

**REFLECTIONS IN THE SILVER MIRROR:
(RE)CONSTRUCTING THE CITY AND MORALITY IN MUŞ**

by

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Submitted to the Institute of Social Sciences in partial
fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Sabancı University

June 2016

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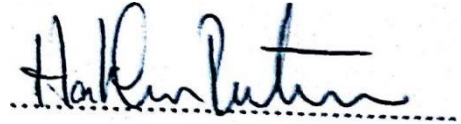
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Date of the Approval

28.06.2016



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ABSTRACT

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ATAK AYAZ

MA Thesis, 2016

Thesis Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Parla

Keywords: *helalleşmek*, *moral economies*, *urban transformation*, *TOKİ*, *Muş*

In 2010, as the result of the collaboration between the municipality of Muş—a city in Eastern Anatolia—and the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ), an urban transformation project started in the city’s historical neighborhood, *Kale Mahallesi*. This thesis examines the function of urban transformation, at large, and the role of the current project, in particular, in shaping moral economies, hegemonic structures, the relationship between memory and materiality, and the project’s continuity with the modernization narrative that developed in tandem with the foundation of the Republic of Turkey.

Utilizing ethnographic findings collected through semi-structured, in-depth oral history interviews and participant observation, this thesis probes the following questions: How does urbanization in the city become realized in harmony with the modernization narrative and identity politics of the Turkish Republic? In what ways is hegemony exercised in the process of urban transformation? How does the loss of historical buildings in the neighborhood affect memory and what kinds of roles do materialities play to this effect? Who defines ownership ‘in the field’ when this concept is complicated by a moral economy of redemption and *helalleşmek*, which can be roughly explained as settling material and nonmaterial accounts in the eyes of Allah? In what ways do *helalleşmek* and ownership pass intergenerationally, as in the case of the silver mirror, complicating the notions of ‘heritage’ and ‘capital’ when we consider what the term ‘ownership’ encompasses? Finally, I emphasize the significance of underscoring a continuum in the politics implemented by the Republic of Turkey since its foundation, in addition to the significance for my interlocutors in deploying moral economies when personal, ethnic and national histories intersect and clash, as in the case of Muş.

ÖZET

GÜMÜŞ AYNADAKİ YANSIMA: ŞEHİRİ VE MORALİTEYİ MUŞ'TA (YENİDEN) İNŞA ETMEK

ATAK AYAZ

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2016

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Ayşe Parla

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Helalleşmek, moral ekonomiler, kentsel dönüşüm, TOKİ, Muş*

2010 senesinde, Muş belediyesi ve Türkiye Toplu Konut İdaresi'nin (TOKİ) ortaklığı sonucu şehrin tarihi mahallesinde, Kale Mahallesi, bir kentsel dönüşüm projesi başladı. Bu tez genelde kentsel dönüşümün işlevini, özelde ise mevcut projenin moral ekonomileri, hegemonik yapıları, hafıza ve materyalite arasındaki ilişkileri ve projenin Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşuyla geliştirilen modernleşme anlatısının sürekliliğini şekillendirmekteki etkilerini inceler.

Yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler ve katılımcı gözlem aracılığıyla toplanan etnografik bulgular ışığında bu tez, şu soruları irdelemektedir: Şehirdeki kentleşme, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin modernleşme anlatısı ve kimlik politikalarıyla uyum içinde ne şekilde gerçekleştirildi? Kentsel dönüşüm sırasında hegemonya hangi yollarla yürütüldü? Mahalledeki tarihi binalar hafızayı ne şekilde etkiledi ve materyalitelere bu etkide ne tür roller üstlendi? Özellikle, mülkiyet kavramı kefaretin moral ekonomisi ve helalleşmekle daha karmaşık bir hale geldiğinde, mülkiyeti 'sahada' kim tanımlar?

'Mülkiyet' kavramının kapsadıklarını ele aldığımızda, 'miras' ve 'sermaye' kavramlarını çetrefilli hale getiren gümüş ayna örneği gibi durumlarda, helalleşmek ve mülkiyet hangi yollarla kuşaklararası geçiş yapar? Son olarak, Muş örneğinde olduğu gibi kişisel, etnik ve ulusal tarihlerin kesiştiği ve çatıştığı zamanlarda görüşmecilerim için moral ekonomileri kullanmanın önemine ek olarak, kuruluşundan beri Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tarafından uygulanan politikaların sürekliliğinin altını çizmenin önemine vurgu yapıyorum.

DEDICATION

To Stefan Efendi and his wife with gratitude,
my great grandmother's neighbors,
for saving her and my grandmother's lives.



Whose names were told for the first time
when I questioned my family history
after hearing the story of Bedros Efendi and his silver mirror.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people without whom this thesis might not have been written and to whom I am greatly indebted. You start reading the outcome of their immense contributions.

I want to start with thanking my thesis supervisor Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Parla not just for being supportive from the very beginning of this thesis journey, but for lifting my mood thanks to her faith in my subject and my findings when my enthusiasm was on the verge of being lost. In this journey, she played the role not only as the expert of her field, but as a mentor whose ideas and advice will always stay with me.

Prof. Leyla Neyzi has been very influential for me in this study with the courses she taught and with her constant guidance. Beyond this, I feel indebted to her as she introduced me to oral history and memory studies, which forms the backbone of this study. I believe what I learned from Prof. Neyzi will always be guiding my academic life.

It was a pure luck that our routes with Asst. Prof. Hakem Al-Rustom crossed. I am so grateful that it happened and he accepted to be a part of my thesis committee. Without his constructive comments, guidance in the writing process, and friendship, this thesis would be lacking in many more points.

I thank all the members of “Speaking to One Another” project and DVV International for introducing me to Muş and letting me use photos taken in 2011.

Over my visits to Muş, quite valuable friendships blossomed that I am sure will last forever. I will start with my hosts Fikret and Ahmet. They did not only open their doors to me but shared their joys, disappointments, enthusiasm, experiences, ideas, warm feelings and most importantly their çay, with me. I will always remember the conversations we had in the balcony over pots of çay. Murat, Ömer and Sümeyye played a crucial role in meeting new people, exploring Muş and feeding my study with fruitful conversations. I am thankful to Baran for letting me use photos from his uncle Mehmet Bülent Bayrak’s (RIP) personal photography archives. However, if Necmiye, my new sister in Muş, did not help me as much as she did, the field work period I spent in Muş would be dull, the ethnographic findings would not be rich and Muş would not be a city that I always miss.

After finishing my fieldwork, the thesis writing process was very draining. I feel indebted to Deanna for being my editor, surrogate sister, co-teacher, neighbor and fellow sufferer

☺; Sona, who seconded as my conference agent ☺; Aslı for listening to my conspiracy theories while I was merging sentences from different interviews together and offering coffee to calm me down when I was walking nervously in the house like Sherlock Holmes; Lara for listening to my overwhelming thesis plans patiently; Çiçek for her support and help in the writing process; Aida and Stefan for doing the final reading of my chapters, and for their constructive comments and encouragement; Murat for helping in translating quotations; all members of my cohort in Cultural Studies Program for being always supportive and ready to listen; Asena for taking more responsibilities in the exhausting translation project we work together, so that I had some time to work on my thesis corrections; Eli for many pasta dinners and Sargis for his unwavering friendship; Çağrı for always and ever being “the” flat mate... always there when he’s needed, ever-meddling, ever-cooking, ever-conjuring, ever- brother. Friends, you mean the world to me and I am thankful to have you in my life!

I thank my brother and sister-in-law, Atıl and Özge, for contributing to my student budget by bringing rakı whenever they visited me, and their super intelligent dog, my nephew, Ares, for sitting and listening to my thesis ☺.

Thanks to all my interlocutors for sharing their stories with me, leaving indelible marks in my memory and shaping this research. Last but not least, I feel deeply indebted to my mother and father, Ayla and Ahmet, for supporting all my decisions and for always and unconditionally being there for me.

I would not have made it without your encouragement and support. I thank you all!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Statement

“Within the scope of the protocol concluded between TOKI (Housing Development Organization) and Muş - a city in Eastern Anatolia- Municipality on 28.07.2010, “A project consisting of 730 apartments, 1 mosque and 115 Commercial Units” shall be built in Muş, Muş central district and Kale neighborhood. The construction will take place on an EIA approved area of 106.446,864 m²” is written in the information file of the urban transformation project in Muş. Although the process started in 2010, I learned the planned changes in October 2011, when I went to Muş within the framework of a local history project called “Speaking to One Another.” The local history project, primarily focused on oral history, photography and performance, had the aim of contributing to the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation process, while conducting a local history study about Muş with the help of local people currently living in Muş and people from Armenia whose parents had lived in Muş. The first phase of the project started in 2009 with a youth camp on the methodology of oral history for students from Turkey and Armenia. Then in 2010 a second joint camp was held in Turkey to teach participants how to develop and implement small-scale student projects of their own in teams. As the result of the first phase of the project a book called *Speaking to one Another: Personal Memories of the Past in Armenia and Turkey* was published. However, I participated the second phase of the project which

started in Muş in October 2011 with another youth camp on oral history, photography and performace. We stayed in Muş for about fifteen days and took photos of the neighborhood, interviewed with local people. Then in April 2012, we all met in Armenia to talk to people whose (grand)parents are from Muş. Being able to hear narratives on Muş from both sides enabled us to have a more comprehensive picture of the life before 1915, reasons that prepared atrocities and how they started.

The project continued until to 2013; it is ended with a documentary “Beginnings,” photo exhibitions and a publication of a book called *Moush, sweet Moush - Mapping Memories from Armenia and Turkey* (Kharatyan et al., 2013) in which I have a photo stories on ruins.

Though the first turning point is participating “Speaking to One Another,” the second one is the encounter I had with Sabri, owner of the silver mirror that gives its name to this thesis. It was the second day of the project, we were all walking in the historical neighborhood with our photo cameras and a huge camera of the documentary crew. Being a crowded group, having cameras and speaking English among each other made us “quite” visible. Other group members were taking photos of buildings and talking to local people. I decided to leave the group behind and enter the garden of the house that we were standing in front of it. Sabri was looking out the window when I asked for permission to enter his garden. While I was taking some photos of the view of his garden, he came down with glasses of tea. After introducing myself, explaining what we are doing in project and telling him that we are a group of students from Armenia and Turkey working on the local history of the city, though I do not remember in details, after a while he started to talk about the story of Bedros Effendi and his silver mirror. Then, we finished our glasses and went into his house to see the silver mirror. Two photographer friends from Armenia came with me to take some photos of it. We spent some time in his house, at the end exchanged our numbers with the promise of interviewing with him. In the following days some other friends from the project conducted an oral history interview with him. Both in our small talk, later in the interview he explained the silver mirror his family has been holding onto and the story of Bedros Effendi, which creates the backbone of the second chapter.

In order to conduct a follow-up interview with Sabri, I wanted to visit Muş again after 3 years. Meanwhile, the urban transformation project has actually started and houses were

demolished. In order to see if his narrative changed and what kind of roles the silver mirror gained as the memory transmitter, I went to Muş in March 2015. Back that time, I was not thinking of writing my master's thesis about Muş. I only wanted to see possible alterations in Sabri's narrative. When I entered into the neighborhood, it was totally changed. Old buildings were all demolished, workers were digging foundations for the new ones.

Since I lost his contact, he did not know anything about my visit; it was quite probable that he would not remember me. I found the house and entered his garden again, while he was feeding his dog and chickens. I saluted and sat next to him. After talking for five minutes, I introduced myself again. For him, I was one a student who was in Muş years ago with Armenians. As my study was about the silver mirror, it was not easy to be covert, though I tried to do my best. I explained my intention of interviewing with him. During my one-week-stay, we met for five times, spent so many hours together. All the conversations and the interview I had with Sabri have constituted the backbone of my study and the preliminary research. Learning and researching more about the history of the historical neighborhood and understanding that the urban transformation has different layers and has created different groups of others made me come to the conclusion that I needed to have a longer stay and interview with more people to see bigger picture. Therefore, I decided to write my thesis on the urban transformation project in the historical neighborhood of Muş, *Kale Mahallesi*.

In this research I take as my focus the urban transformation project, that took place in Castle Street, *Kale Mahallesi*, in Muş, a city in Eastern Anatolia, which was mostly populated by Armenians before the massacres (Hovannisian, 2001; Kévorkian & Paboudjian, 1915). As a continuum of the systematic repression that is endemic across the nation and as a particular form of strategies of omission, between 2010-2014, The Housing Development Administration (TOKİ) and the municipality of Muş have annihilated most buildings and signs that Armenians had left after the genocide in 1915. As a process that continued up to today, TOKİ has been building new buildings to replace the historic ones that were mostly inhabited by Armenians. In this research my starting point is scrutinizing what people remember about the past of the city and how urban transformation will affect their memory. Within this memory-based study, there are different sections built on the relations between memory and moral economies, memory and hegemony and memory and identity formations, aiming to answer the following

questions: How is urbanization constructed in the city in line with the Republic of Turkey's myth of modernity and identity politics? In what ways, hegemony is included in the process of urbanization? Is it possible to read the ongoing urban transformation project as a precaution taken by some state actors to clean materialities left from the genocide in 1915? How did people react to project; why or why not did they give their consent? In line with the hegemonic enforcements of the Turkish state, how and with what motivations do people (re)construct their identities? While living in the land which was predominantly inhabited by Armenians and living in houses left by them, how people run their moral economies with regard to atrocities in 1915 and roles of their relatives? How does memory lie in the core of hegemony, identity formations and moral economies?

1.2. Fieldwork

To conduct the fieldwork of my thesis and to answer my research questions, I have stayed in Muş for 26 days, between the 5th and the 31st of August 2015. In order to hear more people I tried to interview with as many people as possible. In total, I have primarily conducted semi-structured, in-depth oral history interviews with fourteen people, done participant observation and monitored/scanned the local newspapers. However, in my thesis I used seven interviews as I had chance to have multiple meetings/interviews with them.

1.2.1. Research Participants

Fourteen people I interviewed during my fieldwork in Muş have different socioeconomic and political backgrounds, occupations and different levels of education. As the research is about the urban transformation started in the historical neighborhood of Muş, *Kale Mahallesi*, which was mostly populated by Armenians, they either lived in *Kale Mahallesi* or worked on urbanization and/or Armenian culture. I have categorized my interlocutors as the following;

1. Ones whose families settled in Muş centuries ago. These people's elders had lived in the same neighborhood with Armenians before 1915.
2. Ones whose families settled in Muş after 1950. These people are in their 50s and

- 60s. They spent their childhood in the neighborhood.
3. Ones who settled in Muş in 1980s and 1990s. These people around 25-40 years old.
 4. The owners/attorney of buildings preserved by the Cultural and Natural Heritage Preservation Board.
 5. Ones who conduct NGO projects in Muş on the urbanization and Armenian culture.

The same categorization is applicable for the seven interlocutors whose voices are hearable in the thesis. They are either owners/attorney of buildings, ones whose families have lived in Muş for centuries, ones whose parents settled in Muş after 1950s and/or 80s and 90s, and ones who are NGO sector.

Even though my interlocutors are not professionals of neither urban transformation nor ethnography I do not situate them as mere informants. I follow Holmes and Marcus' steps where the aim is "to integrate fully our subjects' analytical acumen and insights to define the issues at stake in our projects as well as the means by which we explore them" (2008). The interlocutors have played significant roles in shaping this study, not just by telling their stories but by accepting me into their lives – past and present- and introducing me to their friends and acquaintances. This study is a product of long and rich conversations over bureaucratic and legal aspects of the urban transformation, which I take as way to understand the neighborhood's subvert pasts.

In order to provide a comfortable setting during the interviews, I assured them that their anonymities will be kept throughout the research. Although some of them gave their permissions to use their actual names, actual names are not used even though some of my interlocutors' names are indicative of their parents' political stances.

1.2.2. Method

I have primarily conducted participant observation and semi-structured, in-depth oral history interviews. My research that is based on oral history and participant observation is about the multivocal meaning of contested events, and not trying to historicize those events. Alessandro Portelli states that the specificity of oral history is that it tells us less about events but more about their meaning and it gives signs about the speaker's subjectivity (Portelli, 2009). I chose oral history as my method of study since the ways in

which people elaborate, interpret, and remember the 1915 atrocities, and how the legacy of such atrocities reveal themselves in contemporary politics and changes in the urban space in a city like Muş, create the backbone of the research.

In addition to oral history interviews and participant observations, I conducted a discourse analysis of the local and national media, and the advertisement brochures published by the office of the governor of Muş to understand the ways in which the urban transformation project is explained and legitimized and the knowledge on Armenians is systematically produced. Analyzing local media enabled me to trace statements of local authorities including mayors and deputies of Muş. Moreover, it was productive to scrutinize discursive strategies used in these texts to support their statements.

1.2.3. Positionality

As explained above, my interest in the urban transformation project and the Armenian past in Muş grew out of the visit I paid to the city in 2011 for a local history project. The experience of visiting Muş in 2011 plays a significant role for this study, as it gave me the opportunity of seeing *Kale Mahallesi* before the act of demolishment started and made me think of the close connections between memory and materialities.

Visiting Muş before and after the demolishment realized in the scope of the urban transformation project enabled me to compare and contrasts how people situated themselves towards the decision of urban transformation, and the urban transformation project's interconnectedness with the current politics in the region.

I did not face with major problems during the fieldwork, especially in terms of access. I had several contacts due to my previous visits. Moreover, a friend of mine who has lived in *Kale Mahallesi* in her childhood, helped me intensively to reach out to my other interlocutors. Her experience living in the neighborhood and working as the assistant of another researcher working in Muş, gained me an excessive benefit in terms of creating a social circle and explaining my research topic and myself as student/researcher.

During my different visits, especially during the fieldwork period, I had chance to follow how my being in Muş and working on the urban transformation is perceived. As a person who is not Armenian and not from Muş, my choice of the thesis subject has been

questioned once a while. Thus, my positionality in the field and on the subject, have required close scrutiny and constant self-reflexivity during the fieldwork and the writing process.

When I explained to people that I am working on the urban transformation project and the history of Muş, they asked my hometown to see if I had a family history connecting me there. When I told them that my family is not from Muş, they asked if I were Armenian or not. They believed that there must be affective and familial ties for starting such a study. However, when they figured out that I had no ties to the city, they thought that I was assigned to work on this subject, like architects and urban transformation experts do. Explaining that coming to Muş was all my decision and I was not assigned to work there, was not convincing for some people I interacted with. I have been categorized and/or questioned several times to see if I was a treasure hunter. Asking people questions about the history of Muş and the Armenian past of the city made some people think that I were either a treasure hunter or a spy.

Some of them openly stated, some of them not but a significant number of my interlocutors had stories related with treasure hunting. Especially a few of them have been quite active in searching for gold. My being there as a researcher/student who has been coming and going attracted their attention and they wanted to see me more with the hope of learning some undiscovered part of the history of Muş. On the other hand, as I did not have any affective ties with Muş, they wanted to make use of my presence to hear stories of elder people. Therefore, they introduced me as many people as possible, even though in some instances I was not willing to. They introduced me, explained my research and during the conversations sometimes they asked some questions on behalf of me, by pretending it would be important for my research. However, except one opportunistic focus group interview I had, I found some ways to escape from them and had one-to-one interviews.

As mentioned before, this study is the outcome of my insistence to have a follow-up interview with Sabri to see if and how his story evolved after the urban transformation project. Sabri's story is related with displacement of Armenian's from Muş in 1915. However, in the last one hundred the neighborhood experienced different forms of displacements: internal migration to *Kale Mahallesi* in 80s and 90s and displacement of local people with the urban transformation project. To have a better understanding of the

complex situation there, I had to expand my study and talk to different people, hear different stories and opinions. Therefore, I decided to write my thesis on the urban transformation project in Muş.

1.3.Literature Review and Thesis Outline

Given that the starting point of this study is the urban transformation that has been implemented in *Kale Mahallesi*, I draw both on the larger literature on urbanization, urban transformation and community (Ghannam, 2008; Harvey, 2012; Low, 1999) and the urbanization literature that pertain specially to Turkey and especially on the relation between space and culture and gentrification (Bartu, 2000; Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008; Gökşen, 2015; İslam, 2010; Kolluoğlu-Kırlı, 2002; Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010; Öncü, 1993; Yonucu, 2014; Yüksel, 2011). Drawing on this literature, however, my specific contribution lies both in the particular geographic context which has so far not been analyzed except one article I could access to.

“An Example of Republican City Modernization: Governor Tevfik Sırrı Gür’s activities in Muş” published by İrşad Sami Yuca (2015) is the only material I could find on the urbanization of Muş. In his article, Yuca focuses on the role of one of the first governors of Muş, Tevfik Sırrı Gür, who worked in Muş from 1937 to 1943. His practices in urbanization are crucial as they are one of the first reflections of the Turkish Republic’s hegemonic urbanization politics. My specific contribution lies in highlighting the close connections between the Turkish state institutes’ hegemonic enforcements and its reflections on urbanization especially through the ongoing urban transformation project in Muş. In Chapter III, “Reflections in the Silver Mirror: Hegemony and Urbanization,” I utilize Gramsci’s notion of transformist hegemony (Gramsci, 1992) as interpreted by B. Williams in her book *Stains on My Name, War in My Veins* (1991) to show the historical continuity what happened in 1915, what Tevfik Sırrı Gür performed during his period of office and what has been happening in the course of the urban transformation project.

Violence, genocide, urbanization and local histories have been studied separately in academia extensively. However, their intersecting points need more studies, especially in cities like Muş that their demography has drastically changed because of violent acts

happened in the past. Therefore, the concepts of memory and, remembering and forgetting are other key subjects that this thesis mainly revolves around. I benefit both from the larger literature on forgetting, forgetting and urbanization, memory and genocide, memory and atrocities, and memory and violence (Brodzki, 2007; Connerton, 2008; Halbwachs & Coser, 1992; Loraux, 2002; Nora, 1989) and the literature on memory and forgetting that pertain specially to Turkey and especially the relation between public memory, memory and genocide the idea of belonging, identity and subjectivity (Altınay, 2014; Altınay & Çetin, 2014; Neyzi, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008; Neyzi & Yetkin, 1999; Özyürek, 2006, 2007).

Along with moral economies and the hegemonic aspect of urban transformation, scrutinizing memory and materiality and utilizing different forms of capital proposed by Bourdieu to understand how people situate themselves towards Armenianness are the main subjects of this thesis.

Chapter II, “Reflections in the Silver Mirror: Owning the Past and Carrying Its Burden” focuses on how people run their moral economies in relation to their relatives’ roles in these atrocities and how they situate themselves towards their actions. The chapter revolves around three stories told by interlocutors. The main focus is underlying how protagonists’ positionalities help them to create their moral economies and what kind of a role distancing themselves from their relatives carries in the process of structuring their own moral economy performances.

After Thompson’s (1971) conceptualization of *moral economy* in his article on English working class of the eighteenth century, Scott (1977) introduced the term to the field of anthropology. Both of them underscored the importance of having such a concept to scrutinize the traditional or third-world societies and dominated classes. However, Daston (1995) opposed and stated that utilizing such a concept only in studies related with working class and/or peasants would put it in a confined space. By using the term in her own study about the world of science and the scientists who have their privileged category, she enlarged its usage.

Although Daston’s approach to moral economy enlarged the range of applicability and importance of the concept and changes its focus drastically, her approach has the danger

of emptying the significance of the term *moral economy* for history and social anthropology since in these fields the term is constructed upon its being related with politics. Therefore, Fassin (2009) proposes some other ways to combine both Thompson and Scott's and Daston's approaches. He suggests using the term, moral economy, interrelated with politics but not only for inequality or unjust social order. In my study, in light of Fassin, I used the term moral economies in the political context of the Armenian Genocide but to understand how relatives of perpetrators. position themselves towards the actions of their elders.

Chapter III, "Reflections in the Silver Mirror: Hegemony and the Ongoing Urban Transformation Project," through underscoring similarities between what happened in 1915 and during the recent urban transformation project, it is aimed to demonstrate the mechanism of urban transformation in Eastern Anatolia in line with the Turkish republican ethic of development and Turkification. The notions of "development" and "progress" that have been taking place in urban centers since the foundation of the republic is at the heart of the modernization project very much as nationalism. In a way, they are inseparable since both emerge from the same ethic of modernity: nationalism, genocide, ethnic cleansing, homogenization of identity, language, and historiography are modernity. On the other hand, the chapter highlights the relationship of territory to hegemony.

Chapter IV, "Reflections in the Silver Mirror: Economy of Identities," examines the importance of including not only economic capital but also social and cultural one in the process of identity re-productions. Through Bourdieu's (1986) conceptualization of economic, social and cultural capital, it is aimed to underline different driving forces behind being in line with or being opposed to hegemonic practices in the process of identity formation.

1.4. Reflections in the Silver Mirror

The title of this thesis and titles of each chapters start with the same phrase: reflections in the silver mirror. As already mentioned a few times, the silver mirror of Bedros Effendi

and the story revolving around it is the reason why this thesis is written. Therefore, everything you read in this study is constituted of reflections I have seen in the silver mirror.

Metaphorically speaking, “reflection” and “mirror” have different connotations that carry various significance for this study. First thing first, mirror reflect the physical object sitting opposite of it. In other words, the image in the mirror is the projection of an existing material. It is not the object itself, the object sits just across the mirror. However, we see its visual and optical representation in the silver mirror. In the process of experiencing the reflection, your perspective and where you stand play significant roles. If you are so close to the mirror, you can mostly see the object standing in front of the mirror (it is your body or something else depending on your standing point); it may block all your perspective. However, if there is a distance between you and the mirror, although a decrease in seeing details about the setting, you can enlarge your perspective and can see the bigger picture. I read these different perspectives as being and insider and outsider. If you are an insider, you may see details very well but it is possible that you are stuck with the same perspective. However, if you are an outsider, you may see the bigger picture without grabbing details and without knowing how to interpret them. Despite the fact that I have friendship circle in Muş, visited the city several times and I read about the history of the city, I was an outsider there. Therefore, I had to get the help of insider to understand how to interpret all the details in the frame. Thus, I conducted an ethnography consisted of oral history interviews and participant observations. I learned from my interlocutors their own interpretations of the details in the reflection in the silver mirror, then I put them in an order as I comprehend. In other words, at the end, I am interpreting what my interlocutors said, and in this thesis carrying the role of an editor. I tried to edit what I have experienced, saw, heard and felt in Muş in a consistent and coherent way. However, as the outcome, I am showing you what I saw in the mirror as a reflection. It might be a distorted version because of my standing point or different people my come up with different versions and interpretations. But in this thesis, I present you the outcome of my own standing point and perspective.

CHAPTER II

REFLECTIONS IN THE SILVER MIRROR: OWNING THE PAST AND CARRYING ITS BURDEN

2.1.Introduction

In this chapter, through ethnographic materials I collected in Muş, I will discuss the importance of including the term moral economies into the debate, especially when moral and political conflicts lie at the core of stories. In all three stories that will be discussed, there are some recurrent themes such as shame, feeling the guilt and burden of what happened in 1915 and settling accounts with previous generations as a result of protagonists' constructions of high moralities. While the latter two stories are based on disconnecting from murderer relatives, the significance of the former one derives from the material-based confrontation, through a valuable silver mirror. The protagonist wants to settle accounts with the descendants of an Armenian person, Bedros Effendi, who was the owner of his "legally" owned house, to be written off his and grandparents' debts, in a practice known as *helalleşmek* in Turkish.

Helal-halal, appropriate, allowed, permissible and legal in Islam, approved by the rules of Islam is the root of the term. By saying *helalleşmek*, which can be roughly translated as writing of material and non-material debts off someone's conscience, it is aimed to ask for forgiveness from someone whom your actions were harmful to. Even though absolution is the ultimate result, it is not between God and God's serf, as in the case of repentance, it is between at least two serfs of God. In Islam, if people do not want to be punished by harmful actions they performed against someone, they are supposed to receive this person's blessing and forgiveness. *Helalleşmek* is the verb denoting this act

of asking for absolution. It is significant not only for organizing the afterlife, but it also has its impacts on the daily social life. Since I could not find any word in English that corresponds to all these aspects of *helalleşmek*, the term is used in the text in its Turkish form.

2.2. *Helalleşmek* Through the Silver Mirror

“I swear to God, this is not my possession, I am its caretaker.”

“I would love to *helalleşmek* with Bedros Effendi and his family. In the eyes of *Allah*, if he is Armenian, he believes in the Bible; I believe in the Qur’an. My holy book says that God ordered, and my serf cannot be unfair to my other serfs, otherwise I would take it from you many times over. I swear to God; I am so afraid of God's anger. Would it not be better if she writes off my debts; I would be gathered by my forefathers without any problems ... As I say, if Shushan -the daughter of Bedros Effendi- came, I would make her eat double of what I eat; I would make her wear better of what I wear. Just as long as she would *helalleşmek* with me.’

These are the sentences of my interlocutor, Sabri, who currently lives on the land of Bedros Effendi. In 1915, when Bedros Effendi, a wealthy businessman, fled Muş, to save his and his daughter’s lives from the onslaught of massacres, he left behind their field and house in which there was a silver mirror. They never returned; their house first became the confiscated property of the Ottoman Empire and later the Republic of Turkey. In 1931, when the properties of non-Muslim were sold, it was purchased by the grandfather of my interlocutor.

“Turkey was founded on the transformation of presence -Christians in general, Armenians in particular- into an absence” say Akçam and Kurt (2012) in their books on the plunder of wealth in the Armenian genocide. It has been one hundred and one years since 1915 and ninety-three years after the foundation the Republic of Turkey. However, the republic and most of its state actors still work on eliminating traces left by Armenians, through name changes, dispossession of non-Muslim’s wealth and reconstructing cities (Akçam & Kurt, 2012; Çomu, 2012; Ulgen, 2010; Ungor & Polatel, 2011). On the other hand, the family currently living on Bedros Effendi’s land has been holding on to his belongings for generations, including the silver mirror. The will passed down to my 58-year-old interlocutor stipulates him to return the silver mirror back to its ‘real’ owners in order to

helalleşmek with Bedros Effendi's descendants, roughly explained as settling material and nonmaterial accounts in the eyes of Allah; writing off people's material and nonmaterial debts.

The description of the house and how it is being categorized show the stance of the officials of the new republic towards the properties of the Armenians: "It is written on the certificate of ownership that the derelict and forlorn property, with a stable, basement and upper part of the house, was sold at auction for 81 Lira to Ahmet son of Mehmet."¹ Even though it was less than two decades after atrocities, properties left by Armenians were categorized as forlorn and derelict.

The Spirit of the Laws: The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide written by Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt traces how legal changes have been done in order to annihilate the physical and economic existence of Armenians within the framework of the Armenian genocide, and the interconnectedness between the annihilation and the contemporary politics of the Republic of Turkey. Moreover, they make comparisons between the Law of Derelict, *Emval-i Metruke Kanunu*, in the Ottoman Empire, and Law of Insolvency, *Tasfiye Kanunu*, in the Republic of Turkey. Their similarities in the sense that they are both used to disavow the legal rights of Armenians on their/their parents' properties, support Akçam and Kurt's claim that the legal system of the Republic of Turkey is formed on institutionalizing what happened to Armenians (and Assyrians) between 1915-17. "The primary goal of the laws and decrees, by seizing all the movable and immovable property of the Armenians, was to eliminate the physical foundations of Armenian existence in Anatolia. Thus, the removal of the physical and cultural existence of the Armenians was intrinsic to the Turkish legal system. This is why we call the system a genocidal regime" (Akçam & Kurt, 2012, p. 13). In this sense, the sentences of the first secretary of the treasury of the Turkish Republic, Hasan Fehmi Bey, prove the close relationship between law and the regime of genocide: "It has been two or three years since we here set out to take into consideration the [20 April 1920 dated] Law of Abandoned Properties as one of the most delicate and fine points of our legal bases" (p. 5).

With the Assignment of Deed Law, *Temlik [Mülkiyet] Verme Kanunu*, that was promulgated on 28 May 1928, "property or land being distributed or sold were registered in title deeds were given to the new owners and the revenues obtained by sale, rent, or

¹For the sake of confidentiality, throughout the thesis, actual names are not used.

other compensation of abandoned properties were transferred to the state treasury of income” (Akçam & Kurt, 2012, pp. 169-170). As my interlocutor’s family bought the property of Bedros Effendi in 1931, most probably, the transaction was done through the Assignment of Deed Law. Although the law was passed in order to eliminate the properties of non-Muslims, in this case Armenians, the name of the previous owner, or as my interlocutor -Sabri- calls the “real” owner, has not been forgotten. To put differently, in contrast to policies implemented by the actors of the Turkish state, Sabri has been referring to Bedros Effendi in his sentences as the real owner of the possession, including the house, the field, the silver mirror and the trees in the garden, even though the family has been legally keeping them since 1931. This is the crucial point where the personal, ethnic and national histories intersect and clash; and where the morality aspect of this chapter’s debate rises, hand in hand with the term *helalleşmek*.

Throughout the fieldwork, it was repeatedly mentioned that old materials that were found in houses or left by old family members, such as carpets, mirrors, stamps or statues were sold to antique dealers visiting villages and cities, or bartered with some other “new” objects. Zeynep, an interlocutor of mine who is fond of keeping old materials in her house showed the old carpets she keeps in her house and explained how she possessed it.

Zeynep: I went to a village, there was an old woman. We chatted for a while. She said a man took our old carpets, May God bless him he gave three carpets per old carpets. Antique dealers going to villages. I said, may I check on your carpet. As this one was the most used one, he did not take it. There is a hole in one of the corners. I said, give this to me and I will buy carpets for you. She said, take it with you, what am I going to do with it. We already got so many carpets. She said she gave 7-8 carpets to the dealer, as he gave 3-4 for each one... She said take it with you, it will be yours.

Atak: Where did they find “some many carpets?”

Zeynep: The woman’s mother or mother-in-law weaved. They were at least 100-120 years old.

Antique dealers also visited Sabri to convince him to get the silver mirror. In his narrative, he underscores that he keeps the silver mirror to be written off his and his (grand)parents’ debts, despite the fact that antique dealers offered him 6,000 Euros for the mirror. He does not let people -including his brothers and the antique dealers- take the mirror away from him.

Sabri: Antique dealers came into Muş; they collected everything. They also gave an offer to me, they came and checked.

Atak: How did they find you?

Sabri: We have so many acquaintances, those who visit us during bayrams.

Another thing he underlines is that even though treasure hunters have already offered him some percentile if they find golds of Bedros Effendi in the field, he does not let them in, as he believes that the possession of the crier does not bring benevolence to the laugher [*ağlayanın malı gülene hayır getirmez*]” Then he continues:

I swear to God; they came with tools to find Bedros Effendi's gold but I did not let them. Assume that they found boxes of gold. Why should other people benefit from it, when his grandchild does not? ... It is an ephemeral world. Our ancestors came, and although they bought their places from the state, Bedros Effendi and his family members are oppressed. In my eye, they are oppressed. Bedros Effendi did not sell his estate when he left.

Despite the fact that my 58-year-old interlocutor is the third generation, after his father and grandfather, who keeps the silver mirror in his possession, he states that giving the silver mirror back to the descendants of Bedros Effendi is necessary for him too, to rest in peace when he dies. Therefore, he articulated in the interview that he already taught his children what he knows about Bedros Effendi and they will carry the responsibility of the will, when he dies:

Atak: You said you know Bedros Effendi very well; If someone comes to get the mirror, you will ask two questions to understand if she/he is the right person. Until when will this continue?

Sabri: I will hand it down to my child. I will say the same. If you want me live in my grave peacefully, this person -Bedros Efendi's (grand)child- will be back. You will ask from him/her to write off each other's debts.

The last quotation shows that he wants to *helalleşmek* with Bedros Effendi not just to save his (grand)parents; but he also feels indebted. According to his narration, his children will be responsible for carrying the “burden of the past” in other words the need of *helalleşmek* to relieve their parents and grandparents.



Figure 1 - Silver Mirror of Bedros Effendi²

During the fieldwork, I have spent so much time with Sabri, we talked about the current politics of Turkey, life in Muş, and as he is obsessed with hunting, we talked a lot about his hound. However, whatever the subject was, the conversation ended up with Bedros Effendi. Once, when he was showing me the garden and trees, he showed the plum trees left by him. Just as he explained in the recorded conversation, he said:

Whenever a group of Armenians comes to Muş, I take a full tray of plumb to them. I try to gratify myself in this way, (*artık ben de kendimi öyle tatmin etmeye çalışıyorum*). I say, eat them, they are your ancestors'. I don't have any expectations; eat them as yours. It is a process coming from Bedros Effendi. I swear to God that this is not my possession; I am its caretaker. Eat them. I am such a person.

In “Morality and the Practice of the Self,” Michel Foucault states that “Morality also refers to the real behavior of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them: the word thus designates the manner in which they conduct more or less fully with a standard of conduct, the manner in which they obey or resist interdiction or a prescription; the manner in which they respect or disregard a set of values” (1980, p. 25). Having information on the previous owner of the house and being taught by his elders that it would be disrespectful to refer him only by his name, Bedros, but it should be Bedros Effendi show that he disregards a set of values revolving around

² Photo belongs to DVV International, it was taken in 2011 during the “Speaking to One Another” Project

denying the Armenian genocide imposed by the law and regulation of the Republic of Turkey. Furthermore, Sabri's narrative is important for showing that there might be a discrepancy of definitions of 'ownership' between the state and personal, as in his performance/discourse, he positions himself as the 'caretaker' of his own state-defined legal property. It is certain that my interlocutor challenges the distinction between the State and the personal in terms of ownership, and shows the liminal nature between ownership and what is 'owned.'

Atak: There were rich Armenians here (I am talking about the city center). Did not beghs appropriate their properties?

Sabri: After the foundation of the republic, Atatürk took care of them.

Atak: What about the time period from 1915 until the republic? Did these beghs seize properties?

Sabri: Of course. Most of the villages today are Armenian villages. Visit them, let's say so-and-so Begh owns the lands of a few villages. Did the begh's father earn it? No! He did not! Armenians were not only in the city center, but all the villages.

Then explains how people, including his own father, looted Armenian villages, how his father occupied a village after 1925. In other words, he talks about the source of their wealth.

My father figures out that each begh occupies a village since the Armenians already left. Then he says, if everybody does this, why should I not occupy one? He has an intrepid spirit. He goes there, sets his tent and announces that this land is mine ... He constructs the village with Armenians he called from the mountains. Kavar -the name of his village- is not our property, it is an Armenian village."

It is significant to underscore that his father seized the village in 1925, in the first years of the Republic of Turkey. It shows that, in line with Akçam and Kurt's sentences cited above, the wealth of Armenians has played a significant role for the republic's economy and the close relationship between the law and the regime of genocide. Therefore, Sabri's subjectivity, being a descendent of a looter; in other words, being the son of the person who occupied an Armenian village gives power to his discourse contradicting with that of repeated by the different state organs of the Republic of Turkey.

The anthropology of moral economies, says Didier Fassin, underlines conflicts and moral issues, their political dimensions and historical inscription (2009, p. 1261). Although Sabri puts a great emphasis on the fact that the will stating to *helalleşmek* with Bedros Effendi's descendants comes down from his grandfather, the moral issue of *helalleşmek* stems from the two-layered conflict that Sabri tries to deal with. The first layer is

generational. It is not only limited to Sabri's own ancestors but also non-Armenian people, in this case mostly Kurds, who took part in atrocities. During the interviews he repeatedly stated that he is not able to understand what happened and how the killings started; that he does not have any explanation for and empathy with the actions of the previous generations. The other conflict is between the state and personal. As it is discussed above, even though the source of his wealth is appropriation of Armenian villages, he tries not to be responsible for stories full of bloodshed. His moral reactions to his previous generations and the state he lives in, are important as they give clues about the historical inscription of atrocities in 1915 and their political dimension. Therefore, analyzing why he constantly reenacts such a persistent performance of reiterating what a morally virtuous man he is, paves the way for understanding how he forms and runs his own moral economy.

Following lines of the whole transcription and the participant observation I conducted with Sabri show that in his self-construction, it is a priority for him to repeatedly underline how virtuous he is. He does not perform it only through the silver mirror, but through the plum trees, his love for children, the objects he keeps from his father and his passion to remember the previous generations. It is important then to ask, why does Sabri give information about how they acquired their wealth and exemplify his "virtuous personality" through his own possession?

In his study on the making of the English working class, Marxist historian Edward Palmer Thompson introduced the term *moral economy* (Thompson, 1971). He used it in a way to show that the working classes of the nineteenth-century, as the farmers one century before, were not concerned only with materialities but also moralities, namely the social relationships and economic life regulated by expectations and obligations. Thompson's main argument is that the capitalist logic, the change in the mood of production resulted riots not just because of the hunger and misery it created but because of the disengagement of the moral contract it resulted.

Thompson's contribution, *moral economy*, opens the way to move beyond studying a specific group of people in objective manners; in other words, objectivizing them. Instead, it enables the researchers to underline subjectivization of the studied group. "In a language that is more familiar to us today and highlights the modern nature of his investigation, we could say that Thompson wants to move beyond objectivizing the

working class toward an interest in the process of its subjectivization” (D. Fassin, 2009, p. 1244).

In Thompson’s understanding of moral economy, the term integrates two dimensions, namely economic and moral. While the economic dimension is related with production, distribution and circulation of services and goods; the moral aspect focuses on how obligations and rules are constituted and implemented. In the end, he comes up with two different correspondences of the term moral economy. On the one hand, it accounts for a system of exchange of services and goods. On the other hand, it is the system of obligations and norms that determines and guides your actions and differentiate between what should be done and what not. Even though the second system does not seem directly related with economy since distribution of goods and services is not mentioned, economy is inevitably there as it is concerned with action, evaluation, constitution and use of obligations and norms. Even though the term moral economy sounds like the economy part is only related with distributions of good and services, as stated above, it is not an obligation. Political dimension and historical inscription of moral issues create enough material for applying the term in anthropology.

The term *helalleşmek* has been first uttered by my interlocutor Sabri in his sentences during our interview. In other words, it is not a concept that I came up with, a concept that I imposed on my interlocutor. Feeling indebted, guilty and sorry about what happened in the past is very strong, and as the result of my subjectivity, not being Armenian and from Muş, I have not asked my other interlocutors if they carry the feeling and need of *helalleşmek* with Armenians in general and/or with some specific people who lived in Muş before. However, during the interview I conducted with Tigran, the Christian-Armenian living in Muş, he explained some of his friends’ attitudes towards him - especially on the 24th of April. Even though these narratives are not *helalleşmek*-based, they show that there are some people who do not empathize with their elders’ responsibility in 1915.

According to Tigran’s sentences, his friend Mahmut -a middle aged man who has had an active life in politics- calls him every year and apologizes for what happened in 1915. Then Tigran recounted a story about Mahmut that underlines how he disassociated himself from his perpetrator relatives.

“Whenever we saw each other, Mahmut told me that he wants to mingle with my relatives when he dies, *ben sizinkilerin üzerine haşır neşir olayım öbür dünyada, sen bizimkilerle*, and proposed me to mingle with his relatives. One day, he explained why he was named as Mahmut; talked about his uncle Mahmut and his actions during the Armenian Genocide” said Tigran, and continued telling me a story that he heard from his friend, Mahmut. In the story I heard through my interlocutor, the nephew Mahmut talks about his reactions towards the actions of his uncle Mahmut.

We did not have any animals before; my family members looted the animals of Armenians. There was a white goat with a long udder. However, the owner of the goat told that one udder was always empty. Then she accused the shepherd for stealing milk. After a while, when another udder of the goat got emptier, the uncle Mahmut started to follow the goat until Zengök, a rocky place. Then he figured out that the goat left the flock, went somewhere else and entered a cave in which there was a baby. When the uncle Mahmut saw that the baby started to suck the udders of the goat, he held the baby, most probably 6-month-old or one-year-old one, threw the baby headlong from the stone. In the evening, when he came back home, told everyone that such a thing will not happen again; he captured a baby while sucking udders of the goat. After a while, Armenian Fidais heard the story. One day, when Maho/Mahmut played his pipe, *kaval*, on a stone, an Armenian Fidai approached him and blew Maho’s brain out by shooting from the back. Then, they – Maho’s friends, relatives- dug a grave, a fancy one, under a tree. People accepted him as martyr; they tied cloth. One day I asked my mother why people call him a martyr and my mother told me the story. I heard the story there. I said this prick, *şerefsiz*, is a murderer and people call him martyr. I wanted to shit on his grave. That night, after hearing the story, I went and shat on his grave. I had such a dishonest uncle; there were such brutal people.

What kind of a responsibility does the nephew Mahmut carry towards his uncle’s action? Why does he feel the need of explaining the story to an Armenian person living in Muş? Why does he apologize, ask for forgiveness? More importantly, why does he propose Tigran to mingle with his relatives when they both die, as the signifier of the fact that he feels afraid of being responsible for their actions? Or, is he responsible for what their elders have already done? Why does he “shit on the grave” to take his revenge? I find it important to highlight that taking the revenge through the “grave,” the ultimate physical trace left by the dead body of a person collectively accepted as martyr is crucial as it shows disavowing the person and his actions, and disavowing the acceptance of the society; the meaning attributed to his death.

On the other hand, Tigran told another story that includes disavowing a family member due to the actions he performed during the genocide. It is another form of revenge taken through the graveyard of murderer by his nephew.

It was 2007, right after the general elections, my friend invited me to his village as his brother wanted. We went to Zengök to celebrate the results. When my friend and I went to the village, we saw the others walking towards the cemetery. My friend proposed me to join them and I said yes. My friend's brother, turned to the imam and said do not include Tajdo into prayers; do not pray *Fatiha* for him. Then he looked at me and said I will explain it to you. Then, he told me the story: There was one route people used to go to Dersim, through Solhan and Bingöl. There was a narrow lane where they put two big trees, to be able to walk on them. Tajdo settled in there to kill Armenians passing by. He killed six wounded, blind, limp or I don't know children Armenians. He killed six but kept wandering there to find the seventh one, as he believed that it was necessary to kill seven Armenians to go to heaven. In the past, they used to crumble bread and pour melted butter on the top, it is *Hevrey* in Kurdish. When Tajdo came back home, his mom gave him food to eat. He said I don't have an appetite and started explaining that he needs to kill one more Armenian to go to heaven: 'I arrived to the door of heaven. I could not kill the seventh one, they will not accept me.' Tajdo could not kill the seventh one and he died. He stayed in between heaven and hell. My friend's brother told that he heard this through his father; his father told him that you had such a douchebag, *alçak*, uncle. Then he said I apologize a thousand times since he is my father's uncle.

In all these narratives, subjectivities of protagonists are significant to highlight. Sometimes their being related with perpetrators, sometimes being the legal owners of Armenian properties make their stories powerful. In the last two stories, the legacy coming down by being the descendance is nullified by the act of shitting on the grave or excluding the dead person from the pray. Butler states that "performative acts are forms of authoritative speech: most performatives, for instance, are statements which, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding power" (Butler, 1993, p. 223). Here in these examples, they exercise the binding power in degrading actions of murderer relatives. It is significant to underline that even though their actions nullify the descendance and their being the descendants of perpetrators, their subjectivities create the power of their actions.

Didier Fassin argues that "the introduction of moral economies re-establishes a viewpoint from within and recognizes the political subjectivity of those involved" (D. Fassin, 2009, p. 1250). Those subjectivities create the basis for the fact that all these stories share contradictory points; points that contradict with the hegemonic discourse of the Turkish Republic. With the book he published in the 70s, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, and his other studies in early 80s, political scientist and anthropologist James Scott brings the term up for discussion with his thesis on modes of production and forms of resistance among peasants in Southeast Asia. His publications are quite effective in creating a network of researchers working on the

interrelatedness of economic logic and social mobilization in rural areas in developing countries. In addition to that, his publications are quite effective in bringing the term, *moral economy*, into the field of anthropology and anthropological discussions. According to Scott, the moral economy stands for the system of values under the expression of emotions. The extreme form of it results in the emergence of revolts.

If we understand the indignation and rage that prompted them to risk everything, we can grasp what I have chosen to call their moral economy, their notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation, their view of which claims on their product were tolerable and which were not. ... Further, if we understand how the central economic and political transformations of the colonial era served to systematically violate the peasantry's vision of social equity, we may realize how a lower class came to provide, far more often than the proletariat, the shock troops of rebellion and revolution (Scott, 1977, p. 4).

Thompson and Scott's approaches to the term *moral economy* and their discussions on the critical potential of it in order to account for social relations even in their violent forms, highlight the political dimension of the term. However, these are not the only ways for using the term *moral economy*, it has multiple but more or less similar meanings developed by other researchers. Lorraine Daston's definition of *moral economy* and her approach to the term open up the concept to a general theory of moral economies that is not confined to workers and peasants, or to the analysis of popular resistance and riots.

To specify and to show in which parts she departs from Thompson's way of explanation through peasants, Daston states that while the term 'moral' "carries its full complement of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century resonances as it refers simultaneously to the psychological and the normative ... the term 'economy' also has a deliberately old-fashioned ring as it refers not to money, markets, labor, production, and distribution of material resources but rather to an organized system that displays certain regularities, which are explicable but not always predictable in their details" (Daston, 1995, p. 4). Therefore, her definition of moral economy, "a web of affect-saturated values that stand and function in well-defined relationship to one another" (p. 4) is crucial not only for showing that these moral economies are not only concerned with traditional or third-world societies and dominated classes but also to open up a space in the discussions for the world of science and the scientists who have their privileged category. In other words, by defining the term from another perspective, she mentions obligations and norms that are not the same with Thompson's, not values underlying emotions as Scott suggested.

Even though the moral economies of the social studies of science do not aim to pursue a criticism of the unequal, unjust social order; even though researchers working on the moral economies of the social studies of science do not take part in the legitimization of insufficient social practices, Daston's approach to moral economy from a different perspective enlarges the range of applicability and importance of the concept and changes its focus drastically: "In fact, there is no reason to limit moral economies to workers and peasants and to consider them only in terms of confrontation with a dominant political economy, or to reduce their theoretical interest to the interpretation of riots and popular resistance (D. Fassin, 2009, p. 1246). In line with Fassin's evaluation, the speculative part of the discussion of Daston is that it carries the possibility of emptying the critical potential of the concept that accounting for social relations even in their violent forms. In other words, Daston's approach has the danger of emptying the significance of the term *moral economy* for history and social anthropology since in these fields the term is constructed upon its being related with politics. "In brief, while Daston opens up the concept to a possible general theory of moral economies, she also causes it to lose the political dimension that gave the approaches of Thompson and Scott their power of critical social analysis" (p. 1247).

Would it be possible to negotiate the two major approaches discussed above? Is there any way to come up with a synthesis of Thompson and Scott's attitudes towards moral anthropology which is based on it being related with politics and critical social analysis, and Daston's attitudes claiming the unnecessary of confining it to workers and peasants? In other words, is it possible to come up with what Fassin calls "a critical opening"? In his discussion, he defines the synthesis as an opening as it "conceptualizes moral economies at the level of entire societies and of specific social groups, always understood in their historical context." In addition to that, it is critical since "it implies being attentive to tensions and conflicts between distinct moral economies to analyze what is at stakes. Ultimately, moral economies always involve political issues" (p. 1260).

2.3. Is Sabri's Narration Pure Goodness?

I have met Sabri first in 2011 when I went to Muş for a local history project called "Speaking to One Another." Within its framework, our aim was mapping memories of

local people towards Armenians who have lived in the region and what happened in 1915. I was one of ten participants from Turkey, there were ten other participants from Armenia. As we were a crowded group speaking English among each other, our presence grabbed attention and local people wanted to talk to us.

Once we were walking in the historical neighborhood of Muş, *Kale Mahallesi*, as a crowded group, some group members were taking photos of buildings and communicating with local people, Sabri was looking out of his window. I decided to leave other members of the project, asked for permission from Sabri to enter his garden. While I was taking some photos of the mountains of Kurtig, he came down with two glasses of tea. After some introductory questions and explaining him that we are students from Turkey and Armenia working on the local history of Muş, he mentioned his story related with Bedros Effendi and the silver mirror. After emptying our glasses, with one of my Armenian photographer friends, we stepped into his house to see the silver mirror and take some photos of it. While leaving the house, we exchanged our numbers and he accepted to give an interview. Then, in the following days some other friends from the project interviewed with him where he explains his story in details.

The conversation that I had with him in 2011 have become very crucial for me in the following years. His knowledge on Bedros Effendi and dedication of keeping the mirror for a long while grabbed my attention. In my grand family everything starts with 1924, time when they migrated to Turkey from the Balkans; it is a milestone in their memories and narratives. Therefore, Sabri's narrative has always been fascinating to me. Let alone his own family history, he still remembers who lived in the house before and taught what he knows about Bedros Effendi to his children.

In 2011, when I was in Muş old houses in the historical neighborhood were still standing. Even though the legal process of the urban transformation project was on, it was before the demolishment. However, after the demolishment of houses, without knowing if the house of Sabri was in the first phase of the urban transformation I went to Muş in 2015 with the presupposition that the house was demolished to see if there is a change in his narrative and the roles of silver mirror as a movable memory transmitter. The house was still there but the neighborhood was totally changed, it became a construction zone. During my one week stay, we met almost every day, spent so much time together and I

had the change of having a recorded interview with Sabri. Therefore, when I went to Muş to conduct fieldwork for my thesis in August 2015, in order to understand if his narrative would change or if he would give more details related with Bedros Effendi and his driving force to *helalleşmek*, I did not turn the voice recorder on when I interacted with him. As he was one of my key interlocutors, I had the opportunity of asking him repeatedly, if he tried to find the (grand)children of Bedros Effendi, as he contributes a great meaning to this action; as he has underlined several times that he has been waiting them to come to Muş. It was interesting that he had the information that Shushan, the daughter of Bedros Effendi, became blind because of diabetes and she was living in Tbilisi, Georgia. As noted down in my field notes, even once he said that “We asked about Shushan to *someone*, he/she said the family line ended [*Bir tanesinden sorduk Şuşan’ı, dedi onlar bitti*],” as he stated during the recorded interview. Even though I asked similar questions to him in different occasions, without talking about his source of knowledge, without giving any specific details, he said that he learned from someone, someone who was coming and going.

Once, Sabri stated that elder people in Muş would remember Bedros Effendi as he was one of the richest people of his time, the owner of a textile atelier. As his story is the starting point and the backbone of my ethnography, I asked other interlocutors if their elders were talking about Bedros Effendi. I asked the same question to Tigran, my Christian Armenian interlocutor living in Muş.

He was nine when he discovered his Armenianness. right after that moment, every night his grandfather told him stories about what happened in the past and taught the Armenian language. As he repetitively mentioned his transnational ties with Armenians from different countries, I was curious if he heard the story of Bedros Effendi. Towards the very end of the interview we had, I asked Tigran, if his grandfather talked about Bedros Effendi when he narrated stories about 1915. He started answering the question by saying that almost twenty years ago, in 1998-1999, he met the granddaughter of Bedros Effendi, the daughter of Shushan.

Atak: There is a recurrent name that I constantly heard of, Bedros Effendi. They explain him as a good man. Have you heard of him? Could he run away from atrocities, what did he do?

Tigran: I've talked with his daughter. She was blind and used to live in Tbilisi. Of course she must have died. Of course she died. She told me, I asked her what kind of a house they had. She said 'we had a two-story house. Downstairs, as my father loved horses, we had a place for the horses. Part of that place was our pantry. Upstairs we had a balcony facing Mount Kurtik right across. My father used to drink his morning coffee there. Our balcony was a wooden but very spacious, a very sturdy one. The timbers of the balcony had carved ornamentations on them. My father and his friends would climb up there to drink coffee in the morning, watching Kurtik. She said 4 tall poplars... she said, both my eyes are blind. We had a very large well in front of our door and two big mulberry trees next to the well. She said, if you took me there right now, going down the road to our house, which was placed on a slope, I could just get there even if you left me by myself. I would see that mulberry tree, as well. Those four poplars, next to the stream, I would touch them one by one. I would go next to the well, too. She was 6 years old then. She said, they are all in my mind's eye but my eyes cannot see. I talked to him over a phone call.

Atak: How did you reach her?

Tigran: His daughter -Shushan's daughter- came to Erzurum. The situation was risky here in 98-99. She found my number from somewhere. She called me and I went there. She absolutely wanted to come to Muş. Her mother -Shushan- told her that you should go to Muş to see the place with your eyes while I am still alive. She was 65; she was the granddaughter of Bedros Agha

Atak: Did she come here?

Tigran: No, she did not?

Atak: Did she come later on?

Tigran: No, not at all.

Atak: What about her children, grandchildren?

Tigran: I do not know anymore. I lost their contacts but I can find. They live in Tbilisi in a certain neighborhood.

In his narrative Sabri underscores that meeting with Bedros Effendi's grandchildren is crucial with him and Tigran states that though he does not have connections with them it would be difficult to find. I thought of putting them into contact with each other, however I did not take any step for a long while. While I was doing the last analysis of my corpus, I found out a part that I totally ignored before. During the almost three-hour-long interview I conducted with Tigran, it was around the 40th minute when I asked him questions about the urban transformation in *Kale Mahallesi*, the process of demolishment and houses being old Armenian properties. He stated that even though 87 houses that were demolished during the course of the urban transformation were appropriated, *hazineye devredilmiş*, there are also deeds from the Ottoman Empire showing that they used to

belong to Armenians. When I asked him if they were not sold in the time of the Turkish Republic, he started talking about the legal process that Sabri's family passed through. He explained the location of the house, gave the name of Sabri's father, the description that I stated above -the derelict and forlorn property, with a stable basement and upper part of the house, was sold at auction for 81 Lira to Ahmet son of Mehmet. At the end he stated that he knows all these details because it is his friend's house.

In order to keep the privacy/confidentiality of Sabri, I did not ask Tigran if he knows the story of the silver mirror since I am still not sure if people from Muş are familiar with Sabri's story related with Bedros Effendi. As the silver mirror is exhibited in the second room of the house that is not often visited by guests, and there was a linen on the mirror hiding it from others when I first entered Sabri's house, I came to the conclusion that I had the opportunity of hearing the Sabri's story and seeing the silver mirror mainly because I was in Muş in 2011 with some people from Armenia. If I was alone there, he would not easily tell his story and show the mirror to me. In other words, since I was not sure if Tigran knew the silver mirror and the fact that Sabri owns Bedros Effendi's land, I did not tell anything to Tigran. However, after reading between lines and putting different parts of interviews together I came to the conclusion that most probably Sabri learned what happened to Shushan through Tigran but kept it hidden in the interview. It shows that way Sabri negotiates with himself and the way he presents himself to visitors are not always the same with each other.

All his sentences can be shown as proofs for his self-serving narrative that highlights his high morality. In his self-construction, from the beginning, he always finds ways to show how virtuous and moral a person he is; he is always couched in the idiom of morality. As mentioned before, when we came by the mulberry trees in his garden, he immediately started talking about Shushan, her being blind, and the fact that he heard that she would find everything in the garden. In other words, he (re)produced the exact same narrative as Tigran's. Since it was before my interview with Tigran, I would not create any parallel between their narratives. Though I insistently kept asking him about his source of knowledge, he gave me the same answer, that he heard it from someone who comes and goes.

To put it differently, although through his friendship with Tigran it would be easier for him to reach the descendants of Bedros Effendi, there is no sign in his narrative showing his effort to do so. Instead of revealing his source of knowledge that transmitted to what happened to Shushan, he prefers to keep it uncertain. Thus, he can present himself as an active protector of the materials of Bedros Effendi and his grandparents' will. In other words, he positions himself as the protagonist through not being entrapped by the actual story but through distorting it and escaping from the actuality. He narrates himself by projecting his good will, high morality and the emotional side; he creates the good character through maintaining his own moral economy.

2.4. Discussion

Either the story of my interlocutor who keeps the silver mirror for generations, the story of the nephew Mahmut who did shit on his uncle's grave, or the story of Tajdo and his nephew's act of excluding him from the prayers are referring back to the same historical and political events: The Armenian Genocide. "The anthropology of moral economies emphasizes moral issues and conflicts, their historical inscription and their political dimension" says Didier Fassin (2009, p. 1261), as cited before. In my ethnographic study the moral issues and conflicts rise through the clash of different political understandings between different generations; between the state -as the powerholder- and its citizens -as subjects. The commonality of these two categories is the unfair distribution of power that results the hegemonic oppression. The stories I have provided above are powerful as they have the potential of going against the Turkish State's denialist discourse on the Armenian Genocide. While on the one hand, they provide historical insights about the lives of people in/before 1915, while they have their own commentaries on historiography of the Turkish state, not only the stories but their protagonists are also politically situated in a position that opposes the hegemonic actors, the implementations of the Turkish State or perpetuator relatives. Moral economies that are driven by the political subjectivities of narrators give power to their stories.

Moral economies may not be capable of abolishing the unfair distribution of power, hegemony that gives rise to itself; however, it may enforce people to find a way to bypass it, to show that there are some non-conformisms in the society. To make my argument

clearer, it is better to refer back to the stories I recounted above. Uncle Mahmut is accepted as a martyr without giving importance to reasons behind the act of killing performed by himself, because of the fact that he was killed by an Armenian. However, the act of shitting on a grave not only goes against the idea that graves are important and sacred places but also it questions the concept of martyrdom attributed by the society. On the other hand, in the story of Tajdo, by not praying for him, Tajdo's nephew extricates himself from his uncle's action; by using a religious tool, (not) praying, he debars his uncle from sacred purification. At the end, in both of the stories, protagonists cut their ties with their relatives who they do not politically and ideologically associate with.

On the other hand, the caretaker of the silver mirror forms his moral economy by including a material object into the debate. By creating a narrative stating that in order to relieve his (grand)parents from the burden of what happened in 1915 and in order not to be responsible for the same burden, he has been waiting for the 'real' owners of the material, he goes against the idea of ownership formed by the Turkish state through the properties left by Armenians. In other words, by keeping the legacy ordering to give back the materials and keep the silver mirror as a memory transmitter, elements in his narration and performance which contradict with the Turkish State's historiography and denialist stance rise.

The striking part of his narrative is that there are so many sentences he uttered to foreground his high morality. These are mostly sentences started with "I." However, I argue that the purpose of constant usage of "I" is not only limited with underlining his virtue. It also helps him to differentiate himself from the actions of the previous generations during the atrocities in 1915. In other words, since there is both a historical and political dimension to *helalleşmek* and the feeling of guilt and the sense of burden embedded in its connotation, through his own character formation, he wants to situate himself away from the previous generations. By using "I" repeatedly, he dictates the terms of his own moral economy, and he declares his control over it. As a consequence, he opens a new sphere for his role in my ethnography. He is not the protagonist of the story of *helalleşmek*, he is the creator of such an affective story. Through underlining his virtuous personality, Sabri becomes the good character in a story full of bloodshed.

However, there is one more commonality in all these stories: even though the protagonists show the political differences between them and their relatives, their actions, words and

performances show that all these are done to pose themselves as not brutal as their relatives and show their good personalities. In short, they are all their self-fulfilling personality developments.

2.5.Conclusion

Either through including or not including economically valuable materialities, ethnographic pieces discussed in this chapter are significant examples for showing that some people run their moral economies in contrast to the Turkish Republic's hegemonic discourse towards atrocities happened in 1915. However, it should be underlined here that the protagonists' subjectivities in these narratives create one of the most important components of their performances, so as their moral economies. In other words, being nephews of perpetrators or being the legal heir of the field and the mirror once owned by Bedros Effendi give power to their narratives and performances.

For the discussion of moral economies, synthesizing Thompson, Scott and Daston's approaches is very crucial. While the former group poses the subject's being political as one of the key elements, the latter one exceeds the limits of moral economies by including some other groups into subject rather than working-class or peasants. In this chapter, the synthesis proposed by Fassin lies in the base. All these stories have their own sayings on the historical and political dimension they spring from, the 1915 genocide, and the moral conflicts between generations and between the stances of the Republic of Turkey and its citizens.

After discussing how the moral economies run against the hegemonic approaches of the Turkish Republic, in the next chapter I will discuss how hegemony has been historically created in Muş and the close connections between hegemony and urbanization.

CHAPTER III

REFLECTIONS IN THE SILVER MIRROR: HEGEMONY AND THE ONGOING URBAN TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

3.1. Introduction

During my fieldwork, I took a day trip to the city of Van. On the way back to Muş, my friend and I decided to visit the Holy Cross (Surp Khach) Cathedral on Akhtamar Island, which was built by an Armenian king in the 10th century. We were only 10-15 people on the boat shuttling between the island and the mainland. On the way to the cathedral after disembarking, even though my intention was not to eavesdrop, I heard a young girl in her very early teens repeatedly asking her brother if they were going to see a mosque. Her brother avoided answering her for a while. However, since she continued to insist, he said no, they would go to visit a church. Soon after his response, and just a few short steps before entering the church, the girl admitted with a worried tone that she was afraid; afraid of entering because it would be sin, *günah*. Her anxiety reminded me of conversations I had with some young boys in *Kale Mahallesi* [Castle District], the oldest center of Muş, in 2011. They told me that the remnants of the Meryem Ana (Saint Mary's) Church in the neighborhood was the source of their horror stories; on top of that, their parents had warned them to behave lest they be haunted by the church's ghosts.

Until 1915, "Muş Sanjak, with 140,555 Armenians and 16,927 houses was the most crowded and ethnically homogenous region where Armenians lived, along with 299 churches, 94 monasteries, 53 pilgrimage places [*hac yeri*] 135 schools in 339 villages that

accommodated 5669 students” (Kévorkian & Paboudjian, 1915). Kevorkian and Paboudjian’s remark on the demographic and urban features of Muş Sanjak before 1915 explains that the area was full of churches. What happened to these churches? Why are there only a few left, and of those left behind, almost all in ruins? Why is there no renovation project, though the remnants of the Surp Arakelots Monastery and the Surp Garabed Monastery still stand? Why did some officials let people build a village on the land of Surp Garabed Monastery?



Figure 2- General view of Muş (It is believed that it was taken before 1915)³

In this chapter, I ask these questions to highlight the close connection between the Turkish republican ethic of development and Turkification; republican politics of urbanization and its hegemonic/assimilatory politics. The notion of “development” and “progress” that has been taking place in urban centres since the foundation of the republic is at the heart of the modernization project very much as nationalism. James Scott in his chapter "Cities, People, and Language" shows clear connectedness between city planning, demography

³ A photo from Mehmet Bülent Bayrak’s (RIP) personal archive

and standardization of language around specific political domains. Though in so many cases it is reflected as all these are done for providing a more practical and useful living standards for citizens, Scott shows the clear purpose of administrative control (Scott, 2009) .

As a reflection of this modernization project, I examine the history of urbanization in Muş, especially the recent urban transformation project, and its being related with the identity politics governed by the state organs through utilizing Gramsci's notion of hegemony. However, it is important to underline that these politics are not only limited to regulating sacred places, and especially churches; they are also integrally linked to the way in which the city has been structured in general. In this chapter, vis-à-vis my ethnographic findings, I will discuss hegemony and urbanization in Muş that is one of the primary reasons of fear mentioned in the introductory anecdote of this chapter.

In his book *State and Nation*, Benjamin Akzin explains the process of nation-state building through the metaphor of cooking.

Our familiar expression of *melting-pot* –better yet, *stewing-pot*- illustrates the process very well. Put into the pot of physical proximity, covered by the lid of a common political system, exposed to the heat of cultural and social interchange, the various elements will change after a fairly long time-it took a few centuries in the past, but may take less in the future-into a brew. The brew will not be quite homogeneous. You can still point to a grain of rice, to a leaf of onion, to a chunk of meat, to a splinter of bone. But it will manifestly be *one* brew, with its distinct flavor and taste (Akzin, 1964, p. 84).

The metaphor is significant for showing that even if different variables—physical proximity, political systems or cultural and social interchange—are implemented and even though a fairly long time may pass, the resulting brew is never actually quite homogeneous. Notwithstanding the distinct flavor and the taste each nationalist brew might have, the lumps will still be discernible. Employing this metaphor as a springboard, I argue that the hegemonic practices on urbanization can be read as a blending that, to the best of its extent, gives the appearance of homogenous brew, yet its taste will always remain loyal to its origins, signifying that there are, in fact, diverse ingredients. Similarly, houses showing the historicity of Muş will remain as unblended lumps, notwithstanding the strong efforts against it by the holders of hegemonic power. Resultantly tracing the

ongoing urban transformation project in Muş in the historical part of the city, provides a lens through which to understand the driving forces behind the decision of the city municipality of Muş and The Housing Development Administration of Prime Ministry of Turkey (TOKİ) in undertaking this transformation project. Administering such a project a few years before the centennial of the 1915 atrocities signifies that the neighborhood's ongoing urbanization is not only limited to the present, but also draws an ideological bridge to politics implemented in the past.

3.2.A Brief History of Urbanization in Muş

To be able to account for the reasons foregrounded the ongoing urban transformation project, it is noteworthy to briefly explain the history of urbanization of Muş, and some of the process's significant names and milestones. The transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey brought its own nationalism, homogenization of identity, language and historiography, as the result of its ethic of modernity. Reflections of all these are embedded in urbanization. Despite the fact that (almost) all cities in Turkey were affected by this transition, some cities including Muş underwent more severe changes. The reason for the intensity of these drastic changes lies in the fact that these were the centers of different ethnic groups like Alevis, extremist Islamist groups, Armenians, Kurds, etc., whose ideologies did not coincide with that of the Turkish Republic's (Koçan & Öncü, 2004; Onis, 1997; Yeğen, 2006).

One of the first governors of Muş, Tevfik Sırrı Gür, played a crucial role in shaping the city space. Space has widely been discussed as a complementary aspect of national identity (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Hetherington, 1996; Kostovicova, 2005; Popescu, 2006) as it is filled with ideological symbols of dominant understanding, and is cleansed from undesirable symbols. Governor Tevfik Sırrı Gür drastically changed the façade of the city within his period in office (1937 to 1943). "Tevfik Sırrı Gür is the one who erased the history of Armenians in Muş. The first governor of Muş. He beat the history of Muş with a hammer," stated one of my interviewees whose properties had been damaged during his governorship. It was repeatedly told by various other interlocutors that the governor brought some stones from the Surp Garabed Monastery, which had been the religious center of Daron, a canton of the Turuberan province of Greater Armenia, in

order to build the Atatürk Elementary School as well as the government office. He used stones from the Güllü Hamam (*bath*), which was run by an Armenian prior to 1915 for the foundation of a school that was built in *Kale Mahallesi*. As the legal heir of the *hamam* stated: “Tevfik Sırrı Gür took the corner stones of the *hamam* by saying that he will build a school. Since the Armenians left, there was no master, no one to carve stones. There were ready stones; he used them. Because they were Armenians’ products, they [the governor and his men] demolished and brought over stones. He built schools and the government office.”



Figure 3-Atatürk Primary School was built by stones of Surp Garabed Monastery

It is crucial to underscore that governor Gür did not only demolish churches and the buildings of non-Muslims. He also knocked down dervish lodges, mosques and minarets and an old Muslim cemetery that he replaced with an industrial vocational high school. He demolished sacred places for different communities as he worked to inject secularist aspect of the Republic of Turkey via urbanization (Yuca, 2015, p. 88). In other words, as the result of the myth of modernity of the Republic of Turkey, he restructured the city and he damaged and demolished historical buildings on the basis of the secularist Turkish identity, which included an assault both on the presence of Armenians as well as the Muslim population.

It was not only the state actors made use of the stones that once was the property of minority groups, but also residents of the region. However, demolition of these sites was only condoned and legitimated after the state actors took first steps. In line with this, one of my interviewees in his late sixties voiced what he heard from his elders: “As these were strong stone buildings, city locals could not start demolishing by themselves; they continued after Tevfik Sırrı Gür made a breach with a cannonball.” All these testimonies are strong signs for showing that the act of demolition is undertaken to maintain a *desirable* urban plan, which also reflects the identity politics of the nascent Turkish state.

After the 1915 atrocities took place in Muş, the number of Armenians dramatically decreased and their houses were left unattended (Akçam & Kurt, 2012). Even though the Muslim locals of Muş were also living in *Kale Mahallesi*, with the extermination and expulsion of the Armenians, Muslim locals settled into the houses and fields that were once owned by Armenians, hence becoming the dominating presence in the neighborhood. Most of these families kept living in the historical part of the city, until the rise of urbanization in the 1950s, when the city started to expand towards the Muş plain. An interlocutor whose parents have been living in the Muş city center for centuries offers insights into the urbanization and changes in the neighborhood:

Up until the 1950s, the areas of residence were *Kale Mahallesi* and *Dere Mahallesi*. There was also *Muratpaşa Mahallesi*. The other districts, *mahalle*, didn't exist yet. Most of the houses, especially the ones in the lower part, had gardens. There were fruit trees, poplar trees, stables. Houses were either adobe or stone. They were made by local stones of Muş. They had two storeys; they were generally two-storied. Walls were quite thick, generally 60-70 cm and sometimes 1 meter, that you would easily sit on. People used to make handcraft, to look outside; walls were that thick. Then, in the 1960s, the mayor at that time declared the old part of the city as the landslide site, *heyelan bölgesi*. After that, they built Yellow Buildings, *Sarı Bloklar*. People from Muş, locals, started to leave the neighborhood. It was like an erosion, the neighborhood started to disappear in the 60s and 70s.



Figure 4-General view of Muş (It is believed that it was taken in 50s)⁴

Although declaring the neighborhood as a landslide site ignited the fire of a drastic change in the demography of the neighborhood, the increase in the number of independent contractors and cooperatives in the same years also played a crucial role in changing the residency center of Muş. Along with the increase of new and modern flats, locals of Muş started to buy houses from the newly-built blocks and started to migrate away from the neighborhood. Another interlocutor of mine who prays “high modern” buildings and skyscrapers and according to his sentences “can’t wait to move to Istanbul or İzmir” as the Western part of Turkey is more “developed,” and whose grandparents left the historical neighborhood in the 1960s notes that “wealthy locals of the neighborhood left their houses as these houses were in poor condition.”

Kemal: As living standards there became harsher in time, and of course human beings try to reach to comfort, to become more comfortable, we moved to this part.

Atak: How were the living standards in the neighborhood?

⁴ A photo from Mehmet Bülent Bayrak’s (RIP) personal archive.

Kemal: Living standards were like this: there was no infrastructure. As the phrase goes, slumdogs (*varoş kesim*) were living there, so we moved to the new center of the city. I don't think that it would be logical to stay there while you had wealth.

Then, in the 1980s and 1990s, mostly due to the civil war between the Turkish Army and The Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê-PKK), internal migration to city centers accelerated. In their stead, people arriving from the villages and towns of Muş and its neighboring cities bought or rented houses in *Kale Mahallesi*. As these houses were in poorer conditions compared to the newly built ones, rents and sale values were cheaper. During an interview I had with a photographer from Muş, he explained the change in the 80s and 90s as follows:



Figure 5-General view of Muş (It is believed that it was taken in 80s)⁵

At the end, adobe houses, *kerpiç evler*, of *Kale Mahallesi* and *Dere Mahallesi* were inhabited by people coming from villages. In the 80s and 90s so many people migrated to the city center because their villages were evacuated. Especially in the 90s, there were so many evacuated villages. Since they were not well off, they found shelter in those houses and stayed. These house had rooftops. Some people put roof to their houses, so houses stayed the same.

Hence, this group of internal migrants, mostly comprised of displaced migrants who were forcibly migrated, or the ones who moved to the city center for some other reasons – such as schools, hospital- became the new inhabitants of the neighborhood. As the resident population of *Kale Mahallesi* changed, new temporal relations with the neighborhood began to be formed. The change of dwellers shifted the significance of the old houses, as well as the ways in which people related to them. As a result, what remained regarding the collective past and memory of the neighborhood incurred heavy losses. Despite all this, it was still well known that most of the houses, churches, *hamams* and other buildings were erected and run by Armenians (Kharatyan et al., 2013). Tamar Anoush Suni (2015) foregrounds in her study the importance of the material remains of the genocide and the stories and narratives that live on, through and around them as they supply information as archives. On the other hand, Alice von Bieberstein (2016) in her recent article discusses the importance of valuable but buried materials of Armenians in Muş, as they are the source of affectivities in the region and they are the signifier of the Armenian past of the region. Moreover, as my ethnographic findings show, materials produced by Armenians such as clay pots, houses and gold have been the signifiers of Armenians' archive in the city. Clay pots are already dumped; houses have been demolished in the course of urban transformation; however, gold remains. Thus, people start to talk about Armenians generally through material productions.

The last step of urban transformation, the ongoing project, began in 2010, during Necmettin Dede's, the mayor from Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP), term. His statements are significant in showing the reasons behind making such a decision. In his early statements, he constantly emphasized the neighborhood's being underdeveloped, its impossibility to fix, its being like a village.

⁵ A photo from Mehmet Bülent Bayrak's (RIP) personal archive.

You would not fix it even if you spent millions of Turkish Liras. However, with urban transformation, this problem will be solved in 2 years. There is not only superstructure but also infrastructure work. 30% of my water loss takes place in *Kale Mahallesi*. Besides that, we do not have power to clean the sewer system and irrigation canals (*Günaydın Muş Gazetesi*, 11 December 2011).

His statements are critical for maintaining the illusion that the only reason behind the decision of urban transformation is the neighborhood's poor conditions and that transformation was occurring solely for the benefit of the inhabitants. Throughout his statements the neighborhood's being underdeveloped is highlighted. In addition to that, when I visited Muş Municipality to get information about the urban transformation, one of the vice presidents who is responsible for the process of the urban transformation underlined that the neighborhood used to look like a village, although it is in the city center. Thus, to make the appearance of the city more developed, they had such a decision.

In his assertions, to highlight the importance of the historicity of the neighborhood, Mayor Dede repetitively used a colloquial and officially (over)used phrase in Turkish, the "historical texture" [*tarihi doku*]. Moreover, he demonstrated, as evidence of this policy, the restoration projects of mosques that aimed to restore them to their past glory. Here it is significant to note that the preservation of history in the neighborhood is limited to Islamic spaces. There are no allusions in Necmettin Dede's statements to the historically diverse architecture of the neighborhood, let alone mention of the fact that two of the old mosques were in fact churches when they were first built, as is articulated by some locals of Muş. If the municipality wanted to keep the "historical texture" as diverse as it is, it would take some steps to preserve the remains of the Meryem Ana (Saint Mary's) Church, which is in the middle of the neighborhood, instead of stating that: "It is said that the church is proclaimed as a historical artifact but what is left there? I wish it was a historical artifact and we would go there with pride (*AGOS*, 12 July 2013).



Figure 6-A general view of Muş before the current urban transformation project⁶

Even though the former mayor of Muş, Necmettin Dede, does not acknowledge the diverse architecture in *Kale Mahallesi* and has stated that Armenians came to Muş after the Russian invasion, the historical texts written about last centuries (Hovannisian, 2001; Kévorkian & Paboudjian, 1915) and the statements of local people attest to the actual ethnic, religious and cultural heterogeneity in Muş.

Tevfik Sırrı Gür and Necmettin Dede, representatives of two different ideologies that have had power in the Republic of Turkey. While the former one symbolizes the secularist aspect, the latter one puts Islam in the core. However, there are some similarities between them: reproducing the myth of modernity. Both have legitimized their actions by claiming that they are all done to have a modern city. However, as mentioned before, there are ideological reasons behind their actions and these actions leave effects on “others” of the society. These “others” are not only constituted of ethnic groups, such as Armenians and Kurds, but economic others are also a part of this classification. With the evocations of villages people were expelled and their properties were confiscated or burnt. It will be discussed further later but evocation and burning of villages that took place mostly in 1990s, and forcing people to move to city centers were done to run the transformist

⁶ Photo belongs to DVV International, it was taken in 2011 during the “Speaking to One Another” Project

hegemony, with the hope of getting power in the territory and expanding Turkishness. However, two decades later, the same people -either with their consents or not- are expelled from the neighborhood with the promise of having more modern buildings. It should be asked why did the urban transformation start in 2010 but not one decade ago? What changed and the municipality, with the other state organs, felt the need of changing the neighborhood?

3.2.1. Why now?

TOKİ is a taken measure. Just as the first mass housing project *Sarı Bloklar*, they could have built TOKİ houses somewhere close to the city center. But in any case, since Armenians started to come here and discussions concerning the Armenian properties increased, I think it was done to remove the traces. Neither because they did not have space for TOKİ nor because of inexpensive prices. History was present there. People were constantly questioning, they were coming back and forth. The questioning would turn into a serious thing in Muş. When Armenians came to the city, under covered police was following them. Who is meeting up with them, who is doing what? The arrival of researchers, etc., started to bother them. In the last 4-5 years, more and more Armenians have started to visit Muş; those who wonder, those who research about them, those who ask about the houses. This bothered the government.

These words belong to one of my interlocutors, Zeynep, who grew up in the neighborhood in the 80s and 90s, and started to question the *untold* history of the city and her family because of the surrounding houses and stories revolving around them. Even though the mayor has foregrounded the economy and development based reasons and has refuted the claim that these houses (used to) belong to Armenians, as my interlocutor interprets, there are some political reasons behind deciding to start urban transformation. Therefore, it is safe to say that one of the primary aims of the municipality and TOKİ was to enact an overall “cleansing” in the neighborhood.



Figure 7-A general view of Muş during the current urban transformation project⁷

Muş, Daron region is one of the important regions in the Armenian history; there was a prominent population there. As she stated, in the last years more and more Armenians started to visit the city with the hope of finding their relatives' houses or to see where their ancestors lived. NGOs started to run projects about the local history of the city. As I mentioned before, one of these projects -Speaking to One Another- introduced different histories of Muş to me; it is the starting point of the present study. In addition to that, more academics have started to visit the city for their research; different photographers have paid visits for documenting the historicity and historical buildings/remnants within the border of the city. Therefore, the city's becoming a hotspot for various groups of people mostly interested in divergences in the monolithic historiography of the Republic of Turkey, posed some dangers for the already created hegemony. These buildings would not be demolished in 1980s and 1990s as hosted people from evocated and burnt villages. In other words, their physical being constituted potential homes for new comers, and did speed up migration from villages to the city center. However, with the recent rise of the

⁷ Photo credit belongs to the author, it was taken during the fieldwork

number of independent contractors in Muş, adequate number of buildings are erected and old ones are discarded. Therefore, it can be said that all these factors are reason why the urban transformation project is being realized.



Figure 8-The ongoing urban transformation project⁸

3.3.A Historic View of Hegemonic Identity Politics

Given that this chapter intends to reveal the hegemonic aspect of urban transformation in *Kale Mahallesi*, Muş, one must demonstrate how the Republic of Turkey has dealt with this plurality, especially in its identity politics since its foundation. In other words, in order to argue for the coherency and continuities in state policies, I first present a historical overview of the Turkish Republic's identity politics and demonstrate the ways in which such identity politics are hegemonic. I will then analyze the methods in which urban transformation has been implemented in ways that perpetuate what I consider these hegemonic policies.

⁸ Photo credit belongs to the author, it was taken during the fieldwork

Founding a nation state from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in which different nations and religions lived resulted in melting of the different constituents of that empire into the same pot for reaching a *desirable* national identity: Turkishness (Ince, 2012; Yeğen, 2006). The main components of this new identity have been structured upon speaking Turkish, being Muslim and secular, and embracing Turkishness (Ince, 2012; Kadioğlu, 1996; Sadoğlu, 2003). Therefore, when we take Muş into consideration, mostly Armenians and Kurds have been outcasted in this classification. Being Christian is the primary reason (among others such as ethnic difference and having a well-established society and language) why Armenians could not fit into this category, whereas Kurds have been able to claim their own ethnic identity and language, instead of embracing Turkishness, holding onto Kurdish rather than Turkish, while still living in the same territory.⁹ In the end, it is the struggle of the Turkish Republic over the ownership of territory. In analyzing this struggle, I utilize Gramsci's notion of transformist hegemony as interpreted by B. Williams, which I will elaborate in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

To briefly foreground my argument: Williams, in her book *Stains on My Name, War in My Veins*, posits a distinction between two kinds of hegemony conceptualized by Gramsci: expansive and transformist hegemony. It is the latter that I deploy in explaining the enforcement of the Turkish state institutes used to strengthen their power in the territory, and to spread Turkishness: "Where the national process aimed at homogenizing heterogeneity is fashioned around assimilating elements of that heterogeneity through appropriations that devalue them or that deny the source of their contribution, it establishes what Gramsci referred to as a transformist hegemony" (Williams, 1991, p. 30).

In order to transform a group, cutting ties with the previous set of orders and maintaining a new one lies at the base of this process. Thus, inevitably, forgetting enters into the debate. In his article that discusses different types of forgetting, Paul Connerton states that one of the forms of forgetting is repressive erasure. "Repressive erasure can be employed to deny the fact of a historical rupture as well as to bring about a historical break (...) Repressive erasure need not always take malign forms, then; it can be encrypted covertly and without apparent violence" (Connerton, 2008, p. 60). With and

⁹ Although the Kurds have also faced extreme state violence, especially in the 1990s, in the name of hegemonic Turkishness.

without apparent violence, the Republic of Turkey has been implementing what Connerton identifies as repressive erasure, in order to form and strengthen its identity politics.

The Place Where the Sun Rises: Muş, Bitlis, Van, Hakkari (Top, 2007) is a valuable source for spotting the hegemonic identity politics of Turkey as it was published, with permission of a significant state organ, by the printing house of the Ministry of Culture in Ankara in 2007. For this study, I have analyzed an excerpt of the book which was published as a tourism pamphlet by the governorship of Muş. As the pamphlet illustrates, name changes, silencing the history of *undesirable* groups, not mentioning their names and situating Turkishness as the focus and revolving history around it, are the most prominent mechanisms deployed by the state's identity politics. Instead of using the original Armenian and/or Kurdish names of villages and districts such as Tirkavank, Miğrakom and Hamurpet, they are all re-named after the foundation of the republic as Donatım, Çatbaş and Akdoğan, respectively.

Furthermore, not only the names but the culture is also presented as Turkified. The text introduces the traditional houses of Muş, the ones that have been erased during urban transformation project, as if only Turks live in the city, not taking Kurds, Armenians, Arabs, Turkmen and other ethnic groups into account: “Muş is a typical Turkish city with its settlement plan and streets” (Top: 2007, 147). Labeling all cultural heritage as Turkish, not reading the situation from a multicultural perspective is one form of Turkification embraced by the official discourse of the Turkish state. Thus, while describing the houses, the author repeatedly highlights that the same reality can be found in other traditional Turkish houses as well: “In the second floor, as it is in traditional Turkish houses, there is a hole and saloon looking to front side of the houses and used for chatting purpose” (148).

3.4.Preserved Buildings

Within the first phase of urban transformation, there were only four buildings—one house, the remnants of the Meryem Ana Church and two mosques—which were taken under preservation under the rubric of historical artifacts by the National Board of Preservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage. While the municipality's and the state

institutes' stance towards mosques is clear, as it has been discussed above, in order to understand the legal dimensions that the owners of the house and the church have undergone, I interviewed the owner of the house and the attorney of the family that owns the church.

The attorney, who is son of one of the legal heirs of the church, stated that his family/clientele bought the church from the state at auction in 1955. According to the statement of the attorney, In 2008, the church had been certified by the General Directorate for Foundations as a historical artifact. In July 2013, the municipality made a plea regarding its urgent expropriation, and in the same month the court gave the authority to confiscate the property. Then, the municipality filed the registration case: "Right after the registration case, we intervened in the process, after receiving a notice sent by them." It is important to note that the petition written by the municipality does not explicitly state that the church will be demolished. Instead, it is written that the municipality requires the land of the church for implementing infrastructural projects regarding permanent housing and social reinforcement lands that will be built within the scope of urban transformation and the development project. However, the petition does not mention anything about the importance of preserving the church (as a church). To the contrary, it highlights the importance of having the land. The defendants' attorney exegetically came to the conclusion that the church will be demolished if the municipality takes control of it. Then he mentioned that the attorney of the municipality orally stated that demolition will not take place, and that their intention is to renovate the church. Yet the municipality does not give any written document stating that they will not demolish the church, and the owners of the church do not *trust* the municipality because their oral statement is far from official. Not giving a written document guaranteeing that the church will stay as it is, but only uttering the statement by words is a sign of how the state operates through creating informalities. Informalities have also been implemented in the case of the owner of the preserved house.



Figure 9-Remnants of the Meryem Ana Church in Kale Mahallesi¹⁰

The owner of the house, according to deed certificates is the fourth one after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. His family started to live in the house right after migrating from a village, first as a tenant. Then his father bought the house from one of the locals who was their landlord after their arrival. Engin, the owner, states that the municipality tried so many times to get the house but he has been trying to protect his property. However, it was with the intervention of *AGOS* newspaper, an Armenian weekly newspaper based in Turkey and published in Turkish and Armenian, which helped his voice become more audible. *AGOS* intervened in the process when Engin wanted to protect his house and preserve it as an old, historical artifact. After publishing the story of Engin, a correspondent from *AGOS* had a phone interview with the mayor of Muş, Necmetti Dede. During the interview, Dede stated that “Armenians came to Muş after the Russian invasion and there is no historic house in the neighborhood left by Armenians.”¹¹ Then he continued:

Muş was invaded by Russians in 1917. Russians withdrew but Armenians stayed. They had a war with Turks with the guns taken from Russians. Since my childhood, stories stating that “this vineyard belonged to X person,” “there was a church here” have been told. Show me some evidence. If there is someone who has the deed [he refers to Engin who claims that he has deeds from Ottoman times]

¹⁰ Photo belongs to DVV International, it was taken in 2011 during the “Speaking to One Another” Project

¹¹ <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/5265/baskan-dede-den-mus-lu-gecmis-zaman> (Accessed date: 3rd of November, 2015)

coming from Armenians, why hasn't anyone presented the deed thus far? (*AGOS*, 12 July 2013)

Reviewing local newspapers from 2010 enables me to say that in the beginning of urban transformation process, neither TOKİ nor the municipality mentions Armenians in their statements. Instead, their statements predominantly revolved around economic concerns, as stated above, without giving any details about the legal side of urban transformation. However, after the intervention of the deputies of Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi – BDP), a Kurdish political party in Turkey active between 2008 and 2014, through press releases on demolishing Armenian houses read by its deputies Sırrı Sakık and Demir Çelik, and the subsequent news articles published by *AGOS*, TOKİ and the municipality started to release statements that negated the claims of the Members of Parliament and *AGOS*.

Sırrı Sakık and Demir Çelik posed an explicit parallel between urban transformation in the historical part of the city and what was done to the Armenians in 1915.

The technique used in demolishing historical Armenian houses resemble the one used 98 years ago (referring to 1915). The 27th article of the law number 2492 is the one that can be applied in warfare. The authority of urgent expropriation can be used in warfare only by the council of ministers. This authority is transferred to the Muş municipality by the decision of the council of ministers. With this authority, the Muş municipality gained the power of eternally demolishing and exterminating power (*Günaydın Muş Gazetesi*, 23 July 2013).

Their commentary on urban transformation is significant since it is one of the few statements made by political actors that contradicting with the majority of other state organs; the state's hegemonic discourse. It is mentioned that in regard to what happened in 1915, the denialist discourse of the Turkish state is structured on censoring the demolition and extermination implemented towards the Armenians, and the municipality of Muş has been repeating this same discourse.

The statement of the BDP deputies is significant not just for the more conspicuous purpose of drawing a parallel between what happened in 1915 and what has been happening within the framework of urban transformation. I argue that it is also crucial in showing that there is no homogeneity among *all* state actors. Due to differing political stances, Sakık and Çelik do not produce statements that are in synchrony with the Turkish state. As a party that fought for the rights of primarily Kurdish people (and secondarily for other ethnic and cultural minorities/others) by standing against the hegemonic discourse of the state, BDP implemented yet another form of identity politics because the

statement's purpose was to shake the solid base of the Turkish state's identity politics. It highlighted the violent acts committed in the name of the hegemonic power holder, it also demonstrates how there are significant continuities to these acts that still exist in contemporary Turkish society, forming the backbone of both the society's own identity politics as well as the deputies' statements regarding urban transformation.

Gramsci argues that the pure and ultimate source of violence and force is not the state itself. On the contrary, he reflexively underlines the importance of a disciplined and conscious human subjectivity for re-constituting hegemony. In order to create disciplined and conscious human subjectivities, both within the state and society, it is essential to increase the number of bodies that give consent; in other words, bodies conceptualize the world under the light of the discipliner's power. In the Gramscian understanding of hegemony, historical unfolding and its articulation inside concrete societies is important (Gramsci, 1992). How did the municipality receive consent from almost all residents of the neighborhood to start the urban transformation project? Was everyone willing to give their houses/lands to the municipality? What kinds of strategies were involved in the process of receiving people's consent? As Gramsci says, consent is crucial for hegemonic practices to sustain their being, and at the same time, consent is the outcome of the hegemonic practices' existence. Yet, what if consent does not materialize as the consequence?

In short, in the case of urban transformation in *Kale Mahallesi*, although the municipality and TOKİ attempted to demolish all buildings in the neighborhood, because of the owners' and their attorney's initiative, Meryem Ana Church and one of the old houses have been preserved. The BDP deputies' statements and the article published by AGOS have also been quite beneficial in this process. However, before discussing the importance of having two old buildings in the neighborhood, I will underline the ways in which hegemony was implemented in the process that I refer to as the process of attaining people's consent; and how informality was used for operating the process.

3.5. Threatening and Persuasion

The mayor of Muş has repeatedly stated that the urban transformation project is being implemented for the improvement and development of the neighborhood. With the project, he claims, the old and uncared-for houses will be replaced by newly built, modern concrete ones. On the other hand, during my conversations in the field, some people who have been living in the neighborhood for decades stated that although they tried to work with independent contractors before, they could not renew their houses since *Kale Mahallesi* did not have a reconstruction permit (*imar izni olmayan bölge*). As the reconstruction permit was given by the council of ministers with the collaboration between TOKİ and the Muş municipality, for so many people urban transformation stood as an optimistic hope for the renewal of their houses and for others, for monetizing diminished investments. However, implemented economic measurements such as the price proposed per square meter made so many people angry. In addition, the rent allowance per month, 350 TL, would not suffice to rent a house in Muş, as rent prices have increased significantly due to the establishment of the city's university, Muş Alparslan University, in 2007. Therefore, most people who were once happy about the decision of urban transformation were no longer satisfied, once they became more familiar with its actual conditions and implications. Most of them did not want to leave their home since it would not be beneficial for them. Engin, the owner of the preserved house, stated that different strategies have been used by the agents of urban transformation in order to convince people to leave. These strategies included threatening people with lawsuits if they did not leave their houses, making use of TOKİ's power as a part of the office of the prime minister, and taking advantage of the economic situation of the neighborhood dwellers, who could have readily used the extra funds to subsidize their already meager lifestyles.

They offered fifty thousand Turkish Liras for my house. Then they added, 'you will give us over the house, and in return, we will sell you a flat from the newly built building for thirty-five thousand liras. If you do not accept our offer, the next time it will be thirty thousand. If you do not accept our latest offer, we will automatically confiscate your house, and the money will be in your bank account in 10 days maximum. I have three flats and a garden here. Even though I have the deed, it can be confiscated without asking and the money sent to your back account. They say you can sue but you cannot. How so? For example, they say I give one hundred million now, next time I will give twenty-five million. Thus, so

many people signed documents. After putting your signature, even if you sue them, it is useless.

As long as two-thirds of the residents in any given area where urban transformation is implemented give their consent, the other houses can be confiscated without the permission of their owners, unless there are reasons for preserving them (e.g. they are historical artifacts). Though in the beginning, Engin's house was one of the confiscated properties, with the decision of The National Board of Preservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, he managed to preserve it. However, this process was not easy for him. In fact, his insistence on keeping the house and maintaining it in the end caused TOKİ to change the project completely. Engin mentioned that some workers were frightening into suing him for astronomic amounts of money.

Engin: They do not ask you how much you would want for your own domain. It says I transferred that much to the bank, I am the state and you will leave this house. People say, it is TOKİ, it is the state, what can we do?

Atak: While they were demolishing other houses, did not they want to demolish yours, too?

Engin: They did but I resisted. they told me that they sued me for 1.5 trillion Turkish lira (million in the current system); they told me that you cannot pay that much money, so you cannot resist and speak in this way.

Atak: Did they really sue or threaten you?

Engin: They did threaten, did not sue. For what would they sue me? I said, bring me 1.5 trillion and I will give you my signature and then you will sue me. How come can you sue me on my own property? I have the deed; I have the property. It is mine. I don't want you to demolish my house. I won't demolish my house. Then, they understood that they can't do anything, spread the rumor among people that they did sue me for 1.5 trillion. If you do a mistake, you will also be sued for 1.5 trillion. Because of their fear, people demolished their house.

In order to protect themselves from the power of state organs and from the burden of a large fine, people gave their consent to urban transformation. People give their consents as the result of informality and threatening used in the process. In order to run the urban transformation project, the municipal workers and TOKİ workers were assigned to convince people. Demographic features of the neighborhood are determinant in the consent-giving process. As mentioned above, an important number of inhabitants moved to the city center because of evacuations of villages. Thus, in order not to mingle with power holders and their possible brutalities, they did give their consents. In other words, informality and people's previous experiences became determinant in the transformist hegemony.

However, despite all the strategies implemented by the municipality and TOKİ to maintain their hegemonic power, there are two historical buildings left in the neighborhood. From now on, the TOKİ's project is obliged to integrate them as preserved structures into their plans. So, the question is: What will be their importance in the neighborhood?

3.6.The Importance of the Preserved Houses

What is the importance of keeping them in the neighborhood, especially since they will be further decontextualized after the urban transformation project? What kind of a role will they play when they are surrounded by tall concrete buildings? In his book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), Trouillot underscores the role of power in silencing certain voices from history, by focusing on the suppression of the roles of Africans in the Haitian Revolution. He explains the story of Jean Baptiste Sans Souci, the Congo-born guerrilla leader, who was murdered by his former commander and comrade Henry Christophe since he was one of the most powerful opponents of reestablishment of the imperial French control therefore slavery. When Christophe became King Henry I of Haiti, he built the Sans Souci palace figuratively and literally over the murdered body of the African hero, with the hope of ruining his memory completely when visitors from Europe assumed that the name Sans Souci was borrowed from the palace of the same name in Potsdam, Germany. As Trouillot states “Henry killed Sans Souci twice: first, literally, during their last meeting; second, symbolically, by naming his most famous palace Sans Souci . . . [which] erased Sans Souci from Christophe's own past, and it erased him from his future” (1995, p. 59). All these is done by keeping the thing, change its meaning and context.

Gramsci deeply positions hegemonic power as in the process of generating values and beliefs, moral and intellectual ideas by which the world is organized and perceived and through which the world acquires meaning. He also emphasizes culture in this prescription—how it is generated and organized. “Man is above all else mind, consciousness -- that is, he is a product of history, not of nature” (Gramsci, 1992). What happens if there are *untold* chapters in that history, as in the case of the Turkish Republic and what happened to the Armenians in 1915? Will these buildings be sufficient to make

new generations “curious” to discover these chapters?

In this sense, Williams’s discussion on the framework of transformist hegemony is crucial for interpreting the follow-up steps of urban transformation. She claims that even though marginalized groups keep respecting their own values, because they do not have enough power to change mainstream understanding, they will always be outcaste. Their cultural products either will be out of the homogeneous brew or, assume that they are accepted, the acceptance will be so systematic that nothing will change regarding their marginalization. The limited nature of public debates in transformist hegemonies and its being controlled by the system results in the filtering out of the unwanted, outcaste groups.

Thus, in a transformist hegemony, the limits of public debate on all issues are established around a set of criteria and a mode of interpreting those criteria that aim to render illegitimate attempts on the part of marginalized others to expand the criteria or to insist on a different mode or even range of legitimate interpretations. Within a transformist hegemony, the marginalized citizens of the state may continue to value highly objects, to adhere to practices, and to maintain commitments to ideas that are devalued in the putatively homogeneous brew. As long as they lack the political and economic power necessary to insist on a redefinition of what are ideologically defined as the core or the central ingredients of that brew, or to insist on a reevaluation of the status of their group identities and their cultural productions, these remain outside the "mainstream." Their new cultural products are either excluded from or absorbed into the homogeneous brew in ways that do little to reduce their marginalization (Williams, 1991, p. 31).

Even though two buildings, one church and one house are protected as the result of the resistance of their owners, intervention of AGOS and BDP, it is not guaranteed that the physical material will stay there as a counter-hegemonic force. Instead, the physical material might be reabsorbed into the brew, which attempts to render maximum homogeneity. Although their faith is not clear yet, the owners of the church and the house think of opening them up to tourism after the renovation process. It is probable that at the end of their renovation, these buildings will be “naturalized,” domesticated, and thus added into the brew. However, I argue that even if they are incorporated into the brew, their material existences will continue to be significant. It would be so assertive to say that they will continue surviving as what Pierre Nora (1989) calls “sites of memory” since they are already decontextualized and their meaning changed. In this sense sentences of Zeynep, an interlocutor of mine who grew up in the historical neighborhood, significant for showing the importance of the preserved buildings despite their decontextualized settings: “next generations will delve deeper just because of the fact that there will be the

church and the house surrounded by concrete buildings. This contrast will spark their curiosity.”

These buildings, as well as their “naturalized” versions, do carry the potential to increase the next generations’ “curiosity” to show the change in the neighborhood. As Williams says, even though hegemonic powers marginalize outcaste groups in order to homogenize the brew it prepares, the space occupied by these groups will keep reproducing heterogeneity.

Although they remain marginalized, the heterogeneity they represent is never eliminated from the system ... In the face of these tendencies toward heterogeneity, even where the homogenizing process achieves a naturalized (that is, taken as given in the natural condition of things) transformist hegemony, heterogeneity remains an essential aspect of the production of culture as a logico-meaningful system in human societies. (Williams, 1991, p. 31).

With the urban transformation project, the neighborhood will “get rid of” its economically and politically marginalized groups soon. However, the presence of the church and the house; their very physical being, despite the possible loss of their meaning and cultural significance after the renovation and instrumentalisation for tourism, makes the blend in the melting pot less homogeneous and gives a distinct flavor and taste. Although they will lose the possibility of being counter-hegemonic after losing their meaning and context, it is important to keep them since TOKİ and the Muş municipality could not, after all, demolish them entirely, and have to find a way for including them into their project.

3.7. Conclusion

Why did the municipality decide to implement urban transformation in the historical part of the neighborhood? How does the municipality make a case for their decision; in addition, how do my interlocutors evaluate the municipality’s decision and the statements made by the city’s mayor? Can the ongoing urban transformation be read as one of the omission strategies implemented by the Turkish state organs to eliminate different marginalized groups presence, including Armenians and economically disadvantaged people, in the neighborhood? In which ways did the municipality and TOKİ implement their hegemonic power to obtain consent from the neighborhood’s dwellers? What kind of processes did the owners of the preserved buildings go through? What will be the

significance of these buildings in a totally transformed neighborhood? After answering these questions in this chapter, in the next chapter, I will scrutinize how people situate themselves towards the historicity of the neighborhood, the *desired* identity created by the Turkish Republic and how they personify Bourdieu's conceptualization of economic, social and cultural capital.



CHAPTER IV

REFLECTIONS IN THE SILVER MIRROR: ECONOMY OF IDENTITIES

4.1.Introduction

“What will be the importance of the preserved buildings in the context of urban transformation?” was one of the questions that I asked almost in all interviews I conducted. As discussed in the previous chapter, one of my interlocutors who discovered the Armenian past in *Kale Mahallesi* through old houses, stated that they will be important for opening up a space for next generations to delve into the history of the neighborhood and the history of the Republic of Turkey. Then, she added that having two historical buildings, one church and one house, in the neighborhood full of tall concrete buildings will create a contrast sparking people’s curiosity.

However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Trouillot explains how past is silenced through decontextualizing and recontextualizing the existing material. In other words, mere existence of the physical objects, in this case preserved buildings, might not be sufficient for shaking the ground of hegemonic historiography produced by power holders. Trouillot mentions that there is a silencing in the making of sources. In this process, not everything gets remembered and recorded. “Accepted past” is the key word deciding what will be included and excluded; not all historical evidence is included in the general version of “accepted past.” Relatedly, there is a silencing in the creation of archives. Judgements made and some evidence is lost and omitted in order to keep the

coherence of narratives revolving around the ‘accepted past.’ “Silences are inherent in the creation of sources, the first moment of historical production. Unequal control over historical production obtains also in the second moment of historical production, the making of archives and documents” (Trouillot, 1995). Even though we accept the physical remnants or the preserved buildings as another form of archives, as Anoush Suni (2015) does, we need to analyze under which circumstances and in which context these materials carry the role of being archives. In short, all these strategies for silencing the past might be accepted as another form of omission strategy implemented by power holders, along with name changes and seizure of properties.

However, the role of human beings in the creation of history is worth to scrutinize. As Trouillot says, “human beings participate in history both as actors and as narrators” (Trouillot, 1995, p. 2). If we still know Kurdish or Armenian names of villages and town, despite their official names are changed for a long while ago, it is the result of participation of human beings in history as actors and narrators. People’s own agendas, their political affiliations and ways of thinking are determinant in how they make and narrate history. The participant observation I conducted in Muş showed that sometimes people may be interested in the history of the city just for opening a new source of income: treasure hunting. In order to collect more information on the past of the neighborhood, they talk to old people, read books and try to communicate especially with descendants of Armenians who lived in the neighborhood. Therefore, in order to understand how people deal with silenced past of their city or contribute to the silencing process, by following the steps of Bourdieu, I argue the importance of reintroducing different forms of capitals into this debate, especially since it sheds light on the connection between memory and materiality: “It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory” (Bourdieu, 1986) .

4.2.Economic Capital

4.2.1. Tourism

“The modern Turkish economy was for a large part established, quite fundamentally, on the Young Turk seizure of Ottoman Armenian property” say Üngör and Polatel (p. 168) As discussed in the previous chapter, looting the villages, houses and fields of Armenians had an impact on the economy and the law systems of the Turkish Republic. As its latest reflection, the urban transformation started in the historical neighborhood of Muş. However, there is a recurrent regret that is shared by a great majority, that the historical neighborhood or other historical sites in Muş, such as churches, bridges and monasteries would be useful for the city’s economy. “It would be for the good of everyone if the whole neighborhood was expropriated and renovated for tourism” is one of the recurrent sentences produced by local people of Muş. As Engin, the owner of the preserved house I elaborate in detail in chapter three, stated, “If this neighborhood was not demolished, it would be quite beneficial for Muş. For example, if they renovated, let say one thousand people visited every year and spent an amount of money. Where would this money go? In this way, people would earn money, the municipality would earn, too.” It is true that if those buildings were preserved, tourism would be one of the main sources of income for Muş. However, other questions then follow: Who would be the potential tourist coming to Muş to visit old houses? How have officials acted towards the tourists who have visited Muş so far? Why did they decide to transform the neighborhood instead of preserving it?

Engin: This part is historical. For example, so many tourists were coming here before. Sometimes, 5 buses were coming.

Atak: Who were coming here?

Engin: People from everywhere, from Turkey or abroad. People who left Muş were also coming. In other words, the owners of houses. Owners of so many houses were coming. They were sitting in the house and crying. They were telling that ‘my father’s house was like this; oh my grandfather’s house was like this; did my sleep here...’

Atak: Do they come now?

Engin: No they don’t. They come and see only the church and my house. They don’t see something else.

The statements I present below are highlighted in order to understand that the decision of the urban transformation is not only economy related, but there is also an ideological aspect to it. An interlocutor of mine, a photographer from Muş, explained how

directorates of tourism, especially in the 1980s, were used as the security intelligence through a story that he heard from a former director of tourism. The anecdote highlights what kind of strategies were developed by the government to keep *foreigners* away from the *undesirable* cultural heritage of the geography.

[A former director of tourism explains] *Foreigner* people, Armenian or others, tell that I will go to Çengilli/Surp Garabet Monastery, and ask how can I go there? In the command/writ, we were told to say that ‘there is no such a place here, there is no such a place.’ Then the person (tourist) finds it on map, goes there and finds the place. Then he comes and says you told me that there is no such a place, but I went there and saw it. We had nothing to say.

After demonstrating the close collaboration between governmental offices, he narrated what he experienced in 1985.

I printed single and doubled postcards of Muş. They had historical mosques, street and the old bridge. I also put a frame from Çengilli Church (Surp Garabet Monastery). In 1985 they came. I knew that they were not from here. They said they were inspectors from the security general directorate. Then, they showed me the postcard and asked if it was mine. I said yes; mine. They asked me with what purpose I put this photo, the photo of the church. He said exactly this. I said, I did not have any purpose. The historic places in Muş are the bridge, mosques and the church. There should be something, so that people would know, maybe one or two tourists would come. There is Akhtamar Church there, thousands of tourists come to Van. The face of the city changed. Muş also has something, this is the aim. They left the postcard and went.

Trying to keep tourists/foreigners away from churches and monasteries or interrogating a photographer just because he published a postcard including a frame of a church are only some of the signs of the unease of the Republic of Turkey towards these places. As discussed in the previous chapter, the city was reconstructed after the formation of the Republic to make it more appropriate for its ethic of development, Turkification and identity politics. As the officials are well aware of the historiography of the city and the fact that the potential tourist would prominently be Armenians, whether originally from Muş or not, these places, mostly religious centers and houses, are accepted as *undesirable*. Thus, as the result of the hegemonic enforcements, they are either ruined, kept as ruins or demolished as in the case of the urban transformation. Besides economy-related reasons, all these ruinations and annihilations are done to create a new history for the city and to annihilate the sites of memories referring to Armenian history; in other words, to silence the past.

4.2.2. Treasure Hunting

However, houses, churches or villages are not the only signifiers of the Armenians' presence in the region, as conversations I had with people in Muş highlight. Since people are into finding buried possessions of Armenians, treasure hunting is one of the inevitable subjects that people constantly talk about. Whoever I interacted with is either an active treasure hunter or has some stories related with it. “‘Armenian’ in its association with gold and treasures functions as a signifier of generic pastness, unspecified in its historicity” (2016, p. 8) says Alice von Bieberstein in her recent article on the role of treasure hunting in Muş. I agree with her argument that treasures function as a signifier of generic pastness. Even though most of the treasure hunters I interacted with feel uneasy talking about the atrocities happened in 1915, instead of mentioning the Armenian history of the city which dates back to so many centuries ago, they wrap everything up in Ottoman Empire. However, on the other hand, in a land where even the word Armenian is used in a pejorative form, through materialities left by Armenians, people talk about the city's past and mention Armenians.

Statistics show that Muş is one of the most underdeveloped cities of Turkey; *Kale Mahallesi* is in itself one of the most underdeveloped districts¹². Therefore, most people see treasure hunting as a source of income and hope to be in the money. Accordingly, there is a market for treasure hunting revolving around high-tech detectors, maps, collaborations and preparations. In the first week of the fieldwork, when I explained to a seventy-year-old man that I wanted to interview him about the history of the neighborhood, he told me “do not try to find old people to learn about the history of this *mahalle*, go and find treasure hunters, you will see that they know better than everyone else.” In line with these sentences, another interviewee of mine, who repetitively underlined that he is well aware of the history of Muş as they have been living in the city center for centuries, mentioned his friend's son. “He -his friend's son- is in my children's age. One day, we had a conversation. As if he was an archeologist, he talked about every bits of the region that people search in. I said, I am not engaged in such activities, my knowledge is limited.”

12 <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=24561> (access date: 15.06.2016).

4.3.Social Capital

The Armenian history in Muş is already over because of the genocide and the hegemonic enforcements of officials, such as name changes, omitting Armenian past and decontextualizing and re-contextualizing history around the materials left by Armenians. However, this does not mean that there are no Armenians left in the city. One of my interlocutors, Zeynep, who grew up in the historical part of the city stated that she heard from an Armenian living in Muş that the current Armenian population in the city center and villages is around two to three thousand. While around two hundred of this population is Christian, the rest is Islamized Armenians. Especially through treasure hunting, antiquary and tourism, Armenian presence in Muş is still crucial for economic capital of the city. Therefore, it can be said that materials left by Armenians has been determinant in the economy of Turkey and it still plays its crucial role. Thus, I find it important to scrutinize what it means to be Armenian in such a setting and what forms of capital are effective for claiming or disavowing the identity of Armenianness.

Right after coming back from Muş in April 2015, while transcribing the interview I conducted, I figured out that I asked questions as if there was no Armenian living there anymore; as if they stayed in the past. However, there is an association called ‘Daron Muş Armenians Solidarity, Social and Tourism Association’, *Daron Muş Ermeniler Dayanışma Sosyal, Turizm Derneği*, run by Armenians living in Muş. There both Muslim and Christian Armenians living in Muş today.

“We have such people who did not take anything regarding Islam. *But*, we look at that Armenian, he accepted Islam and he is more pious than us. How can I differentiate/separate them? We have such people in our dervish lodge. *Though* we know that their mothers and fathers are of Armenian origin, in terms of Islam, they live better than us” said one of my interviewees, Ahmet, who performs being Muslim as his primary identity.

Some generations have already passed after the (forcible) conversions during the genocide in 1915. Some of those who were converted, accepted Islam as their religion, some other converted back to Christianity. However, especially for those who remained in Islam, coming from an Armenian family may create an undesired social capital. As the sentences of Ahmet show, they might be judged, assessed on the basis of their

(grand)parents' religious beliefs. Conjunctions that Ahmet used, but and though, show that he positions himself in a place that can judge Islamized Armenians' faith since they became Muslims later.

The interview I conducted with Ahmet was not one-to-one, it was an opportunistic focus group. It was towards the end of my fieldwork, in order to have a systematic conversation and a voice record, I decided to have an interview with one of my interlocutors, Tugay, whom I spent much time with. We were in a tea garden in Muş. Right after asking the first question and hearing his answer, one of his relatives in his mid-60s, Ahmet, interrupted and joined us. Just a few minutes after the interruption, another relative of my informant, Tugay's collateral uncle in his mid-80s, Mehmet, joined us. By chance, I had the moment of having an opportunistic focus group. After introducing myself and my research, I asked for permission to record an interview with them at that very moment. After getting the permission, I started to ask my questions.

Throughout the interview, silence of Mehmet was quite remarkable. Unless questions specifically asked to him, he did not jump into to conversation but silently listened to ideas and explanations of two other people and mine. Right before the conversation was revolving around Islamized Armenians, Ahmet -the one in his 60s- started talking about how beautiful the city was in the past. He laid an emphasis on the vivid neighborliness between Armenians and others, and on Armenians' honesty. Meanwhile, the older uncle, Mehmet, added in a second that "Armenians back in that time were like this" [*O zamanki Ermeniler öyleymiş*]. Then Ahmet continued explaining how the war started and Armenians helped Russians to invade the city. He explained brutalities of Armenian soldiers in great details and how Russian soldiers rescued a woman from the hands of Armenian ones, and continued: "Russians were merciful; Armenians do not have the mercy." After approving his friend's sentence, Mehmet added "Russians are merciful, they help you but Armenians hit. Armenians do not have the feeling of mercy; they do not have the feeling of pity."

After that moment, the subject came to Islamized Armenians and how well some of them exercise Islam. While Mehmet kept his silence, by lowering his voice, Ahmet explained that there are Islamized Armenians, and compared those Islamized Armenians with his "own people." Then he uttered the sentences I quoted above.

Silence of Mehmet, the older one, was still remarkable. Up until the end of the interview, he distanced himself from Armenians, he referred to Armenians as heathens/infidels and attributed some pejorative adjectives. However, at the end, I specifically asked him if he remembers Gule and if her stories were told. Gulezar (Gule) was an Armenian woman living in region and he was abducted by one of the Kurdish Beghs of the time, Musa Begh. She rebelled against him and though he forced Gule to accept Islam, she fought for keeping her Christian faith. Her case was brought to the central court of Istanbul and observed closely by the national and international media and politicians (see: *Gülizar'ın Kara Düğünü*) Though the older uncle were still silent, Tugay, my informant and his nephew, jumped into the conversation and said “Gule is my uncle’s [referring to Mehmet] grandmother.” Then Ahmet, the one in his sixties, explained the degree of affinity between Gule and Mehmet. I added that Gule is one of my friends’ grandmother, one of my *Armenian* friends’. Then the conversation followed as such:

Atak: Gule is one of my friends’ grandmother; one of my Armenian friends’ grandmother

Mehmet: Is that so?

Atak: A group of grandchildren of Gule’ is in Armenia, in Turkey-Bursa and France.

Mehmet: Brother, find her immediately. You win the lottery (he laughs secretly)

Mehmet, the older uncle was not happy with the revealed fact that her grandmother was Armenian. As a person who carries the faith in Islam, he was not comfortable with the situation, especially because of his friend’s presence. As the expression, “you win the lottery,” shows, the younger uncle, Ahmet, subtly mocked his friend as it turned out that Mehmet was of Armenian origin, his family was Islamized Armenian, a convert or as in Turkish, *dönme*. The conversation followed another fifteen minutes, I asked only a few more questions related with Gule; related with Gule’s personality, her being stubborn and tough. During the conversation, my memory failed me to remember the name of begh who abducted Gule. When both uncles went to pray, I called my friend to learn the name. In order to understand if we are talking about the same Gule, I planned to ask some questions about Musa begh but after finishing the pray, they did not sit at the table and told that they are leaving. We were all standing by the table when I insisted to ask one more question. Before letting me finish the question, he refuted the kinship between him and Gule.

Atak: One last name. Musa Begh, the one who abducted Gule, ...

Mehmet: Well, not that Gule. Not Gule. I know that Gule. I, myself know that Gule. She is the wife of Musa Begh, mother of Nuh Begh. She is his second wife; Kor Hüseyin Paşa's uncle's daughter; Zortemir Paşa's granddaughter. How long will you stay here? Come here after the midday pray. I will give you information about Gule. I will give you information about that Gule. Since you took the trouble, I will give you information; otherwise I would not.

Arranging another appointment without his Muslim friend, starting the second meeting with saying "I am here to clarify the subject," and when I was not at the table with them, by forgetting the tape recorder on the table, warning his nephew by saying that "When you establish a dialogue with strangers, you have to be very careful. Do not explain everything, do not tell everything. You should keep what you know in yourself" show that Armenian identity is something that he avoids himself from, at least in publicly. At the end of the second meeting, on the contrary to what he said when his friend was with us -not that Gule- he accepted that we were talking about the same Gule. Even, he tried to convince me that we were talking about the same Gule.

Atak: Where is the tombstone of Gule?

Mehmet: It should be in Patnos. In one of the villages

Atak: I think we are talking about different Gules

Mehmet: No no, We are talking about sama Gule

Atak: But the tombstone of this Gule is in Istanbul

Mehmet: No no, her tombstone is in Patnos.

As Bourdieu states, "social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 89). Mehmet was not happy with his revealed secret since it erodes the existent social capital he built as a devoted Muslim. Since I was an outsider in Muş, explaining his family background to me would not harm him that much, however talking about such a subject in front of his friend would bring him a reputation of being a convert. I argue that this is the reason why he did not elaborate much on the story of Gule during the opportunistic focus group. However, as he was curious about what I knew about Gule and her grandchildren in France, he gave me another appointment to explain his story.

He is not the only one who does not want to be known as an Islamized Armenian. One of the members of the Armenian association in Muş, Hasan, told me that he first received negative reactions from his relatives when the association was established.

I told you that I got negative reactions from my relatives. I told them that we are from the Armenian nation, *Ermeni milleti*, we are Armenians; they say God forbid, *Tövbe Estağfurullah*. Armenian does not mean religion. They still know it as a religion. I tell them that the religion of Armenians is Christianity but we are Muslim. They are Christian Armenians; we are Muslim Armenians. They say, no we are Kurds.

Taking refuge in the identity of Kurdishness is a safe place for some, as it does not open a space for questioning their religious identities, being Muslim. Therefore, in order not to jeopardize their religious identity and social capital, some prefer forgetting and continuing with the given identity. However, it does not mean that every Armenian in Muş rejects their Armenian and/or Christian identities. Therefore, while analyzing different forms of capital, especially for social capital, context-based analysis is quite crucial.

Two of my interviewees, one Christian and one Muslim, who publicly identify as Armenians, narrated stories about “how they learned that they were Armenian.” In other words, they told me their stories of discovering their Armenian background. Right after hearing so many details, including numbers, names, locations, from Tigran, the Christian Armenian, about Armenians lived in the territory, I asked him how come he learned all these. Then he explained how he learned his Armenianness through a shepherd when he was either in the second or the third grade, through a shepherd; when a 25-year-old shepherd approached Tigran and his friends to steal their notebooks and pencils when they were walking to school. Then endless conversations with his grandfather started. .

Atak: How did you keep all this detailed information in your memory? How was it transmitted?

Tigran: It was told to me. I wrote it down by myself. When I was little, my grandfather explained. I was 9 years old when I learned that I am Armenian. He was 25. There was not a school in our village. I studied primary and middle school in the town. Back that time, I think we were in the second or the third grade. He was a 25-year-old sphered. His grandfather was a well-reputed thief. What would you expect from him, he was also a thief. He approached us and said that take everything out from your begs. I resisted and said I won't. He was 25 years old. He slapped each one of us. He opened our bags to take our pencils and blank notebooks. We were three friends. One of my friend was Kurd, another was Armenian. Then, his 15-year-old friend joined, most probably they were cousins. After the younger one asked who they are, the older one learned our fathers' names and started to explain. By pointing out one of my friends, he said this is Armenian; for the other friend, this is Kurd; and, he showed me and said this is Armenian, too. I immediately went back to find my grandfather while crying. It was after walking for 2-3 kilometers that I decided to go back. I lamentingly asked my grandfather, ‘what are we? Are we Armenians?’ My grandfather said yes. Then

we continued. I made my grandfather explain at nights, I told him Then, I told my grandfather to explain to me what happened and why there are no Armenians here; why he does not have his sibling; why he does not have any sisters; why he does not have any other relatives? ... It was in 1994, I was married. I asked him until 1994, then he passed away.

On the other hand, without creating a detailed narrative, the Muslim-Armenian interlocutor of mine, Hasan, told me that he had learned that he was Armenian when he was 9 or 10. He learned this through his grandmother who was 75-80 years old that time.

Hasan: Back that time Armenians were not revealing themselves. There was some pressure. We were already (by lowering his voice) Turkified. We were Islamized. We were already Islamized, in terms of religion. Then step by step... There were Kurds, Turks, Armenians, but Armenians were absent. I mean they were there but absent. A person should not deny her/his origin. Mankind have accepted different religions but origin is very important. Armenianness is origin. We are Armenian, what can you do (smiling) (*Biz Ermeniysek Ermeniyiz, ne yapıcan*)

Atak: How did you learn?

Hasan: I learned through my grandmother. Back that time she was 75-80 years old. She was also alive during the war. She was married.

Atak: Around Mongok?

Hasan: Around Sason. Then, after the 1915 genocide, he married with my grandfather. I learned Armenianness from her. She told/taught us our Armenianness, ancestors and grandfathers. Then we learned.

Then he started to talk about Arak monastery and the visits he paid with his grandmother. “My grandmother was praying there. She was putting a piece of rope into beeswax, and going there every Sunday to pray. My father was performing salat, my grandmother was Christian. She was going to church to pray. She did not experience any pressure in the family.” Although Hasan did not elaborate on whether his grandmother was known as a Christian Armenian by the neighbors or whether only family members were acknowledged with her faith, what he underlined throughout his narrative is that it was not easy to announce one’s Armenianness nor to embrace one’s Armenianness as one of identities.

To exemplify the difficulty of announcing Armenianness, Hasan continued this time with his father’s story. In the 1980s, when Hasan’s father found and saw his uncle’s daughter in Diyarbakır, he could not muster up the courage to talk to her. In other words, he could not approach his cousin, even though he traced her in Diyarbakır. Hasan said he criticized his father because of his cowardice and said “I cannot understand; she is your sister. How

come you did not talk to her.” His father’s words that he angrily uttered demonstrate all too poignantly his fear for revealing his Armenianness and the possible outcome of such an action: “If I talked to her they would kill me *and* her.”

Even the association established by Armenians -Daron Muş Armenians Solidarity, Social and Tourism Association- is a sign of the fact that the identity situation in the region is not as severe as before. In other words, people are not killed by other people just because they announce their Armenianness. However, it does not mean that the hegemonic identity politics or its oppressive enforcements totally changed. The state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971) still keep surveilling people or institutions, especially if they embrace and fight for their *undesired* identities.

On the 15th of August, when I was in the city center of Muş carrying out fieldwork, there was a photo circulated on different mediums of social media showing three men standing by a naked dead woman’s body. As the governorship of Muş confirmed, it was taken in Varto, one of the districts of Muş¹³. She, Ekin Wan, was a guerilla from People's Defense Forces (Hêzên Parastina Gel - HPG) that is the military wing of The Kurdistan Workers' Party, (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê - PKK), killed by soldiers on the 10th of August. Killing a person, torturing her dead body and displaying it are the bloody and cruel actions done by the Turkish State actors to maintain the metaphysical being called state and its hegemonic politics. As said before, the identity situation in the region is not as severe as before, if and only if, Kurdishness (saying Armenianness would be so optimist) is used in a multi-colored, multi-cultural and pluralist connotation, stripped from all political ideas and claims.

Another sign of surveillance done by state apparatuses was the statement made during the opening ceremony by one of the members of the Armenian association in Muş regarding the number of police officers.

The number of police officers attended the opening was two times more than the participants. I argued with them; I said there are 174 NGOs in Muş. To which one did you go with that many of officers? I distributed invitation letters to the governor, mayor and the chief police, none of them showed up. There were only too many officers. We brought some grapes; offered to officers, too. They did not want to eat. Then I said, leave! Why do you stay here! They said, we are here to protect you. I said, we are all fine there is no need to protect us.

¹³ <http://www.diken.com.tr/mus-valiligi-ciplak-pkkli-kadin-fotografinin-gercek-oldugunu-duyurdu/> (access date: 15, June, 2016).

To my Christian-Armenian interlocutor, Tigran, I asked what kind of reactions he gets from people after openly stating his identities, especially him being both Armenian and Christian. He said there are both positive and negative reactions that are determined by how people situate themselves in relation to the government. Kurds or Turks, regardless of their ethnic identities, give negative reactions, if they feel close to the system, he said.

The negative side is the system side, the other side on the other hand is the ones who consider themselves as social-democrat and give a helping hand... so there is that side too. If we are here, we are here because of this second side. So they say, if they take us into custody maybe each one of them would enjoy that moment at their houses which rest upon the existing system. But the other side, that side, will be really unhappy. I know, there will also be resistance and especially from the youth. In the neighboring provinces, the youth whom we worked with during the election campaigns heard from the political parties that I am Armenian. Whenever I enter into an election office, you can see that the youth is approaching to me. I mean 20-22-year-old young people. They come and apologize for fifty times and ask what they can do for the Armenian community. There is also this kind of young population.

It is crucial that he underlines the fact that their being is under favor of the social-democrat part of the society. If there was not such a support, most probably it would not be easy for him to announce his Armenianness. “The existence of a network of connections is not a natural given, or even a social given, constituted once and for all by an initial act of institution, represented, in the case of the family group, by the genealogical definition of kinship relations, which is the characteristic of a social formation” says Bourdieu (1986, p. 89) Circumstances are determinant especially in social capital since it is related with membership in a group. Statements of another interlocutor of mine who actively takes part in the Kurdish movement for years, on Tigran and when he “came out” as a Christian Armenian is the sign of the necessity of a context-based analysis.

His relatives, for example uncle’s son, are quite religious and *hajji*. He also gets reactions from them. When The Peoples’ Democratic Congress (*Halkların Demokratik Kongresi* - HDK) was formed, he joined with his Armenian identity. For a while there was a rumor that there is an Armenian in Muş named Tigran. I knew Hüseyin before but I did not hear the name Tigran before. Hüseyin was not actually telling people that he is Armenian until a few years ago. Then I was curious who Tigran is. I know Hüseyin for years but not as Tigran. After HDK, I got to know him as Tigran. I learned that people I knew before had different names as Aşot, Sevag and so forth. They recently started to mention.

It does not necessarily mean that Tigran embraced his Armenian identity after HDK; that HDK is the turning point for discovering his past. It is most probable that, as in lives of so many Kurdish people, he used his Armenian name in the household; the other name was to be known by outsiders (Neyzi, Darıcı, & Darıcı, 2013). After telling people that he is Armenian, embracing his Armenian name and taking part in political organizations, it is obvious that Tigran acquired more social capital in a group of politicized people. The change happened in a short period of time shows that social capital is related with group consciousness and it can be acquired quite fast.

4.4.Cultural Capital

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 82)

As stated before, the duality in names and the increased popularity of Tigran after announcing his Armenianness indicate that social capital can be acquired in a shorter period of time. However, important to underline that cultural capital of Tigran he has accumulated for years, enables him to build up his social capital. The main elements of his cultural capital can be classified as follows: knowing history, being taught by his grandfather regarding happened in the past and being proficient in the Armenian language. Since the curriculum in state schools run by the Turkish government reproduces the denialist discourse regarding the Armenian genocide and there is no Armenian school in Muş, home-schooling is quite crucial for developing cultural capital as an Armenian. Tigran's case shows that even though he publicized his Christian Armenian identity recently, even though he was known as Kurd, he invested in his cultural capital for long years.

“But the most powerful principle of the symbolic efficacy of cultural capital no doubt lies in the logic of its transmission. On the one hand, the process of appropriating objectified cultural capital and the time necessary for it to take place mainly depend on cultural

capital embodied in the whole family” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 86). Coming from a family clinging on to cultural capital of Armenianness and Kurdishness makes Tigran who he is. Being proficient in both Kurdish and Armenian, feeling close to the Kurdish movement, being taught what happened in 1915 and who lived in the land before and transmitting all these to his children enable him to assure his cultural and social capital.

However, maintaining cultural and social capital is not only dependent upon having knowledge, it also requires embracing the identity and willing to share it with others. Mehmet, 80-year-old uncle whose grandmother was Armenian, is an excellent example of this case. Through Mehmet’s sentences it was obvious that he had confidence in the information that was transmitted to him. Even though I am not sure about the accuracy, when he explained his family roots, he referred back to fourteen fathers and stated that their family tree goes back to Abbasids and Ottomans. Then he continued “dear, we came to Turkey in 885. Our old roots, we are Abbasids. Long ago, they are from Şengal of Yemen. When they came, they were 2000 families. They built a village in Karacadağ, called Bahçe (Garden).” Even though he grew up in different cities but Muş, he has the information regarding his family tree. More interestingly, despite the fact that there is a suffix in Turkish showing hearsay, *-miş*, he explained his family history through narrative present, *-DI*, as if he was there and observed everything. When I asked him how he acquired information about fourteen fathers he refers to, without revealing his source, as a person who performs his Muslim identity openly and most probably primarily, he stated that the Lord of the universe/saeculorum ordered him and he learned (*Rabbil elamin emreti, biz de öğrendik*).

However, he does not prefer transmitting his knowledge to next generations. Even though his nephew, Tugay, wants to get the pedigree, Mehmet says that there is no one wise enough to transmit. I argue that there is cause and effect relationship between his unwillingness and coming from an Armenian family, as he does not want to (publicly) admit the ethnic and religious background of his family. As a Kurdified and Islamized person, he accumulated a new form of cultural capital that does not jeopardize his Muslim identity. Therefore, at least during the encounter we had in a public place, he preferred to act as Kurdish, did not want to reveal anything about his Armenian relatives. Thus, when I left the table for a few minutes, he forgot that the voice recorder was still on and warned his nephew as he admitted that Gule is Mehmet’s grandmother: “When you establish a

dialogue with strangers, you have to be very careful. Do not explain everything, do not tell everything. You should keep what you know in yourself.”

Hasan, on the other hand, explained that he does not know Armenian because his family members did not want their children acquire the language that might create some problems. Even though it was their mother tongue, since it became an *undesirable* form of cultural capital, Hasan’s parents did not teach their children. The blockage of transmission is not only limited by language. Even though he stated that he was taught the names of his ancestors, he does not have deep and wide knowledge as Tigran has nor the confidence in what he knows. As a person who has been known as a Kurd, whose relatives still embrace the identity of Kurdishness, he has the language proficiency in Kurdish. However, throughout his constant visits to Armenia, he learned some necessary words and phrases for his daily life. “I have been visiting Armenia for 15-20 years, I only can ask for water, bread; I take a cab and travel or travel by my car. That is all.” He talks about the necessity of knowing a language and the language course they offered in the association. He wants his children learn how to speak Armenian as it would be beneficial for them to form friendships and to merchandize.

4.5. Conversions of Different Forms of Capital

Depending on the field in which it functions, and at the cost of the more or less expensive transformations which are the precondition for its efficacy in the field in question, capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 82).

When I went to a café in Muş to meet Tigran, he was there with some dentists from Muş and Yerevan. They were talking about the possibility of collaboration. As dental impression materials and dental prosthesis are more expensive in Turkey, they were debating on how to export from Armenia. Tigran, as the bridge between two groups, was translating their sentences to each other. Then he briefly mentioned that he invited dentists

from Yerevan to introduce to ones from Muş. His competence in different languages and the transnational social ties he has, enable him to convert his cultural and social capital into economic one. After spending some time, I left Tigran with his guests, as the setting was not appropriate for an interview. A few days later, during the interview, without telling that it is a form of income for him, he mentioned that he helps people to find their relatives, either in Turkey or Armenia; he helps people to get their properties back, either in Turkey or Switzerland. In all these countries, cultural capital -language proficiency- and social capital -having friends or acquaintances around- he has, help him to run his files.

On the other hand, as Hasan mentioned, learning Armenian might open a field of commerce for his children and the Armenian youth in Muş. He mentioned that they consider to offer the language course in a regular basis. Knowing the language would enable them to form transnational ties such as friendships and/or business partnership. Even though their decision of running the Armenian course is not only money-oriented, in the end, they are well aware of the fact that having the language competency has its own potential to contribute to the income of a person.

As discussed before, social and cultural capital that one associates herself with, results inclusions to and exclusions from different social groups. All these inclusions and exclusions have also their reflections on economic capital of the same person. It does not mean that embracing an identity only has its gains, but there are some possible disadvantages it brings with it. Hasan, for example, is one of the people who slightly elaborated on the disadvantages the Armenian identity brought. After working for the Armenian association in Muş, some customers stopped shopping from him. If he did not bring the subject up, same people would continue visiting his shop on a daily basis. All these show that different forms of accumulated capital have their potential to feed each other and turn into economic capital at the end.

4.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, in order to understand how people deal with the silenced past of their city or contribute to the silencing process, by following the steps of Bourdieu, I argue the importance of reintroducing different forms of capitals into this debate, especially since

it sheds light on the connection between memory and materiality. Since tourism and treasure hunting as income sources for economic capital are mostly built on the remnants of materialities left by Armenians, I raised some questions to understand if Armenians and people who are reputed to be Armenians distance themselves from or create proximities with their relatives who are publicly known as Armenian and what kind of gains and loss they acquire at the end in terms of different forms of capital Bourdieu (1986) introduces.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Tuzluca Municipality of Iğdır, another city from Eastern part of Anatolia, did hang out welcome and goodbye signs in four different languages including Turkish, Kurdish, English and Armenian. In the ceremony of opening of these signs, Mehmet Gültekin, co-president of Tuzluca municipality (Iğdır) from Democratic Regions Party (Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi -DBP) stated the following sentences: “Tuzluca was an Armenian settlement before the republic. So many regions here are mentioned with the Armenian language. Armenian public/people lived here. They have their labor, past and history in the formation of this district. As a necessity of respect, we used the Armenian language, too.” After a while unknown people first broke letters of the Armenian letters, then the municipality removed the Armenian version.¹⁴

A few months ago, on one of the online sales portals, sahibinden.com, there was an ad for selling an Armenian Church in Bursa. The “owner” of the church asked for \$ 1.500.000 for the church that he keeps in his possession. After a while, when I checked the ad again, I figured out that it was removed from the website. However, news piece published by AGOS titled as “Churches for sale: continuum of the seizure of properties” shows that the ad in Bursa-Namazlık is not the only one. There have been different examples of the same situation in Bursa-Mudanya, Mardin-Artuklu so on and so forth.¹⁵

¹⁴ <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/15720/turkce-ingilizce-ve-kurtce-olur-ermenice-olmaz> (access date: 25 June 2016)

¹⁵ <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/12168/mulk-gaspinin-devami-satilik-kilisel>

These are some other examples showing that debate on Armenian heritage and properties still going on. In this thesis, working on materialities and the urban transformation project enabled me to create links between what happened in 1915 and what has been happening now, and concluding that the same process still continues.

In the second chapter, “Reflections in the Silver Mirror: Owning the Past and Carrying Its Burden,” through engaging with moral economy, it is shown that the feeling of guilt and the sense of burden shape some people’s performances and their morality restructures. Materialities have been studied especially through the affect theory (Biner, 2010) Özlem Biner) but moral economy has not been included into the debate yet. The chapter’s significance lies in showing the contrast between what my interlocutors, especially Sabri, say they do and what they actually do. The contrast has been studied as it is the signifier of how people negotiate with state, society, and family, and with the past, present and future. In addition, the chapter highlights how Sabri negotiate with himself and the way he presents himself to visitors, including me.

In the third chapter, “Reflections in the Silver Mirror: Hegemony and the Ongoing Urban Transformation Project,” through underscoring similarities between what happened in 1915 and during the recent urban transformation project, it is aimed to demonstrate the mechanism of urban transformation in Eastern Anatolia in line with the Turkish republican ethic of development and Turkification. The notions of “development” and “progress” that have been taking place in urban centers since the foundation of the republic is at the heart of the modernization project very much as nationalism. In a way, they are inseparable since both emerge from the same ethic of modernity: nationalism, genocide, ethnic cleansing, homogenization of identity, language, and historiography are modernity. On the other hand, the chapter highlights the relationship of territory to hegemony.

In the last chapter, “Reflections in the Silver Mirror: Economy of Identities,” through applying Bourdieu’s theory on different forms of capital, the importance of introducing different forms of in this debate is discussed since it shed light on the connection between memory and materiality. By utilizing economic, social and cultural capital, I raised some questions to understand if Armenians and people who are reputed to be Armenians distance themselves from or create proximities with their relatives who are publicly

known as Armenian and what kind of gains and loss they acquire at the end in terms of these different forms of capital.

In this chapter, in order to understand the ways in which people deal with the silenced past of their city or contribute to the silencing process, by following the steps of Bourdieu, I argue the importance of reintroducing different forms of capitals into this debate, especially since it sheds light on the connection between memory and materiality. Since tourism and treasure hunting as income sources for economic capital are mostly built on the remnants of materialities left by Armenians, I raised some questions to understand if Armenians and people who are reputed to be Armenians distance themselves or create proximities their relatives who are publicly known as Armenian and what kind of gains and loss they acquire at the end in terms of different forms of capital Bourdieu (1986) introduces.

Muş is an understudied city; there is only limited number of articles published. Violence, genocide, urbanization and local histories have been separately studied in academia extensively. However, their intersecting points and how urbanization shapes specifically Muş and its history have been understudied. I believe, choosing a particular geography and scrutinizing how the past affects its present shed more light on today's life and politics and created the main significance of this study. It needs to be highlighted that the erasure in Mii is not unique to Armenians. However, there is the economic other that is discussed in the chapter three. As Armenians, these people are also expelled and their properties were confiscated. Including discussion about different groups that experienced erasure and bringing in multiple levels of hegemony create the significance of this thesis.

Since Muş is an understudied city, there is a number of studies that can be conducted. With the recent urban transformation, historical houses are gone but there are photos of buildings carry the role of being archives. Thus, how photography works in the memory formation can be studied through focusing on the ongoing urban transformation project.

By following the debate in the third chapter, in order to see the assigned roles to the preserved buildings, and if the municipality will be able to implement its transformist hegemony and melt it in to the brew, a follow up study might be conducted in near future.

By following the steps of Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt, studying the legal aspect of the how properties changed hand would be very useful for the debate on the seized properties of especially non-Muslim people. It would be more of an archival research, as the

buildings had already changed so many hand and most of them are demolished within the framework of the ongoing urban transformation project.

I hope all these studies will be conducted in near future, so that we will have a more comprehensive perspective on the reasons preparing the recent urban transformation project in Muş and its effects on the society.



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