Party. The reformists within the party chose to set up a new party (AKP), against the conservative wing of the Welfare Party. AKP, differentiating itself from the previous Islamist parties, has won three consecutive national elections by increasing its votes. From the 28th February process to AKP's majority governments, the political climate in Turkey intensely improved for political Islam and Islamic movements in general.

Although claiming AKP's organic ties with Islamic communities is a weak claim, most of these communities are openly supporting the AKP government. After AKP consolidated its political power, as Berna Turam demonstrates in her ethnography, Islamic communities –especially the Hizmet Movement— managed to generate new realms of interaction and negotiation with the secular state.¹⁵⁰ In more local levels, it is very easy to observe that *cemaat* members are also very active members of AKP. From this change in the political agenda, the Hizmet Movement along with other Islamic communities witnessed a restoration of power vis-a-vis political, economic and civil society activities. During the 28th February process, pious Muslims were expelled from state jobs since they practiced daily prayers or wore beards (the headscarf issue is the other part of the story) and Islamic capital owners lost big profits because of the propaganda against more conservative companies linked to Islamic communities. However, in the following years, new political power transformed the political climate in favor of Islamic communities by loosening state surveillance of these communities.

Besides the changes in macro political climate, Muslim subjectivities were reshaped with the effects of the 28th February process. During my fieldwork, as a witness of the process, I encountered many narratives of the 28th February process and its drastic impact on Muslims' daily lives. In the narratives of these people, the period is generally remembered in terms of political pressure, while it is also seen as a breaking point. As I showed in the previous chapter, the changes in the educational system effected the

¹⁵⁰ Turam, B. (2007), *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement*, Stanford California: Stanford University Pres, p.13.

interlocutors' daily lives the most . Moreover, changes in the political climate and the inner changes in the discourses of Islamic communities paved way to a new Muslim male identity in Turkey. While Muslim and pious masculinities were under the military gaze during the 28th February process, Islamic communities and Muslims restored their power with new strategies in a new era. In this regard, the micro-level effects of these changes can be observed through the interlocutors' narratives.

As one of the significant changes, Islamic communities, particularly the Hizmet Movement, created new realms of economic and political activity in the post- 28th February process. For instance, the international network of educational institutions is the most significant power source for *cemaat* which has no parallel in Turkey. By also promoting international trade by discursively considering trade as the Prophet's occupation, traders within the *cemaat* established partnerships with the guidance of local *abis*. In other words, traders, maintaining the material sources of *cemaat*, created new economic activities by rendering the support of the *cemaat* as offering local guidance, translation and gathering trade counterparts in many different countries.

In these newly generated spheres, followers enjoyed new opportunities to gain upper mobility in class terms. My interlocutors, as generally coming from low and middle class families, are stark examples of this class shift. Today, many are graduate students in various universities from Princeton University to Boğaziçi and Sabancı University or they work for multinational companies. As they indicated in their narratives, the *cemaat* utilized its education and network to achieve this class change. For example, Salih very well demonstrates the leverage sustained by new social economic opportunities for the followers. Salih appreciates several *abis* in his district:

Salih: Meslek lisesinden gelen adamlar bunlar. Bu adamların Hizmet vesilesiyle özellikle ne kadar geniş bir dünya görüşü kazanabildiğini gördüm. Bu adam normalde önünde Hizmet olmadığını varsayalım hayatında, çok sınırlı bir yolu olan insanlar. Nedir o yol ? Teknik eğitim fakültesinden öğretmen sıfatıyla mezun olacak, kadro bulamıyacak, gitcek saniyede çalışacak. Aslında çok kötü bir kader katsayı meselesinden kaynaklanan bir mesele. Bu adamlar inanılmaz işler yaptıklarını gördüm Hizmet içerisinde. Büyük organizasyonların altında, yüzlerce öğrencinin sorumluluğunu almış, başkası başka bişey yapıyo. Dünyaya böyle, bu çok

subjektif ama, bence birçok kendini entellektüel addeden insandan daha ayakları yere basan bir pencereden bakıyo.¹⁵¹

As a recurring theme in the narratives, Mustafa describes the class shift, and its practical dimensions:

Mustafa: Alternatif yükselme şeyi olmuş. Yani biz de eğitim öyle görülür ya klasik ünive git toplumsal statün artsın denir ya. biraz öyle bir yol olmuş, alternatif gayri resmî. Bu insanlar kendilerini geliştirmişler önemli vasıflar kazanmışlar o yol meselesiyle.

Tevfik: Ne gibi?

Mustafa: Organizasyon kabiliyeti, fedekarlık, ciddiyet.

Tevfik: Sadece manevi şeyler mi ?

Mustafa: Bunlar manevi değil dünyevi yetenekler tamamen. Tamamiyle dünyevi yetenekler şu bahsettiklerim. Manevi kısmını zaten ben ölçemem.

Tevfik: Peki mesela sosyal statü yükselmesinden bahsettin, o nasıl bişey?

Mustafa: Şöyle bir gerçek var, bu adamlar kitabi ilim olarak değil de hayat pratiklerine ilim olarak ilim sahibi oluyolar, bu tecrübelerden geçtikten sonra. İster istemez saygı duyulan insanlar haline geliyor. Diyorum ya ben hayranlık duyuyorum biçoğuna. Sadece benim duyduğum hayranlık değil, adam esnaflarla muhattap oluyo, esnaflar da ona saygı duyuyor. Esnaf dediğin adam senede trilyon kazanan adamlardan bahsediyoruz. bu adamlar bu saygıyı sonuna kadar hak ediyolar.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Salih: They are graduated from ordinary state high schools. I witnessed that these men obtained a world vision with Hizmet. If they were not encountered with Hizmet, they would have a very limited way in their lives. What is this way? Probably, they wouldn't find any job in state schools and find jobs in little companies. I saw them as achieving great things in Hizmet. Under huge organizations, they are carrying many students' responsibility. Maybe it is too subjective to say that, they are more down to earth than many intellectuals.

¹⁵² Mustafa: Hizmet is an alternative way to upgrade. It's like education. As it is always said, go to university and upgrade your social status. Hizmet is very similar way like education, alternative and unofficial one. These people are progressed with new abilities, in this way.

Tevfik: For instance?

Mustafa: Organizational skills, altruism, sobriety.

Tevfik: Are these spiritual features?

Mustafa: These are not spiritual, totally secular skills. I cannot measure its spiritual dimension.

Tevfik: How about climbing up to upper social status, that you've mentioned before?

Mustafa: There is a fact that these men don't have written knowledge (*ilim*) but practical knowledge after their experiences in the Hizmet. These people are inevitably respected. It's not only my respect, but *esnaf* (traders, guilds, industrialist in the movement) *abis* are also respecting them. These people are earning millions of liras in a single year.

6.2. Reconfiguration of Gender Codes

In addition to the shift in economic and social classes, gender codes have been under the impact of broader changes in the post-28th February process. In the last thirty years, the Hizmet Movement expanded globally by establishing schools, charities and think-tanks. Throughout these years, followers were educated at prestigious institutions in Turkey, Europe and the United States. The capital accumulation rendering new modalities of economic and social life also challenged the gender codes which existed in the Hizmet Movement. The 28th February process in particular generated new eclectic codes of masculinity by mobilizing the discursive openness of *cemaat*.

For instance, the government established after the 28th February ultimatum decided to oblige every secondary school student to receive sexuality education. In those years, professional trainers on sexuality education were visiting every single school to give lectures. For religiously oriented schools, these lectures were confusing for both the administrators and the students. Sermet immediately remembered this lecture when I asked questions about sexuality:

Sermet: Orta sonda, 28 şubat sürecinde cinsel eğitim zorunlu hale gelmişti ya, tüm kolejlileri topladılar, bir grup erkek. Bi tane kadın çıkardılar. O kadını da özellikle mi seçtiler, boyu bize yakın ve çok da genç gösteriyodu, güzeldi. Giderken hocalar aşağılayıp gönderdiler

Tevfik: Nasıl?

Sermet: Siz gidiyorsunuz ama aşağılık bişi

Tevfik: Ama göndermek zorundalar?

Sermet: Göndermek zorundalar

Tevfik: Sizce nasıldı?

Sermet: Bizce güzel. Kadın anlattı filan işte. Kadın cinsel yollarını anlattı, erkeği anlattı. Kadın anlatıyo, sonra işte bize şey sordu. Mastürbasyon yapmak iyi midir diye sordu. Bi tanesi kalktı caiz değil dedi. Kadın yok rahatlamamız lazım dedi.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Sermet: In the 28th February process, sexual education became obligatory. One day, they gathered all men, and then a woman stood up. They probably chose this woman intentionally. She was looking very young and beautiful. Our teachers sent us by scorning.

Tevfik: How?

Sermet: They said you are going to this lecture but this is wicked.

Tevfik: But they are obliged to send, aren't they?

Sermet: Yes, they have to send us.

With drastic changes in macro political conditions, the direct effects on inter-gender relations were also deconstructed . Women, who were the outsiders of the male family, started to become the part of the kinship system after 28th February. Sermet dedicated a long time to narrate the confusing experiences of gender-mixed schools, initiated during the 28th February process. Sermet was educated in a boys' school and afterwards he came to a gender-mixed high school:

Sermet: Hepsi 28 Şubat sürecinden sonra. Kolej'in en başarısız dönemlerinden birisi, Çünkü Kolej 28 Şubat sürecinden sonraki döneme bizimle sisteme adapte oldu. Önceden kız yok ortamda, ve kız olmaması çok önemli bişey lise öğrencisi için. Bir çocuk oturup dersini düşünüyö ama öbür çocuk oturup dersin yerine kız düşünüyö. Motivasyonu bozuluyö yani. Kolej bunu ayarlayamadı bizim dönemde. Dengesini sağlayamadı yani. Bizim döneme bakarak daha iyi strateji yarattı. Tekrar da eski başarılar geliyor artık.

Tevfik: Neydi eksiklikler?

Sermet: Mesela bizim erkek hocalar kızlarla bağlantı kurmayı bilmiyolardı, kadın hocalarda erkek öğrencilerle bağlantı kurmayı bilmiyolardı.¹⁵⁴

As Sermet's story indicates, administrators, teachers and students were confused with new kinds of relationships which were very unfamiliar to everyone. However, the respondents generally refer to more egalitarian and tolerant relationships between men and women after the 28th February process. Osman's recent story may reflect the new openness about man-woman relationships in the community:

Tevfik: How was it for you and your friends?

Sermet: It was nice for us. She lectured us, showed man and women genitals. Then she asked a question: Is masturbating a good thing? One of us replied that masturbation is not appropriate (caiz) in Islam. She said: No, you need to relax.

¹⁵⁴ Sermet: These are all happened after the 28th February process. It was one of the worst periods of the school. Our school adapted after 28th February process with our term. Before that, there weren't any girls at the school, and it was very important for a high school boy. He was just thinking about his lessons, not about girls. Our school couldn't find a balance in this issue. But, they created a better strategy by analysis of this period. They are achieving same success, now.

Tevfik: What were their inadequate points?

Sermet: For instance, male teachers didn't know how to communicate with female students. Women teachers didn't know how to communicate with male students, too.

Tevfik: Peki bu kadın erkek ilişkilerinde, evlilik ilişkilerinde Hocaefendi ne diyor, sen bunu nasıl hayata geçiriyosun?

Osman: Benim belli bi bildiğim yok, belli bi distinction yok. Şunu konuşmayın şunu yapmayın falan. Ee tabi gereğinden fazla samimi olmayın diyo. Ama Hocaefendi de gidiyo Nuriye Akman'la röportaj ayarlıyo, yani öyle bi kesinlikle görüşmeme gibi bir durum yok

Tevfik: Peki abiler?

Osman: Ben sana bişi söliim. Ben geçen gün Fas'a gittim, abinin birisi gitti kızlara sohbet yaptı mesela. Orda kızlara sohbet yapıcak birisi yok anlatabiliyo muyum? Yani olay ne biliyomusun, mümkün oldukça uzak dur, belirli bir samimiyeti geçme yani. Ama mesela yapman gerekiyorsa yapacaksın. Mesela o adamın orda sohbet vermesi, onlara kimse yok sohbet vercek, gündemi aktaracak kimse yok. Biri yapıcaktı o yaptı, biri durumu anlatıcaktı o anlattı.¹⁵⁵

Shortly, although gender segregation resembles one of the main tenets of Muslim culture, macro political changes influenced and transformed the daily and communal lives of pious followers of the Hizmet Movement. Thus, intense gender segregation within the *cemaat* has transformed into a more tolerated understanding of inter-gender relationships. In this transformation, the Hizmet Movement enabled its strategies to reach different men with different backgrounds. Throughout years, the Hizmet Movement has deployed a Turkish nationalist language articulated with Islamic discourses. In this regard, Rasim's personal history may lead us to follow how the Hizmet Movement has generated different subjectivities.

6.3 The Book of Maleness

Rasim is one of the most interesting interlocutors as he is very talented about narrating stories. He is from a little town of Denizli, with previous experiences among Turkish

¹⁵⁵ Tevfik: What do Hocaefendi say about man-woman relations and marriage? How do you realize these advices in your life?

Osman: I don't know anything special. There is no a certain distinction like don't talk with women. Of course, he asks not to be too intimate. But he gives interview to Nuriye Akman (female journalist). There is no such a thing that you should never meet with a woman.

Tevfik: How about *abis*?

Osman: I'm gonna tell you a story. I've recently gone to Morocco. An *abi* delivered preaching during a *sohbet* meeting to the female followers in Morocco. There was no woman can deliver preaching in *cemaat* in Morocco. You shouldn't cross a certain level of intimacy. If you need to deliver preaching, you should do it.

nationalist groups –*ülküçüler*—associated with the Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP). Today he can be considered a sympathizer who frequently participates in *sohbet* gatherings.

During the interview, Rasim generally referred to his *ülküçü* days and the personal transformation enabled by his encounter with the Hizmet Movement. According to Rasim, *ülküçü* principles rendered respect for religion which enabled him to attend the meetings of Islamic communities:

Rasim: İşte o zamanlarda birçok topluluğa girdim. O zaman ülküçüydüm. O zamanda ilk dine bakış açım klasik milliyetçi ülküçü gençlik dine bakışı.

Tevfik: Ne o klasik bakış?

Rasim: Klasik bakış şudur, dine acayip saygın vardır ama haytasındır biraz da, delikanlısındır. Çok namaz kılmazsın ama cumaları da ihmal etmezsin.¹⁵⁶

While Rasim is remembering his *ülküçü* days, he mentions his special “The Book of Manhood”. The phrase, the book of manhood, is widely used among men to signify certain codes of manhood which are generally associated with machismo. Rasim explains the content of his book:

Rasim: Bir erkeklik kitabı vardı, erkek adam bunu yapmaz diyen. Bu senin erkeklik kitabın, bunun dışına çıkarsan erkek değildin.

Tevfik: Neydi onlar hatırlıyor musun?

Rasim: Ya en basitinden hani puzmazsın. Birisi sana bir şey söylüyorsa hakkını şiddet kullanarak kollarsın. Bense şiddet hiçbir zaman taraftarı olmadı. ama o zamanlar hani şiddet kullandım açıkçası.¹⁵⁷

Rasim, through the interview, generally refers to his adherence to Turkish language education in *cemaat* supported schools in the world and Turkish Language Olympics,

¹⁵⁶ Rasim: During those years, I joined many different communities. I was a nationalist (ülküçü). My point of view about the religion was a classical nationalist one.

Tevfik: What is the classical nationalist outlook?

Rasim: You respect the religion but you are naughty. You don’t pray daily but you don’t ignore Friday prayer.

¹⁵⁷ Rasim: There was a “book of manhood”, saying what a man cannot to do. That’s your book of man; if you don’t follow this book, you are not a man.

Tevfik: Do you remember what it was saying?

Rasim: For instance, you don’t shrink from anyone. You vindicate yourself by using physical violence. I’ve never supported it, but I used violence in those days.

as an organization supporting the widespread usage of Turkish language.¹⁵⁸ In other words, Turkish nationalist tendencies of the Hizmet Movement enable Rasim to support the *cemaat* by also mobilizing his nationalist motives. However, through his experience in *cemaat* supported schools, Rasim's book of man has been modified through his experiences within the *cemaat*:

Rasim: Cemaatin verdiđi yeni kitap var, benim kitabımda řu var: benim en temel řeylerimden birisi, insanlarla iyi geinmek var ama hakikati sevenlerle, sorunlarını ozmek var. ne kadar deđiřmiř bak nceki erkeklik řeyiyle, ok farkı var. Ondan sonra okumak var, ğrenmek var, testlerde ok yksek net yapmak var.¹⁵⁹

Shortly, Rasim, with his Turkish nationalist motivations, finds a space by mobilizing nationalist discourses of the Hizmet Movement. Yet, his codes of manhood have been transformed during his experiences within *cemaat*, by softening violent tendencies into moral codes. While the Hizmet Movement mobilized the nationalist tendencies to attract the Turkish majority, the social organization made it possible to reach millions of Muslim in Turkey and all over the world. In my opinion, the Hizmet Movement has become able to attract different subjectivities by constituting a blurry border between being an insider and an outsider.

6.4 The Borders of the Community: Insider vs. Outsider

Personally, I have always questioned the border between insider and outsider within the Hizmet Movement. I cannot claim an intimate relationship with the Movement as an insider, yet my educational background and my personal relationships with some followers also shows that I'm not an outsider either. After my fieldwork, I realized that focusing on the boundary between inside and outside was a very simplistic and one-dimensional explanation for my preliminary questions on the issue. Rather, the blurry

¹⁵⁸ For the last 10 years, Turkish Olympics organizes competitions related to Turkish language, by gathering non-Turkish students from the *cemaat* supported schools form all over the world.

¹⁵⁹ Rasim: There is a new book of man given by *cemaat*. It says you should get along with other people who love the *hakikat*. You should solve their problems. Look, it changed a lot from the previous book of man. Then, it says you should get education, you should learn, you should get high scores from exams.

line between inside and outside is an outcome of the specific organizational structure of the Movement.

The Hizmet Movement, in its claims of tolerance and dialogue envisions the multidimensional structuring which consists of different circles. In this scheme, individuals affiliated with the community are classified in three major categories. By constructing these interrelated categories, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi points this multidimensional structure:

Bu kapıdan girenleri, aler-re'si vel'-ayn kabûl ediyorum. Onlar da üç tarzda olur: **Ya dost olur, ya kardeş olur, ya talebe olur.**

Dostun hassası ve şartı budur ki: Kat'iyyen, Sözlere ve envâr-ı Kur'âniyeye dâir olan hizmetimize ciddî taraftar olsun; ve haksızlığa ve bid'alara ve dalâlete kalben taraftar olmasın, kendine de istifadeye çalışsın.

Kardeşin hassası ve şartı şudur ki: Hakîki olarak Sözlere'nin neşrine ciddî çalışmakla beraber, beş farz namazını eda etmek, yedi kebâiri işlememektir.

Talebeliğin hâssası ve şartı şudur ki: Sözlere'yi kendi malı ve te'lifi gibi hissedip sâhib çıksın ve en mühim vazife-i hayatiyesini, onun neşir ve hizmeti bilsin.

İşte şu üç tabaka benim üç şahsiyetimle alâkadardır. Dost, benim şahsî ve zâtî şahsiyetimle münâsebetdar olur. Kardeş, abdiyetim ve ubûdiyet noktasındaki şahsiyetimle alâkadar olur. Talebe ise, Kur'ân-ı Hakîm'in dellâli cihetinde ve hocalık vazifesindeki şahsiyetimle münâsebetdardır.¹⁶⁰

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¹⁶⁰ They too are of three sorts: they are either friends, or brothers, or students. The characteristics and conditions of friends are these: Definitely they have to earnestly support our work and service connected with the Words and the lights of the Qur'an.

They should not support in heartfelt fashion injustice, innovations, or misguidance, nor try to profit by them.

The characteristics and conditions of brothers are these: Together with truly and earnestly working to disseminate the Words, they are to perform the five obligatory prayers and not to commit the seven grievous sins.

The characteristics and conditions of students are these: To feel as though the Words are their own property written by themselves, and to know their vital duty, their life's work, to be the service and dissemination of them.

These three levels are connected with my three personalities. A friend is connected with my individual and essential personality. A brother is connected with my personality

The group defined as friends (*dost*) tend to be more inclusive with not codifying strict conditions for the people interested in *cemaat*. In my opinion, The Hizmet Movement utilizes a similar organizational structure to attract different people with different backgrounds, political motivations, even with different faith and religions. In this regard, my interlocutors' multiple backgrounds, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation may be given as an example of how The Hizmet Movement is able to expand its *dost* group:

Salih: Ya söz konusu olan Hizmet'ken, içerde olmak, dışarda olmak çok sınırlıları belli bir ayırım değil. Hizmet biliyorsun sınırlarını olabildiğince esnetme yanlısı bir dini cemaat. Öyle olunca beş vakit namaz kılan adamın, gidip gelen adama sen Hizmet'tensin diyosun, O da kendisine diyo, o adam dedikten sonra, senin bişey demene gerek kalmıyo. Onun bir ölçütü yok. Ama şu var şakirt denen bir kavram var, dost denen bir kavram var. Hüsn-ü zan edip herkes içerde diyoz ama bunun Bediüzzaman tarafından formülasyonu var.¹⁶²

By loosening the border between inside and outside, the Hizmet Movement creates three interrelated circles to classify its followers. This kind of structuring enables different followers with distinct backgrounds to attend the Hizmet Movement activities. On the other hand, the Hizmet Movement welcomes both Turkish nationalist and Kurdish individuals by utilizing different discursive frames in different geographical and ethnic contexts. In a broader project, further research on Kurdish individuals acting in the Hizmet Movement may complete the whole picture of new Muslim male subjectivities.

which springs from my worship and being Almighty God's bondsman. And a student is connected with my personality which has the duties of herald of the All-Wise Qur'an and teacher.

<http://www.nur.gen.tr/tr.html#leftmenu=Risale&maincontent=Risale&islem=read&KitapId=16&BolumId=5056&KitapAd=Mektubat&Page=345> (Retrieved on 15.04.2011)

¹⁶¹ Nursi, S. (1995), *Mektubat: 26. söz, 10. Mesele*, İstanbul: Envar Neşriyat, p.344-345.

¹⁶² Salih: When we talk about the Hizmet, the border between inside and outside is not certain. As you may know, Hizmet tends to loosen the borders. In this case, if someone is praying daily and is attending activities, he is called as insider by himself and *cemaat*. But, there are concepts of student (*şakirt*) and friend (*dost*) codified by Bediüzzaman.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In Turkey, the Hizmet Movement constitutes the largest Islamic community with millions of followers and an intense network all over the world. By establishing schools, dormitories, *dershanes* (university exam preparatory courses), charities and think-tanks, the followers of the Hizmet Movement aim to introduce the Islamic message to everyone, codified as *ilayi kelimetullah*. In order to realize this duty, Fethullah Gülen, named as the head of the Hizmet Movement, calls for a new Golden Generation which is following the steps of the first generation of Muslims and the Ottoman warriors.

In this discursive frame, Fethullah Gülen, known as *Hocaefendi* (respected scholar), has been defined as the contemporary revivalist of Islam. In an intense hierarchy among the male followers of the Hizmet Movement, *Hocaefendi* is also codified as the ideal Muslim man. Although Fethullah Gülen follows the Sunni ideals, he displays particular features such as preferring a single life. Moreover, Fethullah Gülen deconstructs the stereotypical Muslim identity defined with machismo by sketching an alternative Muslim man who is frequently weeping.

By taking *Hocaefendi* as an exemplar, the followers establish a form of hierarchy by designating elder followers as *abis* (singular *abi*) who are responsible for guiding students in both religious and secular issues. In this hierarchical system, male students from their childhood to university years are trained by *abis* in different educational institutions such as schools and dormitories supported by the Hizmet Movement. While Fethullah Gülen resembles the fantasized male model, the *abi* system creates a more realized intergenerational relationship between men. In the very nature of this relationship, elder men convey the masculinity codes, which are generally shaped by the Sunni ideals, into new generations.

In this intergenerational relationship, conflict between disciples and *abis* frequently emerge in followers' daily lives. In some cases, resistance strategies to subvert the authority of *abi* are always apparent in the very nature of these relationships. More significantly, the Hizmet Movement renders a specific way of morality which can be

analyzed as *habitus* based on religiosity performed by the followers. In this analytical framework, agency, by referring to the performances of piety, is defined through docility rather than resistance against power mechanisms. In this framework, agency is utilized not only as the capacity for progressive change but also, as the capacity to endure, suffer and persist. By focusing on individual and communal reading sessions organized by the local groups of the Hizmet Movement, specific ways are analyzed in which followers perform a certain number of operations on thoughts, body, conduct and ways of being, in order to attain a certain kind of state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.

Especially focusing on the hierarchical scheme which is constructing a new form of kinship substituting their families with a new kinship of male followers, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature on Islamic communities. By taking as a model the arguments of Saba Mahmood, this work attempts to elaborate on the generational aspect of masculinity codes. Complementing Saba Mahmood's ethnography on pious women in Egypt, my inquiry focuses on masculinity codes, narratives and practices to inform more broader debates on gender and agency.

This thesis also aims to contribute to the prevailing debate on secularism and Islam.. For the last ten years in particular, the vibrant political rivalry between the secular elite and the emerging political power of the Hizmet Movement has dominated the daily agenda of Turkey. As a new phase of the historical rivalry between the secular elite and Islamic communities which survived underground until the last fifty years, the Hizmet Movement has become able to dominate the political sphere by acquiring huge capital and by establishing the hundreds of educational institutions both in Turkey and globally. In this process, Turkey has undergone a huge transformation from a strictly secular state into a more conservative one shaped by Islamic communities. Thus, observing the Hizmet Movement can significantly contribute to our understanding of the new Turkey and the new Muslim man, in particular.

The 28th February process marked a breaking point by its intense effects on Islamic communities and Muslim's daily lives after the military ultimatum against the Islamic Welfare Party. The five years after the ultimatum was characterized by drastic changes in both the macro political climate and in Muslims' daily lives; especially those

affiliated with Islamic communities. By the political victory of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), the political climate shifted in favor of the Islamic communities. By creating new economic opportunities, the Hizmet Movement has enabled its followers to Gain upward mobility, resulting in the emergence of a new Muslim middle class.

Moreover, with the changes in the macro-political arena, masculinity codes have been transformed within the Hizmet Movement. As a recurring theme in my interviewees' narratives, the drastic changes in the macro-political arena have affected the daily lives of Muslim individuals and thus gender codes. The legal changes in education by forbidding single sex schools which are generally preferred by Islamic communities and the compulsory sexual education can be given as examples of the macro political changes after the 28th February process. In these years, the followers of the Hizmet Movement witnessed the new forms of masculinity codes which can be considered as more tolerant to the relationship between men and women followers. Although many respondents consider this transformation period as confusing or traumatic, their narratives normalize current new gender codes as more suitable to the contemporary world.

Besides the massive change in socio-political spheres, the Hizmet Movement was able to create new discursive frames to attract new followers in different geographies of Turkey. Individuals with nationalist backgrounds were particularly attracted to the Hizmet Movement. Further research is needed on the narratives and practices of Kurdish subjectivities understand how the Hizmet Movement creates new discourses in different contexts to attract different experiences of manhood.

This thesis historicizes the masculinity codes within a specific Islamic community within the framework of contemporary academic debates on agency and Muslim subjectivities. In a broader sense, I have tried to take a snapshot of new emerging Muslim identities which historically evolved in a rivalry between secular elites of the state and Islamic communities which survived through the last century. In my personal opinion, Turkey is witnessing a new phase of the secular-Muslim debate as Muslim individuals become the active agents of social and political transformation. While these individuals, who are generally participating in Islamic movements, have managed to

dominate the political sphere and civil society, they have also evolved new subjectivities. In this regard, this thesis attempts to observe this transformation by focusing on masculinity codes in the narratives and practices of Muslim men affiliated with the biggest Islamic community of Turkey.

By using these themes, this thesis aimed to examine how a specific Islamic organization called the Hizmet Movement constructs the codes of masculinities with particular features. In addition to the discourse analysis of Fethullah Gülen's writings and sermons, his position of a male leader was rethought in this thesis. Another special feature of the community as structuring the movement with the *abi* system which designates an elder guider for the followers was examined to show how masculinity codes are conveyed through generations. The huge network of the Hizmet Movement resulted in a new form of kinship substituting for the families of the followers. A new model of Muslim man crystallized after the 28th February process. This study also tried to observe how individuals operate/act within a well-organized religious community by resisting / negotiating / modifying hegemonic discourses about masculinities by also revealing the gender regime constructed by the Hizmet Movement in a specific historical context.

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