RESCUING THE BEARS, SILENCING THE BEAR LEADERS: BEAR DANCING IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND ITS ABOLITION IN TURKEY

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Submitted to the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Studies

Sabancı University
February 2014

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DATE OF APPROVAL: 10.01.2014

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Cultural Studies, MA Thesis, 2014

Thesis Supervisor: Ayşe Parla

Keywords: Gypsies/Roma, animal performance, animal protection, tourism, ethnic discrimination

ABSTRACT

The history of bear dancing seems to have accompanied the earliest encounters between humans and bears. As a form of public entertainment, the practice of bear dancing was professed by the Gypsies/Roma in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, as well as in many other countries. In recent decades, however, it became a site of contestation in more than one respect: animal protection, but more primarily ethnic discrimination and visions of urbanism and tourism.

In the early 1990s, Turkey witnessed a bear rescue campaign pioneered by an international animal protection organization, with various Turkish governmental, municipal and non-governmental bodies acting in concert. From the animal protectionist view, the campaign was a long overdue intervention to free the bears from pain and enslavement for the sake of human entertainment. On the other hand, the abolition seems to have been a welcome opportunity in the eyes of the Turkish state to purify the streets of İstanbul and other cities from the sight that visiting tourists first encountered and thus complicated the image of the country that officials wished foreign tourists to take back home. The demise of bear dancing owes more to the latter than to a well-informed concern for the welfare of animals, both revealing and reproducing lasting prejudices against the Roma. Based on interviews with former bear leaders, this thesis explores the multi-faceted dynamics underlying the abolition of bear dancing in Turkey.

AYILARI KURTARIP AYICILARI SUSTURMAK:
TARİHSEL BAĞLAMDA AYI OYNATICILIĞI VE TÜRKİYE'DE YASAKLANIŞI

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Kültürel Çalışmalar, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2014

Tez Danışmanı: Ayşe Parla

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çingeneler/Romanlar, hayvan gösterileri,
hayvanları koruma, turizm, etnik ayrımcılık

ÖZET

Ayı oynatıcılığının tarihçesi insanlar ile ayılar arasında ilk etkileşimlere kadar uzanmaktadır. Osmanlı ve Türkiye'nin yanı sıra diğer pek çok ülkede de bir Çingene/Roman mesleği olan ayı oynatıcılığı son onyıllar içerisinde hayvanları koruma, ama daha öncelikli olarak etnik ayrımcılık ile şehircilik ve turizm tasavvuru bakımından ihtilaflı bir alan haline geldi.

Türkiye 1990'ların başında, uluslararası bir hayvanları koruma örgütünün öncülüğünde hükümet, yerel yönetimler ve sivil toplum kuruluşlarının işbirliği yaptığı bir ayıları kurtarma kampanyasına tanık oldu. Bu kampanya hayvan korumacılar açısından ayıların eğlence uğruna alıkonulup acı çekmesine gecikmiş bir müdahaleydi. Öte yandan Türk devletinin gözünde ayıcılığın yasaklanması, İstanbul ile diğer şehirlerin sokaklarını, ülkeye gelen yabancı turistlerin ilk karşılaştığı ve yetkililere göre ülkenin imajını zedeleyen bir manzaradan kurtarmak için bir fırsattı. Ayı oynatıcılığının kaldırılışı devletin hayvanların refahına dair duyduğu endişeden ziyade bu ikinci etmenden kaynaklanmış, Romanlara yönelik süregelen önyargıları açığa çıkarıp yeniden üretmiştir. Bu tez eski ayıcılarla yapılan görüşmelere dayanarak Türkiye'de ayı oynatıcılığının yasaklanışının çokyönlü dinamiklerini incelemektedir.

Babama...
O hayattayken
tencerem kaynar idi,
maymunum oynar idi...

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my interlocutors in Thrace and İstanbul, who welcomed me into their homes or workplaces, and moreover into a part of their personal histories. Were it not for Ali Mezarcıoğlu, this thesis could not have been realized; I am indebted to him for his expressed faith in my subject and for the indispensable guidance he provided in my fieldwork. I am also thankful to Adrian Marsh for not turning me down when I sought his advice, as well as Nesli Çölgeçen and Reha Arın who provided me a copy of their feature film and related ephemera, in addition to sparing their time to meet me and telling the story of their production.

For her encouragement, insight, and incisive advice, I am grateful to my thesis supervisor, Ayşe Parla. I also wish to extend my great thanks and appreciation to the members of my thesis committee, Selin Önen and İrvin Cemil Schick, not only for their support, but also for their valuable constructive criticism. I especially owe greatly to Schick for kindly making himself available when I turned to him for his help with some translations and many other questions.

For his treasured friendship, our stimulating discussions and shared academic interests, not to mention his assistance with the texts in German, I am obliged to Stephan Steiner. I am grateful to those who have contributed to my research and broadened my view at various stages of this thesis in different ways. Many thanks to Ingvar Svanberg, Gonca Tohumcu, Sema Balaman, Witold Szabłowski, Ilsen About, Elena Marushiakova, Danielle van Dobben, Amy Nelson, Klaus Barthelmeß, Ludvig Wiklander, Ece Zerman, Heidi Morrison, Sonay Ban, Chalak Kaveh, Behçet Çelik, Maria Vasenkari, Mikołaj Machowski, Michal Schuster, Sophia Brothers, Katy Hooper, Bettina Mosler, Cecilia Novero, Pamela Banting, Rachel Swinkin, Kári Driscoll, Pierce and Heather Locke, and Sigrid Zederbauer.

Parts of this thesis were presented at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society in İstanbul and at the Non-Human in Social Sciences III Conference in Prague the same year, and published in the November 2012 issue of *Toplumsal Tarih* and the October 2013 issue of *Frühneuzeit-Info*. I consider myself lucky to have made the

acquaintance of numerous colleagues at these conferences and I am thankful to the encouraging and enlightening audiences of both of them, from whose questions and suggestions I benefited.

Last but not least, I would like to remember dearest Zeynep Doğukan, whose irreplaceable friendship and passionate protest against all manner of injustice, towards humans and other animals alike, have always been an immense inspiration, even after her poignant departure from this utterly unjust world. She does rest in peace now, that is my only consolation...

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1.

INTRODUCTION

In August 2010, the Dünya Yalnız Bizim Değil (The World does not Belong to Us Alone) online membership platform[1] –founded in 2004 for the purposes of promoting the nonhuman animals' right to life and combatting speciesism, establishing communication between local animal protection organizations and individual animal welfare activists, as well as compelling authorities to ensuring the protection of animals– circulated a petition to be delivered to several private enterprises. The campaign involved taking action against and boycotting the sponsors, promoters and ticket vendors of the İstanbul Dolphinarium,[2] one of a growing number of marine mammal show centers across Turkey. The text of the petition included the statement that "Your collaboration with these facilities where dolphins are tortured in concrete pools and commit suicide one by one, where our children are inculcated with a type of entertainment no different from bear leading, and where a commerce in hope is pursued under the name of therapy, is staining the name of your establishment," and further proposed that "selling tickets to dolphin parks is no different than selling tickets to a bear dance or dogfight event."[3] Soon thereafter, I began to come across auctions featuring bear leading photographs and postcards, some of which are presented throughout the pages of this thesis. The benchmark position assigned to bear dancing in the petition text and the practice's uneven representation in public memorabilia were what sparked my interest in researching the abolition of the practice.

[1] http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/dunyayalnizbizimdegil/info.

[2] Established in 2008, the İstanbul Dolphinarium prides itself on being Europe's largest such indoor facility.

[3] Communication via electronic mailing list, August 27, 2010.

In *Silencing the Past*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot notes that "In vernacular use, history means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts, both 'what happened' and 'that which is said to have happened.'"[4] My exploration of the subject, on the other hand, was triggered by the glaring incommensurability between what happened and that which is *not* said to have happened, that which is 'biasedly forgotten,' omitted from public memory and rendered invisible in history.

Katie Trumpener writes:

> Idealization, objectification; sympathetic picture, denigrating caption; exemplary autonomy, feared alterity: what constitutes the mythology of Gypsy life is the tension between two simultaneous, mutually contradictory yet continually coexisting moments—memory and amnesia.[5]

It appeared to me that the ongoing reference to the practice of bear leading and its iconic resurfacing in the memorabilia industry paradoxically prevailed alongside the obscurity surrounding its abolition. In December 2012, an auction house captioned a bear dancing photograph with the jubilant statement "A bygone sight whose disappearance is welcome."[6] How this most welcome abolition translated into the lives of the Romani bear leaders (in other words, the human costs of an animal liberation project), however, remained invisible.

1.1. Outline of the Contents

Professed exclusively by the Roma in Turkey, as was also the case in most other contemporary contexts, bear dancing, the performing animal act of making bears mimic dancing and other human gestures to the rhythm of a tambourine, has a global history that spans continents and centuries. It was a "residual element of culture," and more specifically a residual form of public entertainment – a conceptualization I adopt from Raymond Williams, one that responds to my hesitation to resort to the term 'traditional'

[4] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 2.

[5] Katie Trumpener, "The Time of the Gypsies: A 'People without History' in the Narratives of the West," *Critical Inquiry* 18, 4 (Summer 1992): 857.

[6] "Yok olan ve yok olması güzel olan bir manzara."

with all its problematical connotations: bear dancing was residual not in the sense that it was arrested in time or did not evolve, but in that, having originated in the past and bearing remnants of it (such as the passage of the profession from father to son), it still continued to influence cultural processes in the present. If bear dancing was residual, then, in the particular realm of animal performance, today's dolphin parks are emergent elements of culture, not only because they are novel practices, but also because they emanate from new relations and engagements, social, political, and economic alike. These concepts prove especially instrumental in the present study as they capture the contextualization of these practices (contrasting, and contrasted in the petition text), and more crucially, their interplay helps reveal the functioning of the dominant culture, or of cultural hegemony.[7]

As a residual form of public entertainment, however, bear dancing became a site of contestation in recent decades, not only in Turkey but also, somewhat later, in Eastern Europe as well as South and Central Asia. At the beginning of the 1990s, Turkey witnessed a bear rescue campaign initiated by an international animal protection organization, with various Turkish governmental and municipal bodies acting in concert. Such countries as Bulgaria, Romania and India, where the practice had been most prevalent followed suit in the early 2000s. How did a public spectacle as embedded in history and apparently as engraved in the fabric of public space as bear dancing come to be one of the rare *definite* victories of the global animal protection movement? What was the interplay of factors that brought the practice under scrutiny? What, if anything, did the animal welfare discourse conceal in the context of the abolition of bear dancing? Bearing in mind the fact that "memory is both productive and a product of political struggle in the present,"[8] these were the questions that guided me into seeking the memories and "situated knowledges," to use the term coined by Donna Haraway,[9] of the bear leaders.

On the one hand, from the animal protectionist viewpoint, the campaign was a long overdue intervention to free the bears from pain and enslavement for the sake of human

[7] Raymond Williams, "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent," in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121–127.

[8] Esra Özyürek, "Introduction: The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey," in *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, ed. Esra Özyürek (Syracuse and New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 7.

[9] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, 3 (Autumn 1988): 575–599.

entertainment. On the other hand, though, it was a visibly welcome opportunity in the eyes of the Turkish state to rid the streets of İstanbul and other cities from the sight that visiting tourists first encountered and thus complicated the image of the country that officials wished foreign tourists to take back home. In this process, it is disquieting to witness how a liberation movement has played into the hands of modernizing ideology, both revealing and reproducing latent prejudices against the Roma. In other words, this liberating act did not merely result from the Turkish state's concern for animals; in fact, the intervention was rather a coalescence of several factors in the site of contestation that was bear dancing: animal protection, of course, but more primarily ethnic discrimination and visions of urbanism and tourism.

Attempting to make sense of the circumstances and the societal climate that led to the abolition of bear dancing in Turkey necessitated looking into the historical moments of the practice – an endeavor I took further than I had initally intended to. The contents of this thesis thus follow a historical and ethnographical narrative starting with the earliest known accounts of human-bear interactions through a periodization and geographization of the practice of bear dancing to the aftermath of its abolition in Turkey. While Chapter 2 sets out to explore and exhibit the wide-ranging instances of bear leading in Europe and the United States, Chapter 3 focuses on the situation and reception of bear leading in the Ottoman realm, as well as scrutinizing the discriminatory treatment of the Gypsies in the Empire. These two chapters are intended to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the practice across continents and centuries, and reveal its recognition as a Gypsy profession. They not only present a backdrop, but also, and more importantly, illustrate the historical embodiment of the practice in ironical contrast to its silenced disappearance in the twentieth century. Additionally, locating the practice in history (even if fragmentary) provides insights into the wide-ranging travels and migrations of Gypsy populations, as well as offering a glimpse into their incessant policing by the authorities.

Chapter 4 introduces my formerly bear-leading interlocutors and the town where I conducted my interviews, and resumes with the evolving implications of the practice in the Turkish Republic based on the bear leaders' accounts and its manifestations in the local media. This chapter ends with a close reading of the 1989 feature film *İmdat ile Zarife*,[10] as well as my conversations with the film's director and producer. As a unique production centering a bear and her Romani handler and advocating the liberation of

[10] I am greatly indebted to Gonca Tohumcu for drawing my attention to the film.

perfoming bears, this film may have had an impact on the subsequent anti-bear-leading campaign.

Chapter 5 provides a pause in the narrative as I explore ethno-religious discrimination against Turkey's Roma in general, and inter-ethnic class discrimination against the bear-leading Roma in particular, as the landscape of exclusion that has set the tone for and facilitated the intervention against bear leading. Starting out with the immediate events that transpired in 1993, the year bear leading was abolished and the bears were confiscated by the authorities, Chapter 6 presents the development of the concept and the implementation of animal protection in Turkey. This is followed by a review of earlier attempts to ban bear dancing, as well as a discussion of voiced opinions regarding the practice, a study for which local newspaper archives proved unexpectedly resourceful. My inquiries into the intervention of local and international animal protection societies in the process that led to the abolition of the practice revealed that they displayed an ethnically biased approach, especially in contrast with camel wrestling festivals – another residual animal performance practice, but one that still persists and is considered a matter of cultural pride and primacy. In addition, the early timing of the abolition of bear dancing in Turkey with regard to the belated codification of animal protection in 2006 and compared to the later campaigns in Eastern Europe and India serves to support the arguments elaborated in the last section.

Finally, Chapter 7 is centered on the concepts of urbanism and tourism, which, I contend, have played a defining role in the process. With the added impetus of the evolution of urban public space coupled with the ethnically-charged contempt held for the Roma, the Turkish government's manifest wish to eliminate the practice of bear dancing for the sake of revamping the image of the country in the eyes of foreign tourists has led to the end of bear leading and cost the Romani bear leaders their long-established profession. The views discussed in this chapter further illustrates the ethnically-oriented mechanisms of cultural heritage as they reverberate in the dismissal of bear leading and the privileging of camel wrestling.

The considerable volume of photographs, postcards, and drawings presented throughout the pages of this thesis are not meant to merely shadow the textual narrative. Rather, they are "traces" in and of themselves, and thus they constitute "the testimony of

images."[11] Therefore, running parallel to the textual narrative, they comprise a visual narrative that attests to the historical embodiment of the practice in its varying spatial and temporal configurations as well as signaling striking commonalities across space and time. Moreover, they illustrate how the practice was viewed and captured at particular moments and in turn, urges us to imagine "the impact of the image on the historical imagination."[12]

1.2. Methodological Considerations

Wary of laying claim to being a "thick" ethnography,[13] this study is rather a multi-sited ethnography-oriented analysis bracketed by what has come to be known as critical cultural studies. Thus, informed by a multiplicity and diversity of sources (and all the interdisciplinary potentialities they bear), it centers on culture, its representations (and under-representations and misrepresentations), its historical and contemporary manifestations as they reveal the complexity of immanent societal contestations and the explicit and implicit power relations, as much as they obscure it. Indeed, the diverse cultural resources mobilized in this thesis confabulate with and complement each other in their focus on a particular facet of culture, namely the practice of bear dancing. The culminating narrative is meant to go beyond a mere juxtaposition of fieldwork findings, historical context, discourse analysis, and visual testaments, but it rather attempts to offer an exploration of the complex dynamics of the shifts, variations, interruptions in, and interventions into elements of *culture* (characterized by James Clifford as "an open-ended, creative dialogue of subcultures, of insiders and outsiders, of diverse factions").[14]

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[11] Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001).

[12] Ibid., 13 citing Francis Haskell, *History and its Images* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 7.

[13] For a recent discussion of thick and thin descriptions, or rather, shades of thinness in ethnographic explorations, see John L. Jackson, Jr., *Thin Description: Ethnography and the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), especially ch. 2.

[14] James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," *Representations* 2 (Spring 1983): 136.

Accompanied by an extensive survey of historical sources and the print media which proved exhausting yet rewarding, the fieldwork for this thesis involved semi-structured in-depth interviews ranging from one to five hours with former bear leaders and non-bear-leading Romani locals in multiple visits to a town in Turkish Thrace in 2011–2012. During this period, I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with five bear-leading and ten non-bear-leading Roma, as well as interviewing Nesli Çölgeçen and Reha Arın, respectively the director and producer of *İmdat ile Zarife*. Even though my interlocutors voiced no objection to the use of their actual names in this thesis, I have nevertheless changed them as well as omitting that of the small Thracian town in which they live, in order to protect their anonymity and privacy following the conventions of ethnographic research.

I began to establish contacts for the ethnographic fieldwork incorporated in this thesis in March 2011, within the framework of the Cultural Analysis Workshop course I took in Spring 2011. Gaining access to the field and locating former bear leaders appeared difficult at first, since I had no prior involvement with the Roma and my initial appeals to some of the more accessible members of the Romani community through associations had failed to bring me any closer to bear leaders. Although sources do mention that bear leaders tended to be concentrated in certain neighborhoods of İstanbul, the abolition of bear performances and urban development had long since caused their dissipation. Thus, it was necessary to follow them to their new surroundings, or as it turned out, to their original hometowns. In this process, I was fortunate to meet Ali Mezarcıoğlu, the editor of two websites dedicated to publishing news and articles concerning Gypsies/Roma in Turkey;[15] he became my main gatekeeper, playing an indispensable role in my initiation to the field. Filling out the volunteer form at his website and mentioning my research topic led to my meeting with Mezarcıoğlu, who expressed confidence in my project as well as my ethical stance, and kindly offered to put me in touch with individuals in Thrace who would be able to introduce me to former bear leaders.

Fellow townsmen of my bear-leading interlocutors, and even distantly related to some, these non-bear-leading Romani individuals (the brothers Ahmet and Mustafa) were "key participants" on account of being "'encultured informants' who are consciously

[15] These websites are http://cingeneyiz.blogspot.com.tr (previously http://cingeneyiz.org) and the more recently established http://medyaroman.blogspot.com.

reflexive about the culture in which they live."[16] They were also "partial insiders" with regard to the immediate subject:[17] while they belong to the local and larger Romani community, and are burdened by the common exclusionary and discriminatory patterns prevailing among Turkish society, they had neither practiced bear leading themselves nor endured or even witnessed its abolition. Strikingly, they voluntarily assumed the role of secondary gatekeepers, coming close to being "epistemic partners"[18] during the research as they set up *our* initial meetings with the bear leaders; furthermore, Mustafa usually accompanied me to the interviews, and his involvement in the conversations helped expand my areas of inquiry. Moreover, it may be reasoned that the bear leaders, once the subaltern practitioners of an ancient and (then) enduring craft, functioned during my research as "experts," whose expertise and 'insider information' shaped and framed the present study's scope and directionality.[19]

Kirin Narayan observes that

> the study of one's own society involves an inverse process from the study of an alien one. Instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have preexisting experience absorb analytic categories that rename and reframe what is already known.[20]

I, on the other hand, figured as a 'partial outsider,' native to the surrounding cultural and national context, yet ultimately a stranger to the ethnic community itself, not to mention –inevitably– an outside observer. While we were walking through one of the "Gypsy neighborhoods" of the town, for instance, as an interlocutor was showing me around, an adolescent boy seemed to take offence at my presence; this was no doubt aggravated by

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[16] Karen O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 41–42.

[17] Here I am referring to the term as used by Kirin Narayan for anthropologists conducting research in their native surroundings ("How Native is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* New Series 95, 3 [Sep. 1993]: 676); yet, in an attempt to make sense of the multi-layered field roles, I am proposing an alternative interpretation by associating the gatekeeper locals with it.

[18] George E. Marcus, "Ethnography Two Decades after Writing Culture: From the Experimental to the Baroque," *Anthropological Quarterly* 80, 4 (Fall 2007): 1132.

[19] My reference to expertise takes off from George Marcus' (ibid.) observation of reflexivity and shared "conceptual labor" in ethnographic interlocutors in predominantly institutional technocratic realms, but diverges from it in the sense that it reinstates a more straightforward/elementary/fundamental understanding/realization/comprehension of knowledge and experience.

[20] Narayan, "How Native," 678.

my host's explanation that I was "a researcher from İstanbul." In a circumcision festivity I attended one evening, my humble financial contribution to the circumcised boy's family (*askı*) was announced to the guests as coming from "Ahmet's acquaintance from İstanbul." The fact that I was identified with both my hometown and my affiliation to the immediate environment can be read as an attempt to provide justification for my presence despite my status as an outsider. Indeed, more often than not, I was introduced by the gatekeeper locals as "the researcher from İstanbul," which might have initially engendered some reservations on the part of my formerly bear-leading Romani interviewees.

Developing my own partial –and fragmented– knowledge as the study progressed, it would not be inaccurate to suggest that I gained an altered identity in the field, approaching that of a "partial insider," while the productive interplay of familiarity and distance appears to have enabled me to situate particularities in a wider scheme. My fieldwork experience was thus defined by a convergence of different levels of partial and situated knowledges and expertise, and more importantly, of varying field roles that were volatile, intertwining at once, rather than being grounded on rigid dichotomies, largely evoking similar roles and boundaries that are continuously performed and negotiated in everyday social relations.

During the initial stages of my fieldwork, while searching for bear leaders, I also had the chance, with the guidance of the scholar Adrian Marsh, to pay a visit to a Roma association in a district of İstanbul said to be one of the most densely populated by the Roma. My role as predominantly a participant observer there especially guided my further explorations of the manifestations of national attachment as well as the class distinctions among the Roma. Neither the chief executives of the association, nor their relatives and acquaintances present at the time of my visit were knowledgeable about the course of the abolition, and they even questioned each other about a long gone encampment nearby: "were those in fact bear leaders living in the tents?" Nevertheless, they were the ones who first drew my attention to the Thracian town that I later came to visit.

To my surprise, when it came to the course and the aftermath of the abolition of bear leading, the reactions of Roma from different circles and occupations, as well as those of activists within Roma rights initiatives were mainly defined by a true lack of awareness. Even a distinguished activist working within a Roma initiative in İstanbul said

"There were bear leaders in my childhood. Then they abruptly ceased to exist."[21] Disclosing my topic to friends, family members, and acquaintances further demonstrated how oblivious the public at large was to the circumstances of the disappearance of the practice. While acknowledging the prevalence of the practice in İstanbul and its long-standing association with the Roma, they at times voiced their opinions as to the appropriateness of the intervention, but never questioned its circumstances and consequences.

As for the limitations of this study, it is true that, had this project been undertaken at the immediate moment of the abolition, it would have undoubtedly resulted in more vivacious accounts and details, not to mention perhaps enhancing the chances of obtaining compensation. Nevertheless, the passing of two decades over the abolition of bear dancing seems to have complicated my interviews only in terms of specifying certain dates, numbers, or names. The time lapse, and more significantly, the improbability of any kind of restitution may also have been reasons why some of my bear leader interlocutors initially appeared to be less forthcoming, before the interviews turned into friendly conversations over tea, and why yet another bear leader in the town I visited refused to speak altogether. In addition, ethnographic knowledge could have been further deepened had I expanded the field also to involve former bear leaders still residing in İstanbul, whom I might have been able to reach through the mediation of my gatekeeper. However, the demolition of their houses as part of wide-ranging expropriation and urban transformation, so I was informed by Mezarcıoğlu, had compelled them to take shelter in make-shift tents which had just then resulted in the tragic death of an infant from the cold. In such dire conditions, an inquiry into the past, however poignantly resonating with the present, seemed uncalled for.

Furthermore, although the design of this project and the presentation of its findings are guided by dialogical knowledge stemming from field experience, the resulting account could not avoid being unmediated. I strove to capture "The dialogical, situational aspects of ethnographic interpretation,"[22] especially by providing descriptions of the interview settings and by citing direct quotations from my interlocutors as well as the (printed) statements of authorities and opponents of the practice, in an attempt to forge

[21] "Benim çocukluğumda ayı oynatıcılar vardı. Sonra aniden kesildi." Personal communication, March 3, 2011.

[22] Clifford, "Ethnographic Authority," 132.

an implicit dissipation of ethnographic authority and allow for a diachronic "*representation* of dialogue"[23] – an avenue that was certainly not pursued at the time. Still, in the last instance, it goes without saying that these are all "staged by the quoter" as "coherent presentation presupposes a controlling mode of authority."[24]

1.3. Significance of the Study

The present thesis offers a contribution to Romani Studies, a proliferating field that has begun to yield results in public awareness, civic engagement, and collaborative civil society projects that address the democratic rights of Romani people. In the Turkish context, the field is still in its infancy in terms of ethically informed academic studies, despite a promising rise in the number of theses and dissertations, articles and monographs. Such increasing explorations also coincide with a surge of rights activism among the Roma in Turkey, to which the Turkish government has been responding in recent years; more often than not, however, the government's pledges figure as 'civilizing missions' rather than legally and socially transformative policies that address the prevention of discrimination and the guarantee of equal access to citizenship rights. Notably, the continuing urban dislocation of Romani communities provides a stark contrast to, and furthermore reveal, the superficially inclusionary language employed by the state. On the other hand, the non-Roma population's stigmatization of the Roma is prevalent especially in racial slurs, but also in the educational and socioeconomic realms.

This thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, unique in the Turkish context for its focus on the cultural history of bear dancing and the subjectivity of Romani bear leaders. To be sure, bear leading is by no means entirely absent from historical and contemporary accounts on the Gypsies/Roma in Turkey. Nevertheless, the majority of contemporary texts fail to acknowledge the disappearance of the practice and content themselves with listing it, by rote, alongside other occupations that have come to be closely linked to the Roma. Moreover, the evolution of the practice over time and its situatedness in urban space had previously not been explored.

[23] Ibid., 134.

[24] Ibid., 139, 142.

Additionally, this study attempts to move beyond the common approach to the Roma as a monolithic community, problematizing class distinctions among them through the exploration of the silenced bear leaders. It may also be read as an internal critique of some organizations working for the ethical treatment of animals: while I personally and strongly subscribe to the notion of nonhuman animal rights, however problematic that terminology may be, the actions taken by certain organizations in this instance were narrowly focused and short-sighted, ignoring the human costs of the abolition of bear dancing. This criticism could not have been achieved unless performing animal practices and ethnically biased perceptions about cruelty to animals had been tackled in connection with one another – a contested area which is increasingly addressed in the growing field of human-animal studies.

Finally, the thesis at hand also falls within the domain of urban studies and aspires to supplement the existing literature on the interpenetration of spatial changes, urban transformation, and ethno-territorial exclusion, as well as nodding towards the emerging field of anthropology of tourism, which scrutinizes tourism policies and the tourism industry, the tourist experience, and that which is selected for display, be it as heritage or as novelty.

1.4. "Gypsy" (*Çingene*) vs. "Roma" (*Roman*): What's in a Name?

Alternating and at times overlapping uses of "Gypsy" and "Roma" throughout this thesis beg for a discussion of the ethno-political implications of these ethnonyms, respectively an exonym and an endonym. Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov outline the migrations of and divisions among Gypsies, held to have originated in India, as follows:

> On reaching northern Mesopotamia and the eastern boundary of the Byzantine Empire towards the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh centuries, the Gypsies split into three major migration groups – the (...) Dom (who took the southern route or stayed in the Middle East), (...) the Lom (who took the northern route) and Rom (who took the western route). The first group of Gypsies headed south-west and gradually settled in Syria and Palestine, from where some continued into Egypt and northern Africa. (...) The second group of Gypsies headed north and settled in the lands south of the Caucasus (mainly in present-day Armenia and Georgia). (...) The third and largest group of Gypsy migrants (the [...] Rom) headed west, towards Asia Minor and the Balkans, and from there in due course to central and

> western Europe. For several centuries these Gypsies were settled permanently within the boundaries of the Byzantine Empire which, at the time, encompassed large areas of Asia Minor and the Balkans.[25]

However, the widely-held belief that these three groups have a common origin in India has been contested, notably by Ian Hancock, based on linguistic peculiarities.[26] Moreover, the use of the exonym Gypsy as a "basic category [that] obscures an abundant, and even extravagant, world of multiplicity and diversity of being"[27] has been exceedingly mobilized in racist thinking and language. Deployed as a deragotary appellation in sweeping cultural and geographical contexts, the word Gypsy has come to be abstracted from the people it denotes and has turned into an expression signifying a lifestyle, at once despised and romanticized, generalized and essentialized:

> In Central and Eastern Europe, "Gypsy" is always understood in ethnic terms as referring to a specific people, the descendants of early migrants from India. In the Western academic world, the dominant concept has been that "Gypsy" is an expression of a lifestyle. In this view, the term encompasses communities from different ethnic origins who lead [or used to lead] a nomadic lifestyle.[28]

Yaron Matras, on the other hand, has offered a useful classification: for him, "GYPSY 1 denotes the social phenomenon of communities of peripatetics or commercial nomads, irrespective of origin or language," and "GYPSY 2 is quasi a popular English translation for a set of ethnonyms used by those groups whose language is a form of Romani."[29]

Moreover, in the case of historical documents, it is impossible to retrospectively discern the specific ethnic origins of the communities collectively designated as Gypsies. Therefore, pejorative connotations notwithstanding, I have had to comply with the

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[25] Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire: A Contribution to the History of the Balkans* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001), 12–13.

[26] Ian Hancock, *We are the Romani People / Ame sam e Rromane džene* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2002), 1–16.

[27] Kevin Robins, "Why Roma? A Brief Introduction," in "Code Unknown: Roma/Gypsy Montage," cur. Kevin Robins, *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 14, 6 (Dec. 2010): 639.

[28] Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, "Migrations West to East in the Times of the Ottoman Empire: The Example of a Gypsy/Roma Group in Modern Iran," *Anthropology of the Middle East* 5, 1 (Spring 2010): 97.

[29] Yaron Matras, "The Role of Language in Mystifying and De-Mystifying Gypsy Identity," in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of 'Gypsies'/Romanies in European Cultures*, eds. Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 53.

limitations of respective sources. On the other hand, the lack of capitalization of the word Gypsy in some of the more recently dated citations, which I have preserved as they appeared in the sources, is striking in the sense that they constitute a telling semiotic component of the discursive dismissal of the Gypsies as a people.

Nonetheless, I am also informed by the politically motivated inclination among a number of Gypsies in Turkey towards re-embracing and reappropriating the term Gypsy for the very reason of challenging the long-standing set of derogatory meanings attached to it. The Gypsy activist Mustafa Aksu, for instance, has been a leading figure in this respect. In his examination of the manifold prejudices reserved for the Gypsies, he has noted that

> even Gypsies who engage in big commerce, who work as bureaucrats, who are doctors, associate professors and professors, who have been ministers and prime ministers have concealed their true identities. And we see that those who do not conceal it say 'I am Romani,' thus obscuring the issue!... It is very sad...[30]

In a similar vein, Ali Mezarcıoğlu celebrates his Gypsy identity by declaring that "We say emphatically and proudly that we are Gypsies, not in order to set ourselves apart, but rather to bring together that which has been separated," and argues that

> Today, the sole condition for Gypsies to regain their self confidence and to reach a position of respectability among the Gadjo [non-Gypsy] is for them to use the very terms used by the Gadjo for thousands of years in representing their own culture and civilization. If there will be a struggle, it will be not against these names but rather against the incorrect meanings, the superstitions, and the prejudices that have been infused into those names.[31]

Furthermore, in the 2008 joint publication of the European Roma Rights Centre, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, and the Edirne Roma Association, Adrian Marsh justifies his use of the appellation by arguing that as an umbrella term, Gypsy "encapsulates the widest possible community."[32] In this sense, context-specific

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[30] Mustafa Aksu, *Türkiye'de Çingene Olmak* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2003), 12. In his most recent article, Aksu further opposes the use of Roma in lieu of Gypsy: "'Romanım' Diyen Kardeşlerime Sesleniş," Çingenelerin Sitesi, January 6, 2014, accessed January 6, 2014, http://cingeneyiz.blogspot.com/2014/01/mustafa-aksu-romanm-diyen-cingene.html.

[31] Ali Mezarcıoğlu, *Çingenelerin Kitabı: Tarihi, Sosyolojik ve Antropolojik Bir Kaynak* (İstanbul: Cinius Yayınları, 2010), 12, 33.

[32] Adrian Marsh, "Ethnicity and Identity: Who are the Gypsies?" in *We are Here! Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights of Roma in Turkey*, eds. Ebru Uzpeder, Savelina Danova/Roussinova, Sevgi Özçelik and Sinan Gökçen (İstanbul: ERRC/hCa/EDROM, 2008), 22.

preferences in Turkey significantly diverge from the seemingly 'unitarian' bent presently spreading among the opinion leaders of the European Roma, as far as can be discerned in the declarations and resolutions of the International Romani Union.[33]

Rüdiger Benninghaus rightly observes that "Gypsies have had a negative image for centuries, regardless of what they were called. Combating discrimination cannot be done by simply attaching a different label. Prejudices are then very likely to be transferred to the new name."[34] In the last instance, however, the contemporary and ethnographic sections of this thesis utilizes "Roma" instead of "Gypsy," obeying the designation most often articulated by my interlocutors.

[33] Başak Akgül, "Türkiye Çingenelerinin Politikleşmesi ve Örgütlenme Deneyimleri," *Öneri* 9, 34 (July 2010): 214–215, http://e-dergi.marmara.edu.tr/index.php/öneri/article/view/243/pdf_68.

[34] Rüdiger Benninghaus, "Gypsies or 'Roma'?" in "Code Unknown," 644.

2.

OF BEARS AND MEN

In flatlands the acrobats
Escape through the gardens
Through drunken hotel exits
Through churchless towns

The children guide them
Others follow in a dream
When the acrobats call them
Even the orchards surrender

The acrobats have all the equipment
Tambourines barbells golden hoops
And a wise bear and a sagacious monkey
To collect money as they go

Guillaume Apollinaire, "Saltimbanques"

An animal both venerated and feared, cherished and exploited, the bear is revealed by archaeozoological findings to have held an important place in the lives of humans from time immemorial. Bones of extinct cave bears have been unearthed in Switzerland and Germany; these seem to have been specially saved and positioned, suggesting the existence of a bear cult from some 60,000 years ago.[35] Discovered in 1994, the Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc cave in Southern France displays some of the earliest cave paintings of Paleolithic humans known to date.[36] In this 30,000-year-old cave, besides various bear

[35] James Serpell, *In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human–Animal Relationships* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press (Canto), 1996 [1986]), 182.

[36] For unmatched footage of the cave, see Werner Herzog's 2010 documentary film, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams.*

drawings, a bear skull was found placed on what could possibly have been an altar.[37] (See Figures 1 and 2) Known for its mother goddess cult believed to be represented in repeating reliefs and figurines, the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük located in the southern part of central Anatolia also exhibits bear imagery in different forms. Some wall paintings and reliefs previously interpreted as mother goddess depictions by excavators, in fact seem to represent anthropomorphic or therianthropic bear images in light of recent findings, giving rise to the notion of the bear cult as a distinguished ritual figure for Çatalhöyük communities.[38]

Figure 1. Bear drawings in the Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc cave in Southern France. (Photo. Jean Clottes, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/Fate-of-the-Cave-Bear.html)

Moreover, some animal remains were uncovered at La Grande Rivoire rock shelter in France not too long ago. Among them was the lower jaw bone of a presumably male brown bear five or six years old that displayed a "peculiar deformation." Consequent analysis showed that this deformation strongly suggested that a thong had been tied around the mandible in the early months of the bear's life, and that the lower jaw and teeth grew around this thong as the animal aged. In light of this example, it is likely that

[37] Linda Kalof, "Introduction: Ancient Animals," in *A Cultural History Animals, Volume 2: In Antiquity*, ed. Linda Kalof (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2007), 1.

[38] Ali Umut Türkcan, "Is it Goddess or Bear? The Role of Çatalhöyük Animal Seals in Neolithic Symbolism," *Documenta Praehistorica* 34 (2007): 262.

bears were tamed and tethered as early as 6000 BC and possibly traveled alongside the early itinerant hunter-gatherer communities.[39]

Figure 2. The bear skull found in the Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc cave in Southern France, placed on what seems to be an altar. (Photo. Jean Clottes, http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/chauvet/page4.php)

Irving Hallowell has noted that

> If particular species are respected, venerated, worshipped, or become the center of a cult or a set of customs which imply a religious attitude, whereas other animals are not so regarded, it is said to be due to the fact that the former possess certain qualities or stand in some special relation to man.[40]

Indeed, bears were not only appreciated for their ample supply of meat and fur, but also venerated by virtue of their grandeur, and perhaps more significantly, their highly anthropomorphic posture, occasional upright position, and omnivorous diet, resulting in legends of kinship[41] and bear cults. In a Victorian anatomy book for artists, "the

[39] Louis Chaix, Anne Bridault and Régis Picavet, "A Tamed Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos* L.) of the Late Mesolithic from La Grande-Rivoire (Isère, France)?" *Journal of Archaeological Science* 24 (1997): 1067–1074.

[40] A. Irving Hallowell, "Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere," *American Anthropologist* New Series 28, 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1926): 14–15.

[41] According to Daniel M.A. Freeman, "In different cultures, the dividing lines or boundaries between animals and humans and between the animate and the inanimate may be distinct, blurry, or changeable. Even when the categories are clearly differentiated, animals may later be secondarily imagined to be human, or to be transformations or reincarnations of humans or of ancestral spirits." ("Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the

juxtaposed skeletons of a dancing bear and a human bear warden illustrated that 'the bears (genus Urs[us]) have a claim superior to that of apes and monkeys for the nearest proximity to human beings, on account of their plantigrade feet and (...) erect attitude."[42] So proximate, in fact, that as the British entomologist William MacLeay (1792–1865) pointed out, "a bear was exhibited to the London public as a wild Indian."[43]

Irving Hallowell further elaborates that

> the omnivorous habits of these creatures make them genuine competitors of man in the pursuit of food; on occasion they raise themselves upon their hind legs in a human-like manner or sit down against a tree with their paws, like arms, at their sides and perhaps one leg drawn up under the body; their plantigrade locomotion leaves an impression in mud or sand much like human feet (a heel, arch, and toes being distinguishable), and their excrement is similar to that of human beings, only considerably larger. In emotional behavior the bears also exhibit a range of facial and bodily expression which is very human. When attacked the animals often whine in a pleading way and tears may even appear in their eyes. They even resemble human beings in their well known tendencies to masturbation (at least in captivity), and when skinned the human-like proportions of the beast have received repeated comment in primitive and contemporary society alike.[44]

Thus, James Serpell would justifiably conclude that "bears are both economically important and easy to personify, so the conflict between exploitation and sympathy is particularly intense."[45] They have been subjects of humans' awe *and* grudge, misothery *and* veneration at the same time.

Bond Between Man and Animals," in *Cultural Zoo: Animals in the Human Mind and its Sublimations*, eds. Salman Akhtar and Vamık Volkan [Madison, Conn.: International Universities Press, 2005], 7). See, for instance, Hallowell, "Bear Ceremonialism"; Pertev Naili Boratav, "Les histoires d'ours en Anatolie," *Folklore Fellows' Communications* 152 (1955): 3–46; Altan Gökalp, "L'ours Anatolien: un oncle bien entreprenant," *Études mongoles* 11 (1980): 215–242; Paul Shepard and Barry Sanders, *The Sacred Paw: The Bear in Nature, Myth, and Literature* (New York: Arkana Books, 1992 [1985]), chs. 3, 4 and 5; Julian Baldick, *Animal and Shaman: Ancient Religions of Central Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), passim; Michel Pastoureau, *The Bear: History of a Fallen King*, trans. George Holoch (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011 [2007]), passim; and Ergun Kocabıyık, *Dolaylı Hayvan: Süfli ve Şerefli, Hayvani ve Erotik, Şeytani ve Deli* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2009), 104–142.

[42] Harriet Ritvo, *Noble Cows and Hybrid Zebras: Essays on Animals and History* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 184.

[43] Harriet Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1998 [1997]), 32.

[44] Hallowell, "Bear Ceremonialism," 148–149.

[45] Serpell, *Company of Animals*, 183.

2.1. Performing Bears in Antiquity and the Byzantine Empire

In 1922, the American zoologist William Temple Hornaday[46] (1854–1937) qualified bears as "supremely interesting animals." To him, "no group surpasses them save the Order Primates, and it requires the enrollment of all the apes, baboons and monkeys to accomplish it." He went on to write that "With but few exceptions the bears of the world are animals with philosophical minds, and excellent reasoning power (...). One striking proof of this is the promptness with which adult animals accept *comfortable* captivity, and settle down in contentment."[47] Even though studies on animal captivity since have proven Hornaday wrong,[48] as illustrated by extant evidence from early societies onward, bears have been kept in captivity not only as possible guard animals, as status symbols, or as mere beastly feasts for the curious eyes, but furthermore as performers for the entertainment of humans.

The earliest known written source that mentions bear leading dates back to the ancient civilizations of the Near East. A tablet from the second millenium B.C. studied by the Assyriologist Ignace Jay Gelb lists entertainers of various households in the Lagash province in present-day Iraq. Among the 242 individuals catalogued are seven bear wards, alongside musicians/singers and snake charmers. Gelb indicates that "One common characteristic of [these] occupations is that they were all involved in singing or chanting and playing a musical instrument. The second characteristic is that they all required a

[46] Hornaday was the director of the New York Zoo at the time of the Ota Benga scandal in 1906. A pygmy from the Belgian Congo, Ota Benga was controversially displayed as a curiosity in the monkey house of the zoo until the exhibit was shut down after only two days due to public reactions.

[47] William T. Hornaday, *The Minds and Manners of Wild Animals: A Book of Personal Observations* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1922), 124, 128.

[48] For case studies focusing on bear captivity, see, for instance, Ana I. Soriano, Conrad Ensenyat, Susana Serrat and Carme Maté, "Introducing a Semi-Naturalistic Exhibit as Structural Enrichment for Two Brown Bears (*Ursus arctos*). Does This Ensure Their Captive Well-Being?" *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 9, 4 (2006): 299–314; Joanne D. Altman, "Effects of Inedible, Manipulable Objects on Captive Bears," *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 2, 2 (1999): 123–132; and also David A. Fennell, *Tourism and Animal Ethics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), passim.

period of apprenticeship to learn the craft." Moreover, a combination of other texts has led Gelb to conclude that a bear ward "denoted an individual who plied his trade with a bear at his side and to the accompaniment of a musical instrument, presumably a kind of tambourine."[49]

Even if overshadowed by the extravagance and brutality of gladiatorial combats between wild animals and criminals condemned to "death by beasts" (*damnatio ad bestias*), Ancient Rome, too, witnessed bears and monkeys being led to dance and perform tricks for the amusement of the public.[50]

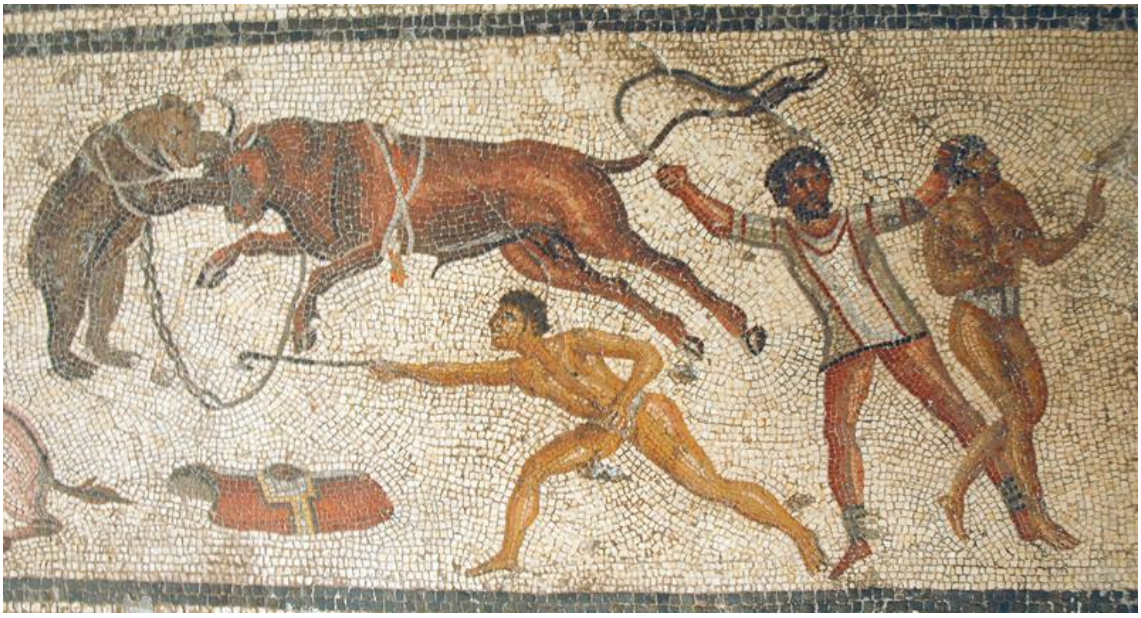

Figure 3. Detail of the Zliten mozaic depicting Roman entertainments, second century AD, The Archaeological Museum of Tripoli, Libya. (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8d/Bestiarii.jpg)

> The Roman's interest in wild animals was intense and catholic; he liked looking at them, he liked seeing them perform tricks and he liked watching them being hunted and killed. Wolves (...), bears, boars as well as deer, hares and wild goats were indigenous. More exotic animals brought the succession of Rome's imperial conquests to Rome's doorstep, visible evidence of the expansion of Roman power to the furthest corners of the inhabited world.[51]

[49] I.J. Gelb, "Homo Ludens in Early Mesopotamia," *Studia Orientalia* 46 (1975): 61–64.

[50] George Jennison, *Animals for Show and Pleasure in Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005 [1937]), 78, 128–129, 167–168.

[51] J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (London: Phoenix, 2004 [1969]), 302.

While performing monkeys "were dressed as soldiers and rode on goats or drove teams of goats harnessed to a chariot," performing bears, some of which were even publicly known by such names as Eirene and Simplicius, brought from "North Africa and also from central and northern Europe, the Balkans and Italy itself" climbed poles and carried out entertaining acts.[52] In the neighboring Etruscan civilization, artifacts depicting bear leaders have been unearthed as well.[53]

Unlike earlier times, though, bear keepers in the Byzantine Empire were acknowledged by a distinguishing name according to the twelfth-century canonist Theodore Balsamon: *Athinganoi*. Identified with the Gypsies (*Atsinganoi*) in the last decades, rather than the ninth-century heretical sect of the same name,[54] this group was known to be "active as bearkeepers, snake charmers, and, in general, as animal trainers; also as acrobats and jugglers."[55] However, since their animal performances were not limited to entertainment but also involved claims of divinity and soothsaying, "those who drag[ged] a bear or similar animal after themselves for the enjoyment and the damage of simple-minded people and who tell the future, fate, horoscope, and whatever else may be the multitude of words of this erroneous trumpery" were to be condemned to a six-year excommunication.[56] The common folk, on the other hand, were urged by the Patriarch Athanasius I of Constantinople (1230–1310) not to associate with the Atsinganoi or let them in their houses.[57] Such measures were taken because, according to Byzantine historian Frank Trombley, "The survival of pagan cult practices among Christians

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[52] Ibid., 305, 312, 306.

[53] Joseph C. Berland and Aparna Rao, "Unveiling the Stranger: A New Look at Peripatetic Peoples," in *Customary Strangers: New Perspectives on Peripatetic Peoples in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia*, eds. Joseph C. Berland and Aparna Rao (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2004), 3.

[54] Karin White, "Metal-workers, Agriculturists, Acrobats, Military-people and Fortune-tellers: Roma (Gypsies) in and around the Byzantine Empire," *Golden Horn: Journal of Byzantium* 7, 2 (Winter 1999–2000), accessed March 4, 2011, http://www.isidore-of-seville.com/goudenhoorn/72karin.html. I am thankful to Adrian Marsh for informing me of this article.

[55] George C. Soulis, "The Gypsies in the Byzantine Empire and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15 (1961): 146–147, 163.

[56] Marie Theres Fögen, "Balsamon on Magic: From Roman Secular Law to Byzantine Canon Law," in *Byzantine Magic*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 100. I am thankful to Adrian Marsh for informing me of this article.

[57] Soulis, "Gypsies," 147.

alarmed imperial and ecclesiastical authorities [for] the empire still had a highly visible, but not very large pagan population."[58]

As of 2010, excavations carried out in Yenikapı as part of the Marmaray rail transport project brought to light bear remains that further support and illustrate the existence of performing bears during the Byzantine times.[59]

2.2. Performing Bears in Europe

Like apes, horses, and dogs, bears were trained by performers "to imitate the actions of men, to tumble, to dance, and to perform a variety of tricks, contrary to their nature."[60] Illustrated manuscripts attest to the existence of tutored bears in England as early as the tenth century. Figure 4 shows a bear made to lie down reproduced from a tenth-century manuscript as well as three dancing bears and their leaders from the fourteenth century.[61] According to Linda Kalof, "Talented animals were extremely popular attractions — dancing bears, performing birds, and trained horses (...) had been standard entertainment in London since the sixteenth century. Spectators particularly enjoyed seeing animals trained to perform human behaviours."[62]

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[58] Frank R. Trombley, "The Council in Trullo (691–692): A Study of the Canons Relating to Paganism, Heresy, and the Invasions," *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 9, 1 (1978): 4.

[59] "Bizans Sokaklarında Ayı Oynatılıyormuş," *Milliyet*, January 3, 2010.

[60] Joseph Strutt, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England: From the Earliest Period, Including the Rural and Domestic Recreations, May Games, Mummeries, Pageants, Processions and Pompous Spectacles, Illustrated by Reproductions from Ancient Paintings in which are Represented Most of the Popular Diversions* (London: Methuen & Co., 1903 [1801]), 195.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Linda Kalof, *Looking at Animals in Human History*, London: Reaktion Books, 2007, 115.

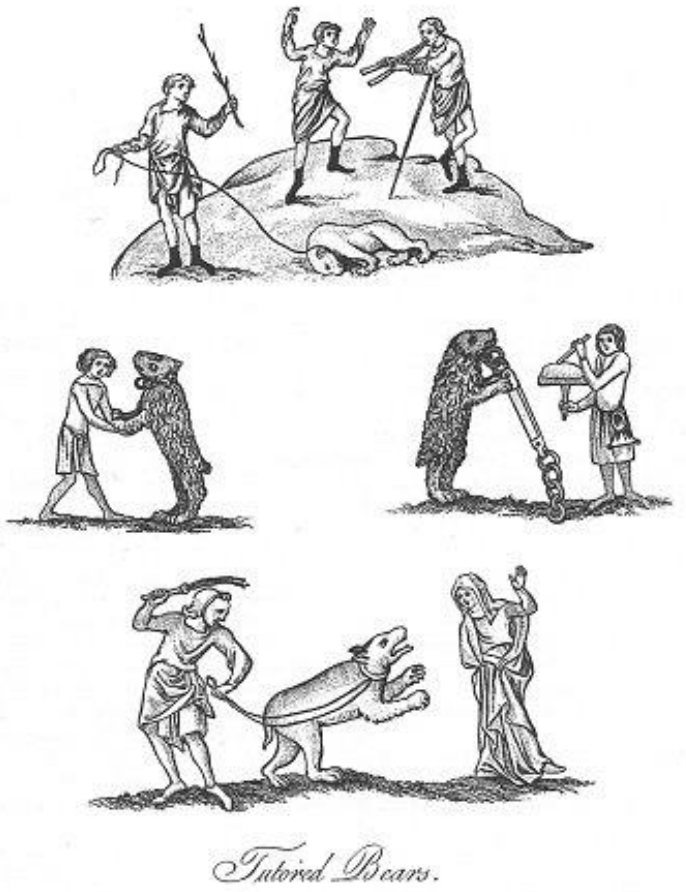

Figure 4. Bear dancing in early England: A bear made to lie down from a tenth-century manuscript (top), and three dancing bears and their leaders from the fourteenth. (Joseph Strutt, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, pl. 25)

Among the public amusements at the disposal of Londoners, dancing bears would appear in a list of "the abuses of the age" compiled by the St. Pavles Church in 1621:

> To see a strange out-Landish Fowle,
> A quaint Baboon, an Ape, an Owl,
> A dancing Beare, a Gyants bone,
> A foolish Ingin move alone,
> (...)
> There goes the bounty of our Age:
> But vnto any pious motion,
> There's little coine, and lesse deuotion.[63]

[63] Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002 [1999]), 25.

Figure 5. A dancing bear on the streets of London, date unknown. (Photo. Getty Images, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/uknews/2565404/Unseen-London.html?image=2)

While sources do not specify that the animal performers were Gypsies, it should be noted that the first record of the presence of Gypsies in England dates back to 1501:

> [Having] left [India] perhaps as early as in the sixth century A.D., probably due to repeated incursions by Islamic warriors (...) Scattered Romani groups arrived in contemporary East-Central Europe from the mid-to-late fourteenth century (Transylvania and Hungary), and throughout the fifteenth century (Slovakia and the Czech lands), and they reached Poland in the early sixteenth century. Their remarkable mobility during these early years is highlighted by Gypsy sightings in places as varied as Bavaria (1418), Paris (1421), Bologna (1422), Barcelona (1425), England (1501), Denmark (1505), and Norway (1544).[64]

Later accounts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also mention groups of Gypsy bear leaders arriving in England and Scotland.[65] Indeed, pictorial evidence (see

[64] Zoltan Barany, *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality, and Ethnopolitics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9–10. However, this argument is disputed by others. See, for instance, Ian Hancock, "On Romani Origins and Identity," accessed December 10, 2012, http://radoc.net/radoc.php?doc=art_b_history_origins&lang=en&articles=true.

[65] Charles G. Leland, *The Gypsies* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1882), 336; Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2003 [1992]), 230.

Figures 5 and 6), travel or biographical narratives suggest that in England bear dancing prevailed at least until the eve of World War I.[66]

Figure 6. A Gypsy holding on to a muzzled bear by a chain, as a young woman looks on, UK, c. 1920. (NMPFT / Kodak Collection / Science & Society Picture Library, no. 10309944[67])

Another form of exhibiting bears in England was bear baiting,[68] namely the practice of chaining a bear to a pole and siccing a pack of aggressive dogs on it to watch them fight each other to death. This may in fact have been a more fashionable pastime for both commoners and royalty: "From at least Angevin times and probably much earlier, Englishmen of all ranks delighted in watching dogs torn to pieces by equally lacerated

[66] See, for instance, the family history and stunning travels of Kosta Stanković, a bear-leading Gypsy of Serbian origin, then (1922) settled in England: Robert Andrew Scott Macfie, "Self-Styled 'Rudari' in England, from T.W.T." in *Serbian Gypsies and Bear-Leaders* (unpublished typescript, dated May 24, 1935, University of Liverpool, Sydney Jones Library, GLS E/13), fol. 65–71, dated April 20, 1934. I am indebted to Ilsen About for informing me of this unique source.

[67] I am indebted to Sophia Brothers at the Science & Society Picture Library for kindly allowing me to use this photograph.

[68] This should not be confused with the method employed in present-day hunting, which involves placing food as bait to hunt bears.

bulls, bears, and badgers,"[69] and "By the mid-sixteenth century bull and bear baiting had become institutionalised entertainments at the London bear garden in Southwark and were under the particular patronage of the monarch."[70] Dating back to at least 1484, the office of "the Master of the Bears" (initially called the "Master, Guyder and Ruler of all our Bears") was commissioned by the monarch and oversaw bear baiting activites in London, as well as granting licenses to –and generating income from– itinerant bear wards touring the provinces to put on matches.[71] However, Julius Ruff notes that

> Bear baiting was growing less and less common in [the early modern] period because by the sixteenth century the beasts had to be imported into England. As a result they were not cheap and their owners, part of a nascent commercial entertainment industry, seldom allowed bears to be killed. Nevertheless, as they stood on their hind legs fending off attacking dogs, or rolled on those who had secured a hold on them, the bears' agonies attracted many paying spectators.[72]

Bear baiting was banned by the British Parliament in 1835 (with the passing of the Cruelty to Animals Act), followed by the prohibition of bear leading at the relatively early date of 1911.[73] This was partly the result of a heightening sensitivity to animal cruelty and growing concern for their humane treatment. Indeed, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was established in 1824; Princess (later Queen, r. 1837–1901) Victoria became a patron of the Society in 1835 and consequently granted it permission to add the prefix "Royal" to its name.[74] The passing of the Performing Animals (Regulation) Act in 1925, which aimed at preventing and punishing cruelty to performing

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[69] James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 2.

[70] Tobias Hug, "'You should go to Hockley in the Hole, and to Marybone, child, to learn valour': On the Social Logic of Animal Baiting in Early Modern London," *Renaissance Journal* 2, 1 (Jan. 2004), accessed November 8, 2012, http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/projects/publications/journal/nine/hug.doc.

[71] S.P. Cerasano, "The Master of the Bears in Art and Enterprise," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 5 (1991): 195.

[72] Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe 1500–1800* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 173–174.

[73] Robert E. Bieder, *Bear* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 105, 110.

[74] Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 129. Yet, "Despite securing a royal appendage, the RSPCA has never managed to dissuade the British royals from their persistent slaughter of animals." (David Hancocks, *A Different Nature: The Paradoxical World of Zoos and Their Uncertain Future* [Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001], 41.)

animals, and demanded that a certificate of registration be obtained by applying to local authorities and paying a prescribed fee in order to be able to exhibit animals "at any entertainment to which the public are admitted, whether on payment of money or otherwise," must have helped further extinguish the possibly last-standing specimens of dancing bears in England.[75] However, a propensity towards social engineering came to reveal itself in the discussions and initiatives of the Society. Cruelty to animals was associated with the lower rungs of the social ladder and the issue of animal welfare was deployed "to mark 'in' groups and 'out' groups, to assert power politically and ideologically," as Kathleen Kete suggests: "The RSPCA attacked the recreations as well as the livelihood of the London poor. (...) Violence was to be sequestered, hidden away from the view of those susceptible to its pernicious influence."[76]

Since bear leading was known to be a Gypsy occupation, this effort to ban the practice may have also been the result of the government's wish to check the country's Gypsy population. Thus,

> official references to Gypsies are to be found in the various statutes passed in order to curb, control and end their activities, way of life and presence in this country. The first of these was passed in 1530 in the reign of Henry VIII,[77]

shortly after their first arrival, and they got stricter over time.

The Germanic lands also have a long-standing familiarity with bears being led to dance and perform tricks. Hailing from thirteenth-century Arenberg and preserved at the Cologne City Museum, the upper skull of a male brown bear features certain anomalies which have been interpreted as strongly suggesting that it had belonged to a performing bear, most likely a remnant of the times of Viscounts Eberhard (r. 1200–1218) or Heinrich

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[75] "Performing Animals (Regulation) Act: An Act to Regulate the Exhibition of and Training of Performing Animals," June 30, 1925, accessed November 13, 2013, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1925/38/pdfs/ukpga_19250038_en.pdf. For a discussion of the genesis of this act, see David A.H. Wilson, "Racial Prejudice and the Performing Animals Controversy in Early Twentieth-Century Britain," *Society and Animals* 17 (2009): 149–165.

[76] Kathleen Kete, "Animals and Ideology: The Politics of Animal Protection in Europe," in *Representing Animals*, ed. Nigel Rothfels (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 27. For a more detailed look into the history and motives of the Society, see Brian Harrison, "Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England," *The English Historical Review* 88, 349 (Oct. 1973): 786–820.

[77] David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities 1500–2000: From Egypcians and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 57.

III (r. 1220–1252).[78] Other early instances of performing bears include "jugglers with two bears" in Marburg in 1511, "Polish men with dancing bears" in Rothenburg in 1597, and "Lapps" displaying bears in Kassel in 1598.[79] Later, in the nineteenth century, during his travels throughout Europe, the American folklorist Charles Leland (1824–1903) encountered Hungarian Roma displaying bears in Baden-Baden:

> These Ričinari,[80] or bear-leaders, form (...) a set within a set, and are in fact more nearly allied to the gypsy bear-leaders of Turkey and Syria than to any other of their own people. They are wild and rude to a proverb, and generally speak a peculiar dialect of Romany, which is called the Bear-leaders' by philologists.[81]

Figure 7. Amateur stereoview of a dancing bear in Nenndorf, south of Hamburg, Germany, 1900. (http://www.flickr.com/photos/15693951@N00/4655984765/)

[78] Werner Schäfke and Marcus Trier, eds., *Mittelalter in Köln: Eine Auswahl aus den Beständen des Kölnischen Stadtmuseums* (Cologne: Emons Verlag, 2010), 269–271. I am thankful to the late Klaus Barthelmeß for drawing my attention to the Cologne City Museum and to Bettina Mosler for kindly providing me the document.

[79] Gösta Berg, "Zahme Bären, Tanzbären und Bärenführer," *Der Zoologische Garten: Zeitschrift für die Gesamte Tiergärtnerei* New Series 35, 1/2 (1968): 44. I would like to extend my thanks to Ingvar Svanberg for informing me about this article, and to Stephan Steiner for rendering this German text accessible to me.

[80] According to Alexandre G. Paspati (*Études sur les Tchinghianés ou Bohémiens de l'empire Ottoman* [Constantinople: Imprimérie Antoine Koroméla, 1870], 460), the Romani word *ritchiní* derives from the Sanskrit *riksa*, meaning bear.

[81] Leland, *Gypsies*, 96.

As was the case in England, it would seem that the abolition of bear leading in this region awaited the first decades of the twentieth century. Theologian and animal welfarist Emil Knodt (1852–1924) voiced the suffering of various animal species in his 1903 pamphlet *Klagen der Tiere* [Lament of Animals]. Among the twenty-nine accounts of animals telling their stories of agony is one devoted to the plight of dancing bears, in which the bear reproachfully says "When men are happy, they dance; but when bears dance, they could not be farther from being happy." The animal goes on:

> I have been wandering all over the world for five years now, from North to South, from East to West. Tired and jaded, I am driven from pillar to post as my food is poor and my master does not care well for me at all. I still quiver if I only think about my years of apprenticeship in Poland. How they were torturing me only to teach me how to dance; they put me in such a position that my paws landed on hot iron plates as soon as they dropped, in which case I would lift them immediately, leaping in pain. And this they repeated ever so often till I learned to dance. Then they pulled an iron ring through my nose where we bears are so tender. And how I am now dragged around by this ring! How often my master beats me when I am tired and quite unable to dance anymore. Since I am the one putting bread on the table by my efforts alone, he should at least be gentle and kind to me.[82]

Nearly three decades later, an American newspaper clipping from 1929 reads:

> The Ministry of the State of Bavaria has directed all police officials to refuse to extend the permits now in force for the exhibition of dancing bears and to issue no new permits. The Ministry declares that these exhibitions are frequently connected with cruel treatment of the animals and that anyway the public is showing less and less interest in the performances. Most of the owners of the bears are gypsies.[83]

[82] Emil Knodt, "Aus dem Leben eines Tanzbären," in *Klagen der Tiere. Zur Beförderung des wahren Tierschutzes der Jugend und dem Volke dargestellt* (Berlin: Berliner Tierschutz-Verein und Deutscher Lehrer-Tierschutzverein, 1903), 19–20. I am grateful to Stephan Steiner for his translation.

[83] "Bavaria Bans Dancing Bears," *The New York Times*, November 24, 1929.

Figure 8. Bear leader resting under a tree, c. 1930. (Photo. Friedrich Seidenstücker [1882–1966], in Friedrich Seidenstücker, *Von Tieren und von Menschen* [Berlin: Dirk Nischen Verlag, 1986], 148)

Here, too, intensifying policies of violent persecution, expulsion, sedentarization and assimilation directed towards Gypsies in Europe at large[84] appear to have overlapped with concerns for the welfare of animals. Decades earlier than this reported revocation of bear leading permits, Bavaria had been the stage of a case of deportation: the Bavarian government set out to expel a bear-leading family in 1907, confiscating their animals and wagons, and putting them up for sale. Following Bulgaria's rejection, the Turkish Consulate seems to have agreed to take the family. In the absence of information as to the fate of this family, one can only assume that they managed to cross the border some time later.[85]

[84] For an overview, see Fraser, *Gypsies*, especially chs. 5 and 6.

[85] Katrin Reemstsma, *Sinti und Roma: Geschichte, Kultur, Gegenwart* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1996), 90–92. I am thankful to Stephan Steiner for informing me of this interesting account.

The Dutch became acquainted with bear dancing in 1868,[86] if not earlier, when Ursari[87] entered the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In the context of soaring anti-Gypsy policies, they are thought to have been well-received by the rural population based on the bear leaders' "sometimes impressive wealth (...) and also [on] letters sent by local authorities who pleaded in their support against the accusations of the central government." However, most of these Ursari were in the Netherlands only temporarily on their migration route to the United States; therefore "After the turn of the century they appeared only sporadically." Additionally, since bear performances were prohibited under Nazi occupation, any remaining Ursari in the Netherlands would have switched to leading only monkeys or playing the street organ during the 1930s.[88]

With a long-standing circus tradition, Russian lands have historically been a leading site for the dancing of bears, "that most Russian of all animals" as Jane Costlow puts it.[89] Its conspicuously contemptuous undertone aside, the Russian proverb "The bear dances, but the gipsy takes the money"[90] is a testament to the public's high familiarity with these spectacles. In addition to playing a ritualistic role in villages, bear performances, or "bear comedies," have for centuries amused the Russian public who have in their language "at least twenty-seven nicknames or terms of indirection to use for the 'one who knows where honey is.'"[91] Featuring Gypsies as trainers, as well as Tatars and Russian peasants from

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[86] Wim Willems and Leo Lucassen, "Gypsies and Caravan Dwellers in the Netherlands," in *Encyclopedia of World Cultures, vol. IV: Europe (Central, Western, and Southeastern Europe)*, ed. Linda A. Bennett (New York: G.K. Hall & Company, 1994), 136.

[87] Derived from the Romanian word for bear, *urs*, Ursari is "the name of several clans of Gypsies who traditionally trained bears and of at least two distinct dialects of Romani." (Kenrick, *Historical Dictionary*, 285; also see Yaron Matras, *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction* [Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 5, 6, 8, 223.)

[88] Willems and Lucassen, "Gypsies and Caravan Dwellers," 137. Indeed, starting in 1933 the Nazi government promulgated a series of animal protection laws deemed the most comprehensive of their kind at the time. They involved the protection of such endangered species as the wild horse, the bison and the bear. (Kete, "Animals and Ideology," 20, 30.) For a further analysis of these laws, see Arnold Arluke and Boria Sax, "Understanding Nazi Animal Protection and the Holocaust," *Anthrozoös* V, 1 (1992): 6–31.

[89] Jane Costlow, "'For the Bear to Come to Your Threshold': Human–Bear Encounters in Late Imperial Russian Writing," in *Other Animals: Beyond the Human in Russian Culture and History*, eds. Jane Costlow and Amy Nelson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 77.

[90] Selwyn Gurney Champion, *Racial Proverbs: A Selection of the World's Proverbs Arranged Linguistically* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1938), 256.

[91] Costlow, "For the Bear to Come," 79.

Transvolga,[92] Russian bear comedies took a blow and the recently established Russian Society for the Protection of Animals reportedly gained its first major victory when Tsar Alexander II (r. 1855–1881) issued the Imperial Edict on Bear Comedies in 1866: prohibiting the displaying of performing bears, as well as reprehending the training methods and mutilation of these animals, the edict granted the bear leaders a grace period of five years to abandon this occupation. Yet most significantly, the ban "denounced the influence of this popular entertainment on the moral sensibilities of spectators as well as the bear trainers themselves, who were inclined to 'hard-heartedness, immorality, drunkenness, and vagrancy.'"[93]

Almost two decades later, the ban was to be committed to literature and social memory with Vsevolod Garshin's (1855–1888) 1883 satirical short story "The Bears":

> In September of 1857 the town of Bielsk was in a state of unwonted excitement. (...) The unhappy gipsies had journeyed hither from four Districts of the Government with all their household effects, horses, bears, etc. More than a hundred of these awkward beasts, ranging from tiny cubs to huge "old men" whose coats had become grey or whitish from age, had collected on the town common. (...) The Authorities were waiting until all should arrive, so that the business of killing the bears might be carried out in one day and finished with once and for all. The gipsies had been given five years' grace from the publication of the Order prohibiting performing bears, and now this period had expired. They were now to appear at specified places and themselves destroy their supporters.[94]

It has been suggested that some of the Russian dancing bears may indeed have been killed following the ban, if not quite on the scale related by Garshin, though most are thought to have been sold to menageries and circuses.[95] However, the practice held on into the Soviet period, during which both animal protection societies and anti-cruelty legislations were indefinitely suspended.[96] To this day, the tradition of dancing and skating bears

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[92] Ibid., 79.

[93] Amy Nelson, "The Body of the Beast: Animal Protection and Anticruelty Legislation in Imperial Russia," in *Other Animals,* 101.

[94] W.M. Garshin, "The Bears," in *The Signal and Other Stories*, trans. Captain Rowland Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1916), 250, 255. For an analysis of this short story which, while being insightful, fails to acknowledge the factual events that inspired the subject, see Marilyn Schwinn Smith, "Vsevolod Garshin's 'Medvedi' ('The Bears'): 'Gypsies' and Russian Imperial Boundaries," in *"Gypsies" in European Literature and Culture*, eds. Valentina Glajar and Domnica Radulescu (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 85–104.

[95] Costlow, "For the Bear to Come," 79.

[96] Nelson, "Body of the Beast," 111–112.

continues in Russian circuses, if not on the streets. Moreover, despite the fact that the number of countries prohibiting the use of all kinds of animals at circuses is gradually rising,[97] traveling Russian circuses are still in operation.[98]

Figure 9. Russian troops in France posing with a dancing bear, "the mascot of the regiment," in a postcard postmarked 1916.

[97] These countries are: Bolivia, Greece, Costa Rica, Austria, Singapore, Finland, India, Portugal, Croatia, Israel, Sweden, Hungary, some provinces of Ireland, and, most recently Belgium and the Republic of Cyprus. (PETA UK, "Bravo Belgium! Country on Track to Ban Circuses that Use Wild Animals," July 2013, accessed August 7, 2013, http://blog.peta.org.uk/2013/07/bravo-belgium-country-on-track-to-ban-circuses-that-use-wild-animals/; Yeryüzüne Özgürlük Derneği, "Kıbrıs'ta Hayvanlı Sirkler Yasaklandı!" July 2, 2013, accessed July 3, 2013, http://yeryuzuneozgurluk.blogspot.com/2013/07/kbrsda-hayvanl-sirkler-yasakland.html.) According to an April 2013 report, as of 2015 the United Kingdom might be next in line, albeit only with regard to wild animals (Nigel Morris, "Government to Ban Use of Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses from 2005," *The Independent*, April 15, 2013.)

[98] The Big Moscow Circus (*Bolshoi Moskovskii Tsirk*) seems to take the stage regularly in Ankara under the auspices of the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, notwithstanding the fact that in 2011 nine bears of this company were burnt alive in their cages due to a fire of unknown origin (Ekin Karaca, "İnsan Eğlensin Diye Dokuz Ayı Öldü," Bianet, December 30, 2011, accessed June 10, 2013, http://bianet.org/bianet/hayvan-haklari/135130-insan-eglensin-diye-dokuz-ayi-oldu) and that a petition was launched against their return to Turkey ("Büyük Ankara Sirkindeki Hayvanlı Bölümler Gösterimden Kaldırılsın," accessed November 5, 2012, http://www.change.org/tr/kampanyalar/büyük-ankara-sirkindeki-hayvanlı-bölümler-gösterimden-kaldırılsın).

Further to the north, it is recorded that in 1572 two bears were exhibited by Polish performers before Frederick II, King of Denmark and Norway (r. 1559–1588).[99] In the Swedish Empire, too, sources suggest that bear leaders during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came primarily from Poland (Smarhon) and Russia, as well as Hungary and the Balkans.[100] One can assume that the practice of bear leading continued over the centuries: as of 1868, Swedish police were authorized to take action against animal exhibitors on the grounds that they posed a threat to public security. Moreover, in 1914 the Swedish government issued an immigration act that included a stipulation directed at Gypsies. It read "Foreign gypsies and other foreigners who have the obvious intention to earn their living by begging or by wandering from place to place to perform music, showcase animals and the like, should upon their arrival to the realm or immediately thereafter be repatriated by the police,"[101] thereby specifically acknowledging and intending to exclude bear-leading Gypsies. Finally, on December 30, 1916, King Gustaf V (r. 1907–1950) issued an edict regulating the exhibition of animals in menageries,[102] and in particular banning bear dancing, except for circuses where the practice lasted until the end of the 1950s.[103]

[99] Berg, "Zahme Bären...," 44.

[100] Ibid., 50.

[101] SFS [*Svensk författningssamling* (Swedish Code of Statutes)] 1914:196. I am thankful to Ludvig Wiklander ("The Swedish Immigration Ban on Roma People: Who was Supposed to be the Target?" [paper presented at Antiziganism – What's in a Word? The Uppsala International Conference on the Discrimination, Marginalization and Persecution of Roma, October 23–25, 2013]) for sharing the details of this Act. Also see Tomas Hammar, "Sweden," in *European Immigration Policy: A Comparative Study*, ed. Tomas Hammar (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009 [1985]), 26–27.

[102] Berg, "Zahme Bären...," 53.

[103] Ingvar Svanberg, personal communication, April 9, 2011.

Figure 10. Mural from the Oltenia region of Romania. (http://art-historia.blogspot.com/2009/05/inca-o-postare-pe-tema-monumentelor-din.html)

Bear leading was most common in the Balkans which had a large Gypsy population that goes back to the thirteenth century.[104] For instance, in Bucharest, "the bear dance had turned into a regular practice among gypsy fiddlers and bandsmen as early as the 17th or 18th century." Thus, in his "Report on Oltenia" (1727), General Charles von Tige mentions having seen "a lot of gypsies who used their flutes and cembalo to make 12 bears dance very gracefully" at the court of Voivode Constantin Brâncoveanu. For Viorel Cosma, their reception at "the princely court in Bucharest in the 18th century confirms not only the tradition of this age-old practice (nowadays passed on to circus performers), but also the amount of appreciation it received."[105] Romanian-born Konrad Bercovici (1882–1961) wrote that the Ursari formed a "class of wandering Gypsies" who provided

[104] Elena Marušiakova [Marushiakova] and Vesselin Popov, "Bear-trainers in Bulgaria (Tradition and Contemporary Situation)," *Ethnologia Bulgarica* 1 (1998): 106.

[105] Viorel Cosma, "The Bear Dance," trans. Daniela Oancea, *Plural* 33 (2009), accessed July 19, 2012, http://www.plural-magazine.com/article_the-bear-dance.html [excerpt from *Bucureşti: citadela secular ă a lăutarilor români (1550–1950)*, 2009].

entertainment for the public. First published in 1928, in *The Story of the Gypsies* he noted that "To this day, Gypsies leading huge Carpathian bears, followed by women warming a half-dozen snakes in their bosoms, can be seen pacing the roads and sidepaths from one end of Roumania to another."[106]

Figure 11. Macedonian bear leaders depicted in a postcard. (Author's collection)

Likewise in the Banat, eighteenth-century records indicate that Gypsies' occupations included bear leading alongside charcoal burning, gold washing, horse trading and copper smithing.[107] Indeed, in his unpublished notebook entitled *Serbian Gypsies and Bear-Leaders*, Gypsy lorist Robert Andew Scott Macfie (1868–1935) quotes that only in 1772, twenty-six bear leaders were among the Gypsy groups newly settling in the Banat.[108] In the early nineteenth century, the Ursari also appeared among the different groups of Gypsy slaves of the Crown in Wallachia and Moldavia. They traveled from town to town exhibiting the bears they had captured in the Carpathian mountains,

[106] Konrad Bercovici, *The Story of the Gypsies* (New York: J.J. Little and Ives Company, 1928, 3rd printing), 54.

[107] Donald Kenrick, *Historical Dictionary of the Gypsies (Romanies)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007 [1998]), 16.

[108] Macfie, *Serbian Gypsies*, fol. 94.

and paid the Crown twenty to thirty piasters annually for the privilege.[109] Living in tents, they were "one of the most mobile ethnographic groups" in Europe.[110]

Figure 12. Ursari depicted in a Romanian postcard, 1931. (Editeurs Maier & D. Stern, in Jana Horváthová, *Devleskere čhave: Svedectvom starých pohľadníc* [Poprad: Region Poprad, s.r.o., 2006], 75)

A certain Mr. Skene is reported to relate his encounter with a group of Gypsies after "crossing the Drina at Rača and passing Bjeline, and about an hour before reaching Tuzla [in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina] on horseback" around 1851. He paints a vivid picture of a camp of nomadic bear and monkey leaders:

> In the centre of the encampment were assembled several ponies, mules, and donkeys with pack-saddles of a most clumsy construction; and beside two or three large masses of rock, which stood near the trees, blazed the fires that served to cook their food. Each fire was superintended by an old hag, and the turning-spit on each was eagerly watched by a number of half-naked brats, who seemed to relieve one another in this important duty, while their murky ranks were intermingled with dogs of different breeds, some large and fierce, to act as the sentries of the camp during the night, others small and quaint,

[109] Michel de Kogalnitchan [Mihail Kogălniceanu], *Esquisse sur l'histoire, les mœurs et la langue des cigains connus en France sous le nom de bohémiens suivie d'un recueil de sept cents mots cigains* (Berlin: Librairie de B. Behr, 1837), 12–13.

[110] T.P. Vukanović, "Gypsy Bear-leaders in the Balkan Peninsula," *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* Third Series 38, 3–4 (1959): 111.

with bright coloured jackets, to dance at merry-makings, and take a part in the juggling tricks of the wanderers from the far Ind. One spit, on which a large lamb was being roasted whole, was gravely turned by an enormous bear, whose benignant gaze was fixed on a monkey in a cocked hat and feather, which was burning its fingers in the vain attempt to drag certain small pieces of meat from the cinders where they had been placed to grill.[111]

Figure 13. Possibly turn-of-the-century chocolate card illustrating bear leading in Bulgaria. (Author's collection)

As for the Bulgarian lands, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov argue that the earliest bear leaders to have appeared there "were probably the Romani-speaking *Ričara*, the majority of whom later gradually left the Bulgarian lands. Probably during the second half of the 19th century, Romanian speaking *Ursara* took their place."[112] The practice of bear dancing and bear-related folk rituals continued to feature prominently in both rural and urban settings in the Balkans, leaving their indelible mark on the cultural scene and social imaginary: the Bulgarian saying "A festival without a bear trainer is a waste of

[111] Erasmus Sanseus, "Serbian Gypsy Bear-leaders about 1851," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* Third Series 14, 3 (1935): 203–204.

[112] Marušiakova [Marushiakova] and Popov, "Bear-trainers in Bulgaria," 106.

time,"[113] and the Serbian proverb "A bear has no fear of a tambourine but only of a cudgel"[114] clearly attest to that.

2.3. "Four-Legged Pupils"

Figure 14. Anonymous hand-colored woodcut depicting a bear leading scene, from possibly the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, Poland. (Photo. Wąsik Marcin, courtesy of the National Museum in Warsaw, inv. Gr.Pol.26491)

Poland and France deserve special mention as the sites of specialized bear-leading schools, with another possible one in "Radowicz, a suburb of Prague."[115] The 'bear

[113] Carol Silverman, "Ethnicity, Folklore, and Cultural Politics in Bulgaria," Final Report to National Council for Soviet and East European Research, 803-19, September 1989, 23.

[114] Vukanović, "Gypsy Bear-leaders," 110.

[115] Macfie, *Serbian Gypsies*, fol. 97.

academy' at Smarhon (Polish: Smorgonie, in present-day Belarus) was established in 1778[116] and remained the private estate of the princes of Radziwiłł until the nineteenth century. This school was previously mentioned in the Swedish context as well as having been referred to in Emil Knodt's dancing bear narrative in the 1903 *Klagen der Tiere*. According to Jerzy Ficowski, the Radziwiłłs appointed Gypsy Kings under whose rule

> Smorgonie developed and expanded considerably. The duties of one of the Gypsy headmen included the founding of an Academy for Bears in Smorgonie, and the selection of talented Gypsies who would teach these animals to dance and perform other tricks, and arrange suitable accommodation for the four-legged pupils. Young bears caught for the purpose in the prince's forests were brought to the academy at Smorgonie, and sometimes there were as many as several dozen animals there at one time. Radziwiłł also sent monkeys there to be trained. The establishment was open every day and a dozen or more Gypsies were permanently employed in looking after the animals and training them.[117]

The bears, who had their 'academic break' between the first of November and the fifteenth of February,[118] were taught "all kinds of tricks—dancing in couples, pushing baby carriages, and so on—before they underwent a 'final examination' in front of a committee and were sold throughout the world. [A] bear trainer reported that one of his 'black students,' which he had presented as a gift, returned 'from a place eight hours distant' in order to 'complete his studies in the fine art of dance.'"[119] Upon graduation, and "[w]ith royal permission, the Gypsy bear-leaders set off into the world with the graduates of the academy (...) 'to amuse people with their acts, to collect groats from the spectators, both for the upkeep of themselves and their animals, and also for the payment to the Smorgonie treasury'."[120]

The founder of the academy was Jan Marcinkiewicz, who was appointed King of the Gypsies residing on the Radziwiłł estate in 1778. An eye-witness wrote in the 1780s:

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[116] Kenrick, *Historical Dictionary*, 164.

[117] Jerzy Ficowski, *The Gypsies in Poland: History and Customs*, trans. Eileen Healey ([Warsaw]: Interpress Publishers, [1989]), 95.

[118] Alexander Zaprutko-Janicka, "Słynna na całą Europę niedźwiedzia akademia: Oczywiście w Polsce," February 4, 2011, accessed August 25, 2012, http://ciekawostkihistoryczne.pl/2011/02/04/slynna-na-cala-europe-niedzwiedzia-akademia-oczywiscie-w-polsce/. I am grateful to Witold Szabłowski for notifying me of this article.

[119] Bernd Brunner, *Bears: A Brief History*, trans. Lori Lantz (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007 [2005]), 110.

[120] Ficowski, *Gypsies in Poland*, 95.

> In approaching His Highness the Prince as a faithful vassal, the king of the Gypsies had taught several bears to draw a cart in harness, which pleased the prince exceedingly. A Gypsy acted as a forerunner for these bear tamers, and the outriders were monkeys. When once the king of the Gypsies rode in this way unexpectedly into the courtyard of the Radziwiłł palace at Nieśwież, the Prince was extraordinarily astonished and delighted and treated his guest royally, rushing up and saying: "M'lord, gracious sovereign! You will be received as no guest is received anywhere in the world. Your visit has done me great honour which should be held in memory throughout generations."[121]

Figure 15. Jan Marcinkiewicz, King of the Gypsies on the estates of the Radziwiłł family, pays a visit to Prince Karol Radziwiłł in his palace at Nieśwież. (In Jerzy Ficowski, *Gypsies in Poland*, 122)

Given this history, it comes as no surprise that the current coat of arms of the city of Smarhon features a black bear with a golden collar. (See Figure 16)

[121] Ibid., 21–22.

Figure 16. The coat of arms of Smarhon (Belarus).

Bear leading in Polish territories suffered various setbacks during the nineteenth century: During the first decade of the nineteenth century, an official ban coupled with the policies of the partitioning powers made it

> increasingly rare to come across Gypsy bear-leaders. There were ever fewer of them to be found in the villages, and they only very rarely reached the towns and cities. "It is as yet less than forty years since bands of Gypsies travelled in large numbers not only through our villages and small towns, but also through Warsaw itself, bringing with them bears that had been taught to dance," wrote K.W. Wóycicki in 1861. "They would be found in the larger courtyards of the houses of the capital of the kingdom, in the squares of the towns, and a gaping crowd of the curious would soon collect to look at our Gypsies, the bears and their gambols."[122]

Another ban was issued at the end of the nineteenth century in Warsaw, prohibiting bear leaders and their families from entering the city. However, they could still be occasionally seen as late as the inter-war period.[123]

[122] Ibid., 95.

[123] Zaprutko-Janicka, "Niedźwiedzia akademia."

Figure 17. Bear leading on the streets of Paris, date unknown. (Author's collection)

Another school for bears was established in France, the setting of the following anecdote from the memoirs of a certain Todor Neičev:

> In 1891 as a university student in France, I was taking a walk with friends and some Frenchmen in Lyon along the banks of the Sa[ô]ne River, and we saw a great crowd of people watching something with great curiosity. We came closer, and what do you think we saw? We saw a group of Galata [in present-day Bulgaria] Gypsies, leading two big bears and carrying a playful monkey on one shoulder. Understanding that they were my compatriots I started a conversation with them and they told me they had been all over Russia, Germany, France and were now leaving for Italy, and from there via Austria-Hungary and Serbia to Bulgaria, with their bags stuffed with gold.[124]

The French 'bear academy' was located in the Ariègois town of Ercé. It is thought that local highlanders had learnt the practice from the Romanian Ursari in the nineteenth century. The curriculum included teaching the bears how to salute, simulate wrestling and

[124] Cited in Marušiakova [Marushiakova] and Popov, "Bear-trainers in Bulgaria," 108.

a defence against attacking dogs, and playing dead upon being "shot" by the leader.[125] During the year-long training, "an older bear acted as 'monitor'" for the young pupil.[126]

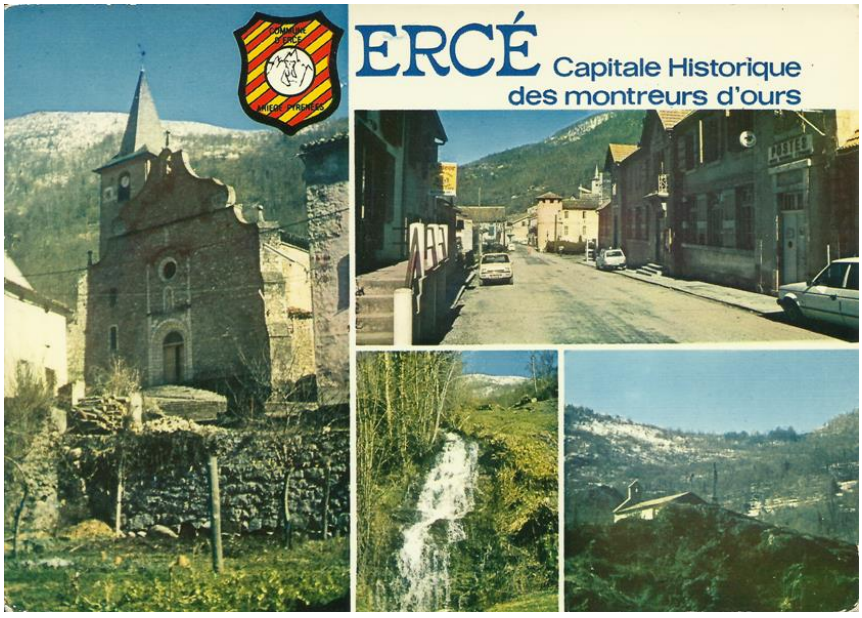

Figure 18. Postcard of Ercé featuring the caption "Historical Capital of Bear Leaders." (Author's collection)

French bear leaders donned distinctive headdresses to pass themselves off as Gypsies, since they were well-reputed for their talents as animal trainers. However, World War I brought the end of the guild of Pyrenean bear leaders, allowing the Gypsies to reclaim their traditional occupation in the area.[127] In Ercé's neighboring town, "The Ustou peasant," a newspaper reported, "either sold their bears to gypsies, or the younger son of the family would put on his béret, hand a few strings of onions over his shoulder, and set off with his bear to tramp the roads of Europe." The report continued that "He returned in time for the Spring plowing, with a pocketful of money earned by selling his onions and showing his bear."[128] Yet, their reputation and recognition did not render them

[125] Michel Praneuf, *L'ours et les hommes dans les traditions européennes* (Paris: Éditions Imago, 1989), 67, 69.

[126] Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France: A Historical Geography* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 167.

[127] Praneuf, *L'ours et les hommes*, 70. For a discussion of the non-Gypsy bear leaders of the Pyrenean region, see François-Régis Gastou, *Montreurs d'ours des Pyrénées et d'ailleurs* (Portet-sur-Garonne: Éditions Loubatières, 2002), chs. 2 and 3.

[128] "Bear Trainers," *The New York Times*, March 7, 1937.

immune to actual or intended police intervention, either in the form of individual cases of arrest or proposed regional or national bans on the movement of bear leaders as of the beginning of the twentieth century.[129] Nevertheless, in Paris, Gypsy bear and monkey leaders were spotted as late as the early 1960s.[130]

2.4. Performing Bears in the United States

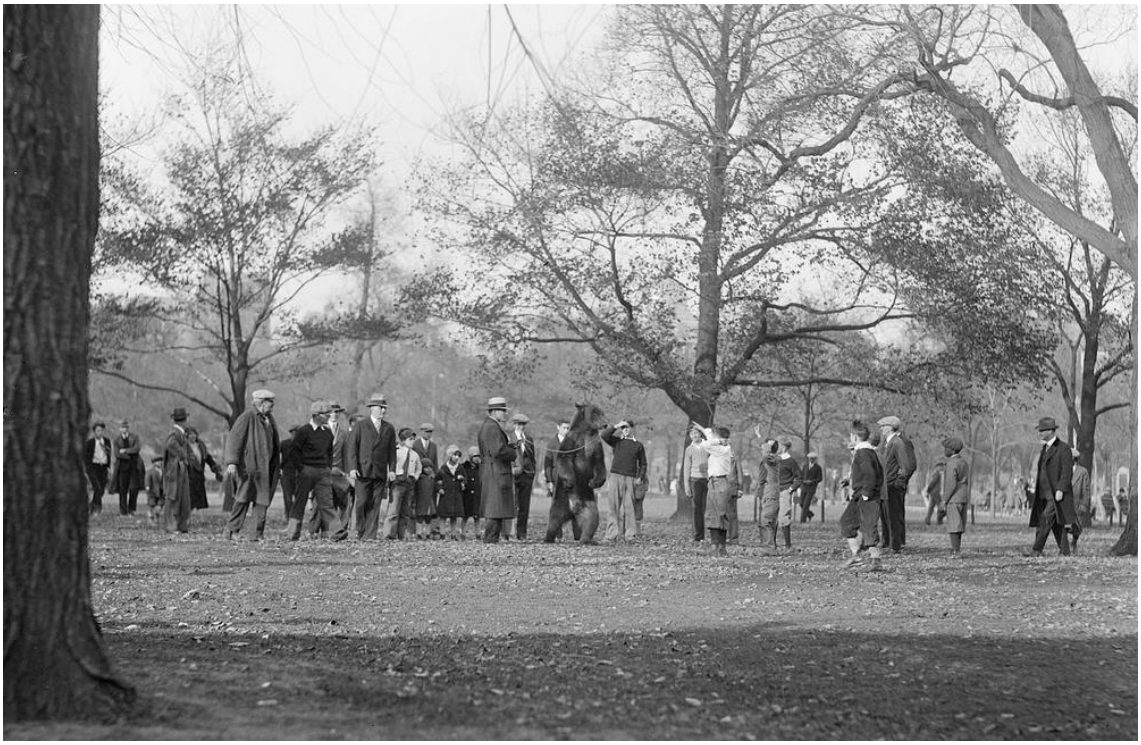

Figure 19. Bear dancing at the Boston Common, 1927.
(http://circusnospin.blogspot.com/2012/01/american-dancing-bear.html)

Either voluntarily or urged on by anti-Gypsy resettlement policies,[131] groups of Gypsies in large numbers are known to have migrated to the United States along with other

[129] See, for instance, "Arrestation mouvementée d'un montreur d'ours," *Le Petit Parisien*, November 1, 1910; and Département d'Eure-et-Loir, Conseil Général, *2e Session Ordinare de 1905. Rapports du préfet de la commission départementale et résumé du procès-verbal des déliberations* (Chartres: Imprimerie Ed. Garnier, 1905), 158.

[130] Berg, "Zahme Bären...," 53; Bieder, *Bear*, 111.

[131] "During the Age of Exploration and Colonization, Spain, Portugal, France, and Great Britain attempted to get rid of the Gypsies by resettling them in the New World," suggests

European settlers from 1880s until about 1914. Angus Fraser notes that "the newcomers came mainly from Austria-Hungary, Italy, Greece, Russia, Rumania and Turkey."[132] Among them were bear-leading Gypsies as well, most of whom "arrived with their trained bears and monkeys; they generally declared Austro-Hungarian or Turkish nationality,"[133] in addition to the Ursari coming over from the Netherlands, as stated earlier. Despite scarce information on bear leading in the United States, pictorial evidence attests to their presence.

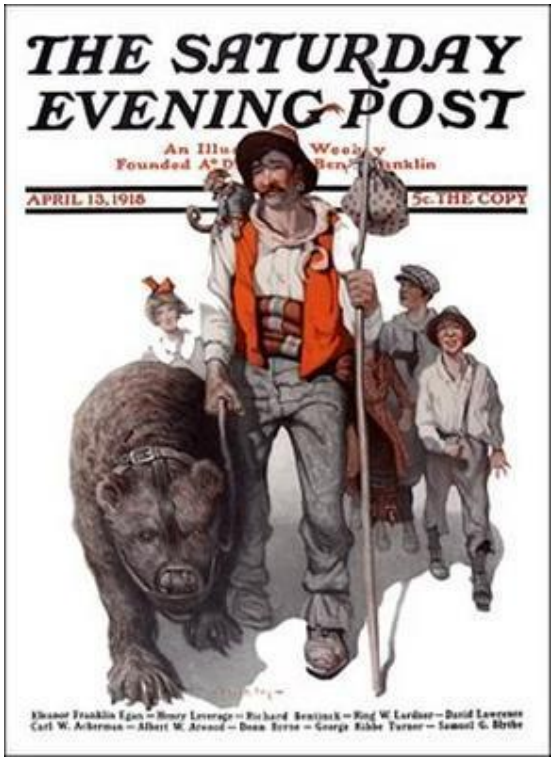

Figure 20. The cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* dated January 13, 1918 depicts a bear- and monkey-leading Gypsy. (Illustration by Clark Fay, http://www.utoledo.edu/library/carlson/exhibits/gypsy/Mystery%20Caravan%20indiv%20four.htm)

Scattered references in the press also provides testimony of to the prevelance of the practice:

> A small colony of Italians had been camping and begging near Wellsburg, N.Y., a few miles from the Pennsylvania line. They observed gypsey-like

Rena C. Gropper in *Gypsies in the City: Culture Patterns and Survival* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1955), 17.

[132] Fraser, *Gypsies*, 235.

[133] Ibid.

> habits, the company being composed of about an equal number of women, babies and trained black bears. They departed on Thursday, November 26, in their rude dog-carts, passing through Elmira. The police drove them out of town quickly. Now, a statement is made by a citizen of Wellsburg, who observed their habits, that an infant of one of the Italians died in camp, and was, in lieu of burial, fed to the bears. There is good evidence to believe that the inhuman parents stood by and saw the beasts devour their child. The bears were certainly very hungry, and the country people are willing to believe any wild story about them. The disposition of the baby's corpse will have to be explained however, the authorities having sent officers in pursuit of the wandering Italians, under the pressure of public opinion.[134]

"In Europe the brown bear is smaller, shy of people, and much less aggresive toward people than its North American counterpart, the grizzly," wrote bear ecology and behavior specialist Stephen Herrero.[135] Almost a century earlier, William Hornaday had pushed the limits of unwarranted anthropomorphism by suggesting that "The European brown bears are sanguine, optimistic and good-natured. (...) [They] are best for training and performances."[136]

As evidenced by the diverse accounts covered above, albeit not in systematic fashion, bear leading was practiced across centuries in a wide-ranging geography. While the absence of its association with the Gypsies in the earlier accounts serves to demonstrate the practice in its de-essentialized and de-ethnicized form, in the later instances bear dancing has come to be associated distinctly with the Gypsies. Moreover, the widespread locales of the practice also point to the extensive migrations of communities identified as Gypsies, in addition to testifying to their persistent policing by the authorities.

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[134] "The Last Bear Story. A Yarn that a Nomad Band of Italians Feed Their Dead Babies to the Trained Brutes," *The National Police Gazette: New York*, December 23, 1882.

[135] Stephen Herrero, *Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance* (Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 2002 [1985]), 237.

[136] Hornaday, *Wild Animals*, 17, 128.

3.

BEAR LEADING AND GYPSIES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Zâhir oldukda hatt-ı meymûnî
Ayu oynatmağa başlar hûbî

Enderunlu Fâzıl, *Hubânnâme*

As was the case in Western and Eastern countries around the same period, bear dancing was a popular amusement in the Ottoman Empire as well. Moreover, while royal recognition of the practice and reception of Gypsy bear leaders seem to have been isolated incidents in Europe, their appearance was well-established in Ottoman courtly events. Although detailed information as to the significance of bear dancing in the daily life of ordinary subjects is lacking for the earlier periods, several foreign travellers such as Pierre Belon (1517–1564),[137] Baron Wenceslas Wratislaw (1576–1635) and Philippe du Fresne-Canaye (1551–1610) expressed astonishment at the abundance of wild animals, including bears, in the streets of the capital. Thus, Wratislaw wrote of "wild beasts of various nature and form; lynxes and wild cats, leopards, bears, and lions, so tame and domesticated, that they are led up and down the city by chains and ropes" in İstanbul.[138] Philippe du Fresne-Canaye, on the other hand, referred to wild animals strolling around unchained in contrast to Turkish women who were covered and confined. He further wrote that he could not

[137] Metin And, *Istanbul in the 16th Century: The City – The Palace – Daily Life* (İstanbul: Akbank, 1994), 149.

[138] A.H. Wratislaw, ed., *Adventures of Baron Wenceslas Wratislaw of Mitrowitz. What He Saw in the Turkish Metropolis, Constantinople; Experienced in His Captivity; and After His Happy Return to His Country, Commited to Writing in the Year of Our Lord 1599* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1862), 70.

attend a festival for fear of being attacked by these beasts.[139] However impressionistic and anecdotal they may be, accounts in travel literature provide valuable material that captures the sociocultural imaginary of the time and sheds light on both courtly and public affairs.

Figure 21. Miniature painting of a bear-leading Gypsy from the manuscript of Enderunlu Fâzıl's *Hubânnâme*, dated 1215 AH (1800–1801 AD). (In Edwin Binney, 3rd, *Turkish Treasures from the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd* [Portland, OR: Portland Art Museum, 1979], 120)

[139] Philippe du Fresne-Canaye, *Fresne-Canaye Seyahatnamesi 1573*, trans. Teoman Tunçdoğan (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2008), 78.

Bear leading was frequently featured at imperial processions and festivals. For instance, in his *Book of Travels*, the Ottoman traveler Evliyâ Çelebi (1611–1682) relates at great length the parade of craftsmen and artisans held in İstanbul prior to Murad IV's (r. 1623–1640) campaign to Baghdad in 1638. While his numbers must generally be approached with caution, Evliyâ Çelebi indicates that there were as many as seventy bear leaders in this procession, all of whom were Gypsies residing in the Sultan Balat Şah neighborhood of the old city. Appearing right before the butchers' guild, the bear leaders Karyağdı, Avra, Duracak, Binbereket, Yazıoğlu, Sürioğlu and Hayvanoğlu are described as dragging their tethered bears with sticks and tambourines in their hands, reciting a tongue twister as they passed before the Sultan.[140]

Books of festivals (*sûrnâme*) give vivid descriptions of Gypsy bear and monkey leaders (*ayubâz*/*ayucu*/*ayıcı; maymûnbâz*/*maymuncu*) who performed regularly at the grand entertainments held on the occasion of imperial weddings or circumcision festivals. In addition to sanctioning the matrimonial union in the case of weddings and functioning as a rite of passage in the case of circumcision festivals, these grandiose public celebrations more significantly helped legitimize the sovereignty of the palace in the eyes of both the public and the invited foreign guests, and inculcate order among imperial subjects, while also conceivably serving as a recognition and commendation of different occupational groups making an appearance and performing their crafts at the processions.[141]

The sumptuous festival celebrating the circumcision of Prince Mehmed (later Sultan Mehmed III, r. 1595–1603) took place at the Hippodrome in the summer of 1582 and lasted almost two whole months. For their performance, bear leaders brought along two bears and each took turns to describing his 'ursine workmate' in highly anthropomorphic terms:

> This fearless bear of mine, whose majesty is like a leopard's and onslaught like a lion's, is intelligent and wise, mighty and powerful. (...) He undergoes the forty-day penitence like an ascete and bestows licenses onto people like a sufi. A guide to those who have gone astray and a friend and helper to those

[140] Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehemmed Zıllî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: 1-6. Kitaplar*, vol. 1, eds. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı, Robert Dankoff, Zekeriya Kurşun and İbrahim Sezgin (İstanbul: YKY, 2011), 280.

[141] Fikret Yılmaz, "Boş Vaktiniz Var mı? veya 16. Yüzyılda Anadolu'da Şarap, Eğlence ve Suç," *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 1/241 (Spring 2005): 11–15.

> who stay on course, he spends his time during mortification licking his hands and feet, and in order to preserve his modesty he flees at the sight of a woman with an uncovered head.[142]

The other bear leader challenged him, saying "At times of fury he roars like the mad, and when exhausted he mutters like the artisans. Because of an excess of ambition[143] he does not eat fresh meat until it smells[144] and because of excessive lust he gives in to carnal passion and forgoes sleep."[145] All this mutual taunting was followed by the bears standing up on their hind legs and wrestling vehemently. After a while the bears calmed down, "turned hostility into festivity," eagerly whirling and pretending to play the *zurna* and tambourine.[146] While the author of this account did not identify the bear leaders, Johannes Löwenklau (1541–1594), a German historian, translator and jurist who was visiting İstanbul at the time and attended the events, indicates that it was the Gypsies who carried out these bear performances.[147]

In 1675, at the eighteen-day wedding celebrations of Mehmed IV's (r. 1648–1687) daughter Hatice Sultan in Edirne, animal performances were greatly sought after and once again involved bears and monkeys as well as donkeys, goats, greyhounds, and snakes. According to the notes of John Covel (1638–1722), an English clergyman who witnessed the occasion, the spectacle of a bear wrestling with a naked boy was enjoyed so much that it was repeated a few times before the Sultan.[148]

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[142] Mehmet Arslan, ed., *Osmanlı Saray Düğünleri ve Şenlikleri 2: İntizâmi Sûrnâmesi* (İstanbul: Sarayburnu Kitaplığı, 2009), 428 (Topkapı Palace edition).

[143] The early Ottoman word for "bear" is homonymous with "ambition" (*hırs*). Having referred to the bear as *hırs* in the preceding passage, here the author of this account must have aimed at a play on words.

[144] Due to their omnivorous dentition, bears are indeed known to bury their prey and let it rot –and thus soften– for a few days before they eat it. (Hüseyin Avni Özen, *Bak Şu Ayının Yaptığına: Doğanın Bir Parçası Olmak* [İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2009, (1st ed. undated)], 82.

[145] Arslan, ed., *İntizâmi Sûrnâmesi*, 428.

[146] Ibid., 429.

[147] Johannes Leunclavius, *Neuwe Chronica türckischer Nation* (Frankfurt a.M.: n.p., 1590), 478.

[148] John Covel, *Bir Papazın Osmanlı Günlüğü: Saray – Merasimler – Gündelik Hayat*, trans. Nurten Özmelek (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2011), 155. Also see Özdemir Nutku, *IV. Mehmet'in Edirne Şenliği (1675)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1972), 100.

Figure 22. Bear dancing in the courtyard of Elçi Hanı in Çemberlitaş, İstanbul, in the Löwenklau album, c. 1586, fol. 141. (Courtesy of the Austrian National Library, cod. 8615)

One of the most celebrated Ottoman books of festivals was written and illustrated on the occasion of the circumcision festivities of the four sons of Ahmed III (r. 1703–1730). The lavish banquet was held in İstanbul in autumn 1720 and lasted fifteen days, on the fourth of which Gypsy bear leaders made the scene, clanking their chains and holding their distinctive tambourines.[149] A chamberlain by the nickname of Çomar with a dreadful appearance started turning somersaults on the ground while reciting a tongue twister: "(...) Offer me to the mastiffs like a bear/[150] Sing some song like Hevayî/ (...)/ Mighty enough to wrestle with bears/ Rarely you see a brave man like me." What followed was Çomar tussling with a bear and the audience bursting into laughter in the face of this scene. (Figure 23) Subsequently, the other bear leaders unchained the bears and the interspecies duos performed all the wrestling moves normally carried out by pairs of humans. (Figure 24) Following the maxim "Might makes right," bears outmaneuvered their leaders. Afterwards, it was the monkey leaders' turn on the ground where the animals impersonated dancing humans and displayed various difficult acts, teased and infuriated a number of goats, before finally collecting handfuls of tips from the audience and making their Gypsy handlers "happy as larks."[151]

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[149] According to the author of this account, these were special tambourines that did not bear metal jingles (*zil*). However, Melih Duygulu (*Türkiye'de Çingene Müziği: Batı Grubu Romanlarında Müzik Kültürü* [İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2006], 198) describes the traditional bear leader tambourine as one *with* jingles and larger than usual in diameter.

[150] This reference to bear baiting is particularly interesting, as it shows that this practice was at least acknowledged, if not frequently pursued, in the Ottoman lands. A rare mention of an occurence of –a notably mild version of– bear baiting in the Ottoman Empire appears in the highly Orientalist text accompanying architect and painter Antoine Ignace Melling's (1763–1831) drawings of İstanbul: Among the entertainments performed before Sultan Selim III (r. 1789–1807), it is said, "After wrestling comes bear fighting; this has nothing in common with the terrible sport of bullfighting, of which Spain has retained the deplorable custom. The bear which is led into the pit is muzzled, and the human adversary who confronts the miserable animal limits himself to insulting him in a thousand ways in order gradually to increase its impotent rage. Dogs are brought in, also muzzled, further to irritate the bear without posing any real danger to it." (Antoine Ignace Melling, *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore / A Picturesque Voyage to Constantinople and the Shores of the Bosphorus / İstanbul ve Boğaz Kıyılarına Pitoresk Seyahat*, trans. İrvin Cemil Schick and Ece Zerman, ed. Rezan Benatar [İstanbul: Denizler Kitabevi, 2012 (1819)], 74.)

[151] Mehmet Arslan, ed., *Osmanlı Saray Düğünleri ve Şenlikleri 3: Vehbi Sûrnâmesi* (İstanbul: Sarayburnu Kitaplığı, 2009), 207-208. For a different account of this festival, see Hâfız Mehmed Efendi, *Şehzâdelerin Sünnet Düğünü: Sûr-ı Hümâyûn, 1720*, ed. Seyit Ali Kahraman (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2008); and Mehmet Arslan, ed., "Hâfız

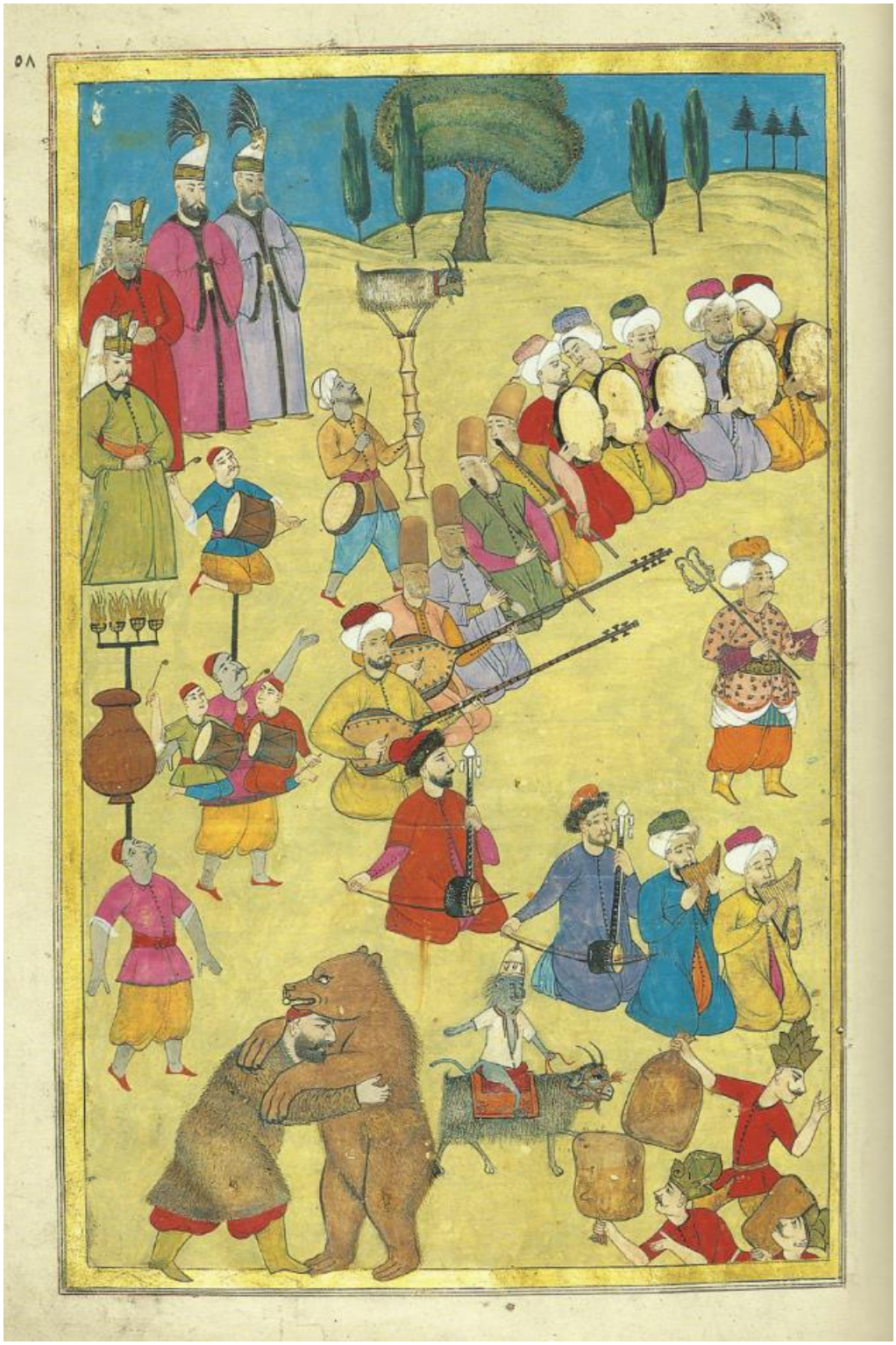

Figure 23. (Left) A man wrestling with a bear at the circumcision festivities of the four sons of Ahmed III, in Levnî's miniature painting in *Surnâme-i Vehbî*, c. 1730, fol. 58a. (Courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, A. 3593)

Mehmed Efendi (Hazîn) Sûrnâmesi," in *Osmanlı Saray Düğünleri ve Şenlikleri 4-5* (İstanbul: Sarayburnu Kitaplığı, 2011), 295–447.

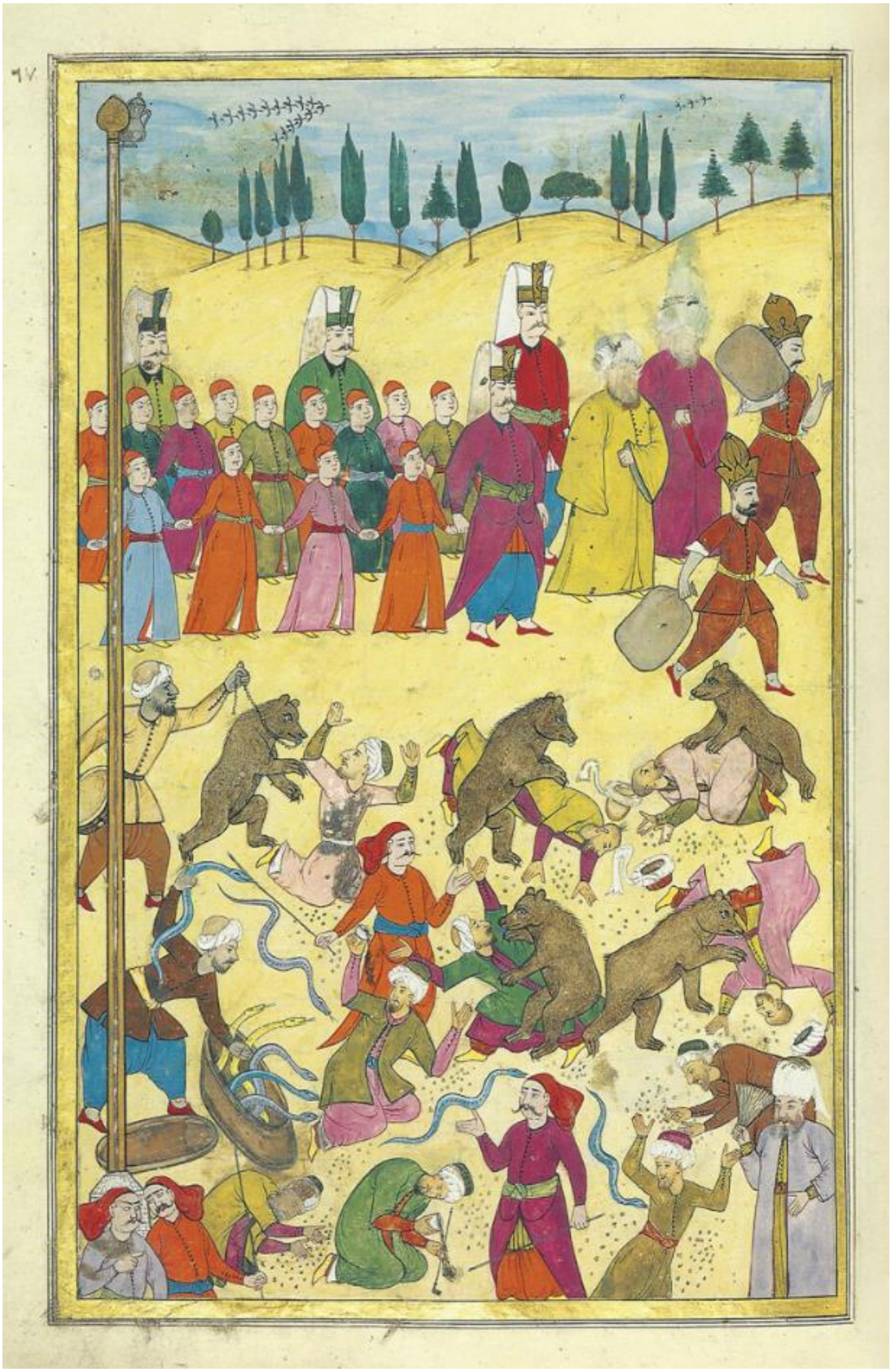

Figure 24. Gypsy bear leaders wrestling with their bears at the circumcision festivities of the four sons of Ahmed III, in Levnî's miniature painting in *Surnâme-i Vehbî*, c. 1730, fol. 67a. (Courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, A. 3593)

3.1. Coexistence Interrupted

The evident prevalence of the practice and its imperial recognition did not necessarily mean peaceful coexistence between the Ottoman public at large and the bear-leading Gypsies whose community by and large was subjected to discriminatory taxation and exclusionary social status throughout the Empire. Even though it has been noted that, save the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, discrimination against Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire was "far less rampant,"[152] or that legislation concerning Gypsies was far from being "systematically repressive," when compared to Europe,[153] they were nevertheless stigmatized and persecuted by both authorities and the rest of the public. For instance, Alexander G. Paspati (d. 1891), İstanbul-born Greek physician and Gypsy lorist celebrated for penning the first comprehensive study of the language of Ottoman Gypsies, referred to bear and monkey leaders as

> the wildest people of this race. They lead bears and monkeys in fairs and large cities. Some of them are blacksmiths during the winter. It is from among this class that the government finds its executioners. Like migrating birds, they wander from one place to another, so that it is very difficult to get to know them or even learn about their way of life. They wear enormous head dresses and broad trousers. Their gaze is savage, their walk proud. Three years ago, a band of these people traveling through the countryside at a distance of three hours from Constantinople murdered two country wardens who had addressed some not-too-polite words to their women. They nailed their victims to the ground by sticking sticks through their heads. They do not form a class apart from the others, but are distinguished from fellow Gypsies by their savageness and rudeness.[154]

Even though imperial decrees and court records offer glimpses at best, they can still be illustrative of the treatment of Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire and their ways of counteracting authorities, and to a lesser extent, their relationships with the rest of society. A decree sent to the judge (*kadı*) of İstanbul in 1761, for instance, addressed the complaint of the Muslim residents of the Hoca Ali neighborhood in Eğrikapı that, they said, was

[152] Barany, *East European Gypsies*, 10.

[153] Fraser, *Gypsies*, 172.

[154] Paspati, *Études sur les Tchinghianés*, 22.

being increasingly taken over by the Gypsies migrating from the countryside and were purchasing and occupying houses previously owned by Muslims. In addition, they complained about the noise made by the animals the Gypsies kept for performances and claimed that the twigs they collected for making brooms constituted a fire hazard. Interestingly, a bear-leading Gypsy by the name Mustafa was singled out in the decree for intending to purchase a house at a high price. In conclusion, the Gypsies were strictly ordered to remain within their own quarters. A few weeks later, the decree was re-issued, with the addendum that those who did not abide would be expelled from the neighborhood and sent back to their previous locations by the authorities.[155] It should be noted that the faith of the Gypsies is not mentioned here, while the residents of the neighborhood in question are specified as Muslims, which points to marginalization on the grounds of a peculiar blend of religion with ethnicity – peculiar for the Ottoman context, but a closely familiar justification for discrimination that has repercussions in the daily lives of Roma to this very day.

3.2. All Muslims are Equal, but Some are More Equal than Others[156]

Governed by the Sharia law, religious affiliation (rather than ethnicity or language) was the leading demarcation line among the subjects of the Ottoman Empire in terms of duties and rights. Thus, the society was mainly classified into two major groups, Muslims and non-Muslims, with the supremacy of the former, and each group was regulated by sets of differentiating rules for taxation, military service, and even attire,[157] while all Muslim subjects were, in principal, considered to be equal members of the *ummah*. However, in practice, some Muslims were more equal than others, and Gypsies appear to be a

[155] Ahmet Kal'a et al., eds., *İstanbul Ahkâm Defterleri: İstanbul'da Sosyal Hayat 2 (1755-1765)* (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1998), 238–239, 273–275.

[156] This heading, of course, takes off from George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (Essex: Longman, 1995 [1945]), 92.

[157] See, for instance, İrvin Cemil Schick, "Some Islamic Determinants of Dress and Personal Appearance in Southwest Asia," *Khil'a* 3 (2007-2009 [2011]): 25–53.

specially-treated sub-community of Muslims, *id est* discriminated against based on their ethnic identification by the authorities.[158]

> [In the Ottoman Empire, the Gypsies'] existence was buttressed by a long list of regulations and taxation acts that, while clearly discriminating against them, nevertheless made them a legitimate part of Ottoman society and a steady source of state revenues. The place given to Gypsies, however, was unmistakably inferior.[159]

One can trace this ascribed inferiority even in the restrictions imposed on the choice of mount: "the horse being preferred over the donkey as a more honorable mount", Leslie Peirce notes, "forbidding non-Muslims to ride horses was one of the measures periodically enforced by Muslim authorities when they wanted to remind Christians and Jews of their legally inferior status."[160] Such a measure was inflicted upon the Gypsies of İstanbul and Rumelia in the sixteenth century as well, as they were reported to be "committing malice and atrocities"; the government's response was to prohibit them from mounting horses and raising mares, while allowing them ride donkeys and ox-carts when necessary.[161]

Another domain where one finds Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire being discriminated against concerns their military recruitment. Even though they did occasionally serve in the army, their involvement was limited to auxiliary services. Furthermore, although granted exemption from certain taxes in return for these services, they were denied the opportunity of becoming members of the ruling class (*askerî*), thus being endowed with privileges separating them from the *rayah*, and were to be identified as "exempt" (*müsellem*) instead.[162]

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[158] See Antonina Zhelyazkova, "Islamization in the Balkans as an Historiographical Problem: The Southeast-European Perspective," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, eds. Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden, Boston and Köln: Brill, 2002), 258–259.

[159] Eyal Ginio, "Neither Muslims nor Zimmis: The Gypsies (Roma) in the Ottoman State," *Romani Studies* Fifth Series 14, 2 (2004): 141.

[160] Leslie Peirce, "The Material World: Ideologies and Ordinary Things," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, eds. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 216.

[161] Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrîde İstanbul Hayatı*, ed. Abdullah Uysal (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000 [1917]), 252–253.

[162] Faika Çelik, "Exploring Marginality in the Ottoman Empire: Gypsies or People of Malice (Ehl-i Fesad) as Viewed by the Ottomans," EUI Working Paper RSCAS No. 2004/39: 7–8; and Ginio, "Neither Muslims nor Zimmis," 135–137.

Taxation was yet another realm infused with discriminatory treatment of Gypsies. The Islamic poll-tax (*cizye* or *harâc*) was levied from the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire, and it was "considered as an extra heavy imposition on the non-Muslims and always caused discontent among them; the main cause of conversion, desertions and uprisings in the empire's period of decline."[163]

The government's desire to establish stricter control over its Gypsy subjects led to the issuance of regulations specifically concerning them, the first of which appeared in the Decree on the Number of the Sheep of Rumelian Turks (*Rumeli Etrâkinün Koyun Adedi*) issued during the reign of Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481). This decree specified the amount of poll-tax to be collected from each and every Gypsy, regardless of their religious persuasion but with the exemption of blacksmiths employed to work at the construction of fortresses, and the rules of tax collection. Most significantly, Muslim Gypsies were forbidden to associate or reside with non-Muslim (*kâfir*; literally unbeliever) Gypsies on pain of incarceration.[164]

Indeed, Gypsies "were pushed into a twilight zone between the two [confessional categories], and subsequently formed a group of their own."[165] Moreover, this formation did not only prevail in the social imaginary. Around the turn of the sixteenth century, the Gypsies of Rumelia were organized into a Gypsy sub-province (*Livâ-yı Çingâne* or *Cingâne Sancağı*)[166] which is thought to be not so much a geographical construct but rather –ever so unorthodox for the Ottoman realm of the time–one based on ethnicity.[167] The formation of this administrative segment meant not only that the Ottoman government recognized Gypsies politically, but also that it was determined to establish stricter and more centralized control over their tax payments as well as their way of life,

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[163] Halil İnalcık, *The Survey of Istanbul 1455: The Text, English Translation, Analysis of the Text, Documents* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2012), 475.

[164] Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: FEY Vakfı Yayınları, 1990), 397–400.

[165] Eyal Ginio, "Neither Muslims nor Zimmis," 119.

[166] Akgündüz (*Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, v. 6 [1993], 511) notes that this sub-province was centered around Kırk Kilise (present-day Kırklareli) and that it mainly constituted of the districts Eski Hisar-ı Zağra, Hayrabolu, Malkara, Döğenci Eli, İncügöz, Gümülcine, Yanbolu, Pınarhisar, Prevedi, Dimetoka, Ferecik, İpsala, Keşan and Çorlu. Most of these districts fall within the boundaries of the Thrace region of present-day Turkey and are still densely populated by the Roma.

[167] Faika Çelik, "Exploring Marginality," 6.

the latter considered to be disorderly and immoral. The existence of such a sub-province, which survived well into the reign of Murad III (r. 1574–1595),[168] before it dissolved, possibly due to failure to maintain its function, is evidenced by the first Ottoman law solely targetting the Gypsies, promulgated in 1497 during the reign of Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512). Outlining the responsibilities of "the governor of the Gypsy sub-province" (*Cingâne Sancağı Beği*), this Law of the Poll-Tax of the Gypsies (*Kânun-ı Cizye-i Cingâneha*) stipulated the taxation of non-Muslim Gypsies in further detail.[169]

The governor of the Gypsy sub-province was called for duty in the Law of the Gypsies of Rumelia (*Kânunnâme-i Kıbtiyân-ı Vilâyet-i Rumeli*) as well. Enacted in 1530 under the rule of Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566), this law reiterated the previous prohibition of Muslim Gypsies commingling with their non-Muslim counterparts, once again imposing incarceration and higher tax payments on those who did – arguably "to ensure that Islamized [G]ypsies remained Muslims."[170] Moreover, the law specified a two-tiered taxation for Muslim and non-Muslim Gypsies, even though they were administratively subsumed under a single provincial unit. Yet the seemingly trifling difference (22 and 25 aspers, respectively) evokes the notion that in the case of Gypsies ethnicity was given precedence over religious affiliation.[171] Much like their early modern European counterparts, who were subjected to endless persecution due to their supposedly "questionable Christianity" and "objectionable way of life,"[172] the Muslim Gypsies' adherence to Islam in the Ottoman Empire was undervalued, which led Peter Sugar to remark, within the context of early seventeenth-century Sofia, that "while Gypsies were considered such low people that even Muslims could be taxed illegally, their religion was

[168] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, v. 8 (1994), 651–652.

[169] Ibid., vol. 2 (1990), 383–386.

[170] Suraiya Faroqhi, *Coping with the State: Political Conflict and Crime in the Ottoman Empire 1550-1720* (İstanbul: İsis Press, 1995), 140–141.

[171] The study of the taxation of Ottoman Gypsies still awaits a systematic survey of the amounts of poll-tax levied in comparison to other non-Muslim subjects of the Empire.

[172] Shulamith Shahar, "Religious Minorities, Vagabonds and Gypsies in Early Modern Europe," in *The Roma: A Minority in Europe: Historical, Political and Social Perspectives*, eds. Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2007), 9.

still worth a 70 *akçe* tax discount" in contrast with Christian Gypsies (180 and 250 aspers, respectively).[173]

Indeed, "The main stigmatization attributed to the Gypsies [was] their seeming negligence in keeping the religious commands, to the extent that they were characterized by the surrounding society as pagans who only pretended to profess a religion."[174] Evliyâ Çelebi would attest to this impression by citing the practices of Rumelian Gypsies who were said to have been deported from Komotini to İstanbul by Mehmed II:

> The Rumelian Gypsies celebrated Easter with the Christians, the Festival of Sacrifice with the Muslims, and Passover with the Jews. They did not accept any one religion, and therefore our *imams* refused to conduct funeral services for them but gave them a special cemetery outside [Eğrikapu]. It is because they are such renegades that they were ordered to pay an additional tax for non-Muslims (*harâc*). That is why a double *harâc* is exacted from the Gypsies. In fact, according to Sultan Mehmed's census stipulation (*tahrîr*), *harâc* is even exacted from the dead souls of the Gypsies, until live ones are found to replace them.[175]

However, it is important to note that Ottoman court records exhibit cases where Muslim Gypsies sought relief from this unjust system. While an imperial decree ordered that poll-tax be collected from all Gypsies residing in the provinces of Anatolia, Karaman, Rumelia and Trebizond in 1525,[176] only a few years before the enactment of the Law of the Gypsies of Rumelia, from early seventeenth century onwards the palace seems to have responded favorably to the petitions of Muslim Gypsies. For instance, a group of Gypsies residing in the Üsküplü quarter of İstanbul appealed to the Sultan in 1618, stating that they were offended by tax collectors who tried to levy from them the poll- and land-tax designated for non-Muslims (*harâc* and *ispençe*). The response of the palace was accommodating:

> [G]iven that the aforementioned are believers and members of the community of Muslims, and given that they mingle with Muslims and perform the five daily prayers and recite the glorious Qur'an, as do their sons, and given that

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[173] Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354–1804* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 103.

[174] Ginio, "Neither Muslims nor Zimmis," 127.

[175] Evliyâ Çelebi, *Seyahatnâme,* vol. 2, 8/37. The English translation is taken from Victor A. Friedman and Robert Dankoff, "The Earliest Known Text in Balkan (Rumelian) Romani: A Passage from Evliya Çelebi's *Seyāhat-nāme*," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* Fifth Series 1, 1 (Feb. 1991): 4.

[176] Yasemin Dağdaş and Zeynep Berktaş, eds., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar Mahkemesi 5 Numaralı Sicil (H. 930-936 / M. 1524-1530)* (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 196–197.

> they do not mingle with other Gypsies and they pay the household tax (*avarız*) and other taxes together with the inhabitants of the neighborhood wherein they live and have committed no fault; therefore do not permit anyone to offend or frighten the aforementioned, and do not request *harâc* and *ispençe*, and do not give them reason to complain again.[177]

It appears that justice seeking on the part of Ottoman Gypsies and judicious responses from the government were not frequent, but neither were they unheard of.[178]

In *A Moveable Empire* where he explores the movements of migrant groups and the implications of migrancy and settlement in the Ottoman Empire, Reşat Kasaba notes that

> Of all the religious and other groups who came under the control of the Ottoman Empire, Gypsies and Kurds were the only ones categorized on the basis of ethnicity and not religion. Even though both groups included Muslim and non-Muslim segments, such distinctions were subsumed under the general categories of Kurds and Gypsies.[179]

Indeed, as fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ottoman censuses clearly illustrate, while the chief taxonomic groups were religious denominations, where the sub-categorization of non-Muslims primarily consisted of Greek Orthodox, Armenians and Jews, "oddly enough, [there was] a separate classification for *Kıpti*, i.e. Gypsies."[180] Significantly, this situation prevailed well into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where the Gypsies (both Muslim and non-Muslim) were held separate while Muslims were classified as Islam and Christians as *rayah*.[181]

The "twilight zone" into which the Ottoman Gypsies were pushed into is further demonstrated in a late nineteenth-century incident that transpired in Rumelia: in 1888,

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[177] Yılmaz Karaca et al., eds., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: İstanbul Mahkemesi 3 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1027 / M. 1618)* (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 487–488.

[178] Also see, for instance, Yılmaz Karaca et al., eds., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: İstanbul Mahkemesi 12 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1073 / M. 1663-1664)* (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 817–818; Hüseyin Kılıç et al., eds., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Bâb Mahkemesi 54 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1102 / M. 1691)* (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2011), 435–436; and Tülün Değirmenci, "Sözleri Dinlensin, Tasviri İzlensin: Tulû'î'nin *Paşanâme*'si ve 17. Yüzyıldan Eşkıya Hikâyeleri," *Kebikeç* 33 (2012): 127–148. I am grateful to İrvin Cemil Schick for informing me of the last source.

[179] Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants and Refugees* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2009), 29.

[180] Çelik, "Exploring Marginality," 7 citing Kemal Karpat, "The Ottoman Confessional Legacy in the Middle East," in *Ethnicity, Pluralism and the State in the Middle East*, eds. Milton J. Esman and Itamar Rabinovich (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 45.

[181] Orhan Sakin, *Osmanlı'da Etnik Yapı ve 1914 Nüfusu* (İstanbul: Ekim Yayınları, 2008), 85–86.

Alexander Paspati wrote of a fatality among the bear-leading Gypsies of Değirmenköy (in present-day İstanbul, formerly under the administration of Çorlu, Tekirdağ) in 1866:

> One night one of them, called Mustapha, in passing a river with his bear, got imbedded in the mud up to his waist. His cries were heard by some workmen at a neighbouring farm, but, thinking that highwaymen were at their work, they left the poor fellow to his fate. In the morning he was found still in the mud—dead.[182]

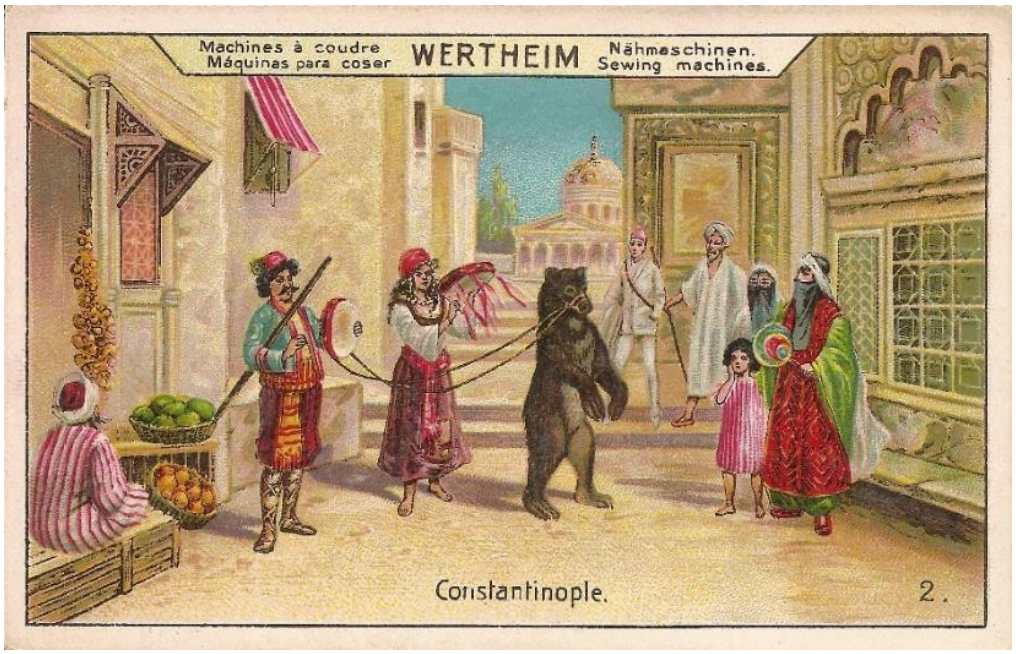

Figure 25. Chocolate card featuring bear leading in İstanbul, possibly dating from the turn of the twentieth century. (Author's collection)

So far the story is straight-forward. The issue of where Mustafa would be buried, however, proved complicated, and illustrates the fact that the Gypsies of the Empire were indeed ostracized by both Muslim and non-Muslim communities:

> His companions went to the Greek priest in the village to have him buried, but the priest, knowing that up to that day he had been called Mustapha, was unwilling to bury him. His companions had alleged that his name was Theodore. Finally the Turks, finding no vestige of circumcision, gave him up as a Christian, and he was buried according to the rites of the Christian Church. It is a striking example of their indifference to religion.[183]

[182] Alexander G. Paspati, "Turkish Gypsies," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 1, 1 (July 1888): 3.

[183] Ibid.

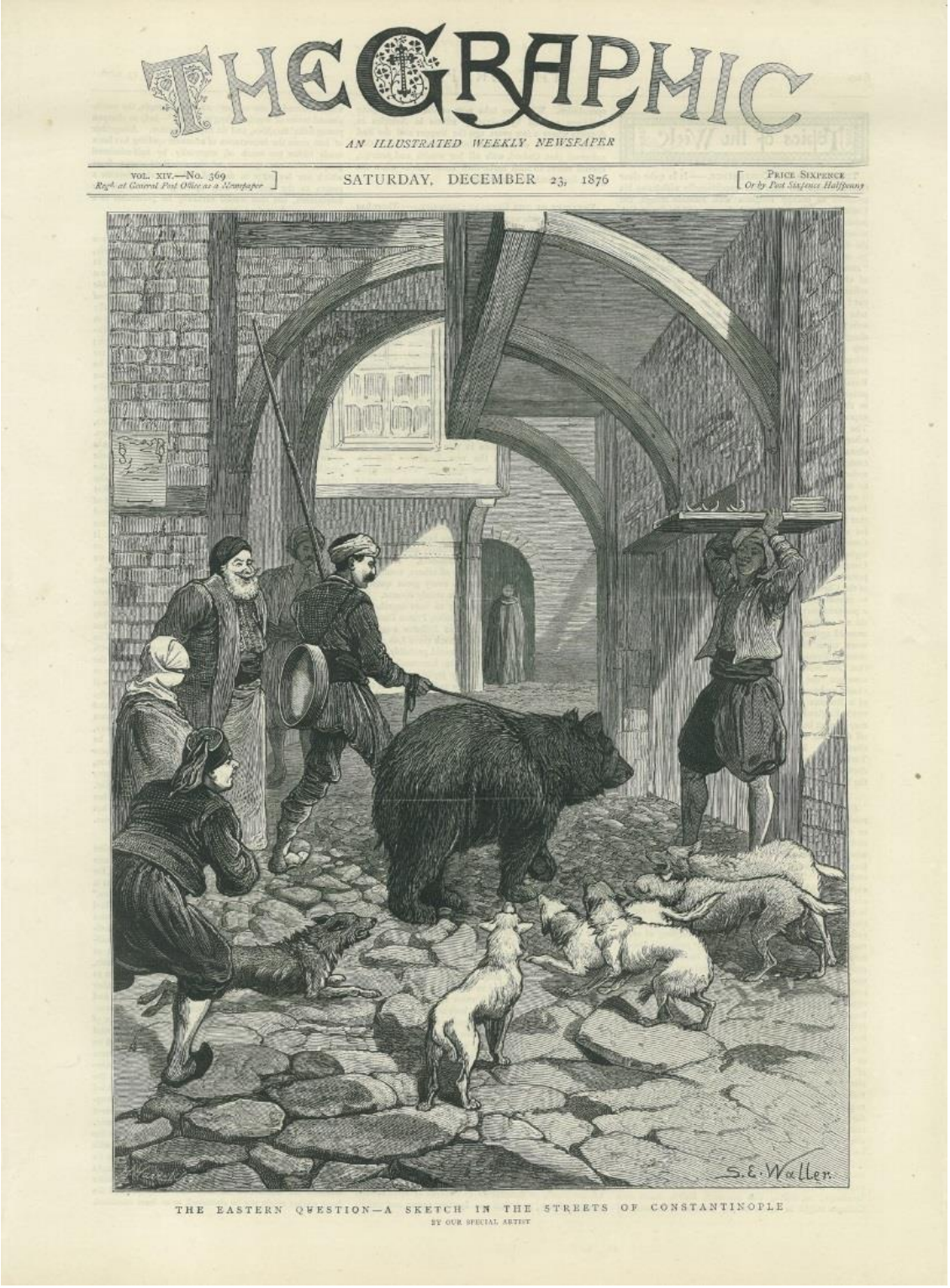

Figure 26. *The Graphic* dated December 23, 1876 captioned this cover illustration by S.E. Waller with "The Eastern question—A sketch in the streets of Constantinople." (Author's collection)

The discriminating attitude of both the public and the administrators towards the Gypsies of the Empire was starkly scrutinized in a confidential report submitted to Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) on February 5, 1891 by Sadi Bey, the Ottoman and Persian language instructor at the Serres Preparatory and Civil Service School. A perfect example of the Hamidian autocracy's bent for governmentality and data collection, the report stated that "gypsy is an ill-omened word that, when pronounced, conjures the accursed, abominable acts of an [evil] people, or, a posteriori, a deeply felt hatred." Qualifying them as "a tribe of ignoramuses" who are "envious of the blessings dogs receive," but nevertheless, still deserving of mercy in the name of Islam and humanity, Sadi Bey went on to lament the fact that Gypsies had been left to their own resources and discriminated against: "Although the Copts [*Kıbtî*, i.e. Gypsies] became Muslims when they pledged their lives to the glorious power of the everlasting and eternal Ottoman state, they are still inscribed in census records as "exempt Copts" and are subject to distinct procedures!..." If the requisite care to their –specifically religious– education had been exercised, the report continued, "they themselves would have long forgotten that they are Gypsies."[184]

Sadi Bey's report culminated in a sentimental encouragement of the government to 'rehabilitate' them so as to reduce crime and transform them into useful citizens: "Given that the Gypsies, whose humanity one does not doubt, are Muslims, would anyone with a conscience acquiesce to their being dispossessed in both this world and the next?"[185] It appears that Sultan Abdülhamid took the report to heart and promptly ordered local authorities to take care of the settlement and sedentarization of nomadic Gypsies, as well as the building of new schools in these settlement areas. A noteworthy attempt at breaking down prejudices and discriminatory actions of local administrators was to rename the neighborhoods previously –and notoriously– known as "Gypsy quarter"s. However, concerning civil registry, it would take until 1905 for the Gypsy (*Kıbtî*) classification to cease to appear in census records.[186]

[184] Ahmet Uçar, "Çingenelere Dair II. Abdülhamid'e 1891 Yılında Sunulmuş Bir Rapor," in *Bir Çingene Yolculuğu*, eds. Hasan Suver, Başak Kara and Aslınur Kara (İstanbul: Fatih Belediyesi Başkanlığı, 2010), 131, 132–133, 138.

[185] Ibid., 140.

[186] Ahmet Uçar, "İlk Çingene Açılımı 120 Yıl Önce Yapıldı: Sultan Abdülhamid'e Sunulan Gizli Rapor," *Atlas Tarih* 10 (Dec. 2011–Jan. 2012): 67.

Such was the condition of the Gypsies vis-à-vis the Ottoman state, among whom bear leaders constituted a separate occupational group, if not a distinct and unmistakably lower class.

Figure 27. Postcard depicting bear leaders in Ottoman Damascus, postmarked 1909. (Author's collection.)

3.3. Towards the Republic

In 1914, on the eve of the fall of the Empire, a public gardens regulation (*Umûmî Bahçeler Talimatnâmesi*) was issued in İstanbul, prohibiting animal performers, along with travelling musicians, singers, acrobats, jugglers and shoeshiners from entering the gardens.[187] In light of historical evidence, one can confidently presume that the group identified as animal performers included bear and monkey leaders. Another document from the same year gives a clearer idea about the pervasiveness of bears, and thus bear

[187] Osman Nuri Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyye*, ed. Cengiz Özdemir, vol. 4 (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1995 [1330–1338 R (1914/1915–1922 AD)]), 2127.

leading in the capital. A toll tariff for the two now-long-replaced bridges connecting the opposite shores of the Golden Horn (*Köprüler Mürûriye Resmi Tarifesi*) included a toll for bears, which was the same amount (twenty *para*) demanded from each loaded porter and twice the amount collected from each pedestrian.[188] That such a tariff even existed indicates that bears were still a common occurence in the city, and that the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) government wished to cash in from their abundance.

Figure 28. Photocard depicting monkey- and bear-leading Gypsies in possibly late Ottoman İstanbul. (Author's collection)

This amount must have corresponded roughly to the usual amount a bear leader would receive for a performance. In the diary he kept for his daughter, Nevhîz, Ahmet Nedim Servet Tör (1871–1947) made an entry for June 19, 1914 in which he recounted the frequently encountered scene of bear dancing in İstanbul:

> This evening (...) a four-legged, heavy-bodied, huge bear –that joy of the mountains, that apple of the eye of nomad's tents, that dancer on the stage of talent, that most skilled of impersonators– coquettishly ambled into our street, led by his disheveled gypsy guide. (...) we felt like having you [Nevhîz] watch

[188] Ibid., 2000–2001.

that big fellow as he walked by our gate at the rhythm of the tambourine. Already eyeing the windows and waiting for a small inviting gesture, the gypsy saw our sign and immediately began to play his tambourine, occasionally hitting the bear here and there with the long stick he carried under his arm and making that big body jump around. The song he sang in order to make the bear dance was as off-key as the crude tambourine he played... He went on making it dance for quite a while... He made it describe and imitate how old ladies lie down after coming out of the hammam, how the young girls of yore used to act all coy when they saw young men, and how those of today strut and belly dance. Then he said "curtsy to the little lady so she gives you your tip" and held out his tambourine; taking the twenty [para] coin tossed into it, he walked away.[189]

Figure 29. Undated photocard showing two performing bears in possibly late Ottoman İstanbul. (Author's collection)

Looking at bear dancing as practiced and prevailing in the Ottoman Empire allows us to trace the historical variations of the profession: despite a popular and administrative disdain reserved for the Gypsies, and apparently additional discrimination through legislation and taxation, bear leading had been imperially recognized and enjoyed by both the palace and the populace throughout centuries. As the following pages will deliver, the

[189] Ahmet Nedim Servet Tör, *Nevhîz'in Günlüğü: "Defter-i Hâtırât,"* trans. Kaya Şahin (İstanbul: YKY, 2000), 153–154. I am thankful to Ece Zerman for providing me this source.

imperial reception of bear leading delineates a stark and ironical contrast with the dismissal of the practice over time, culminating in its abrupt abolition in the early 1990s.

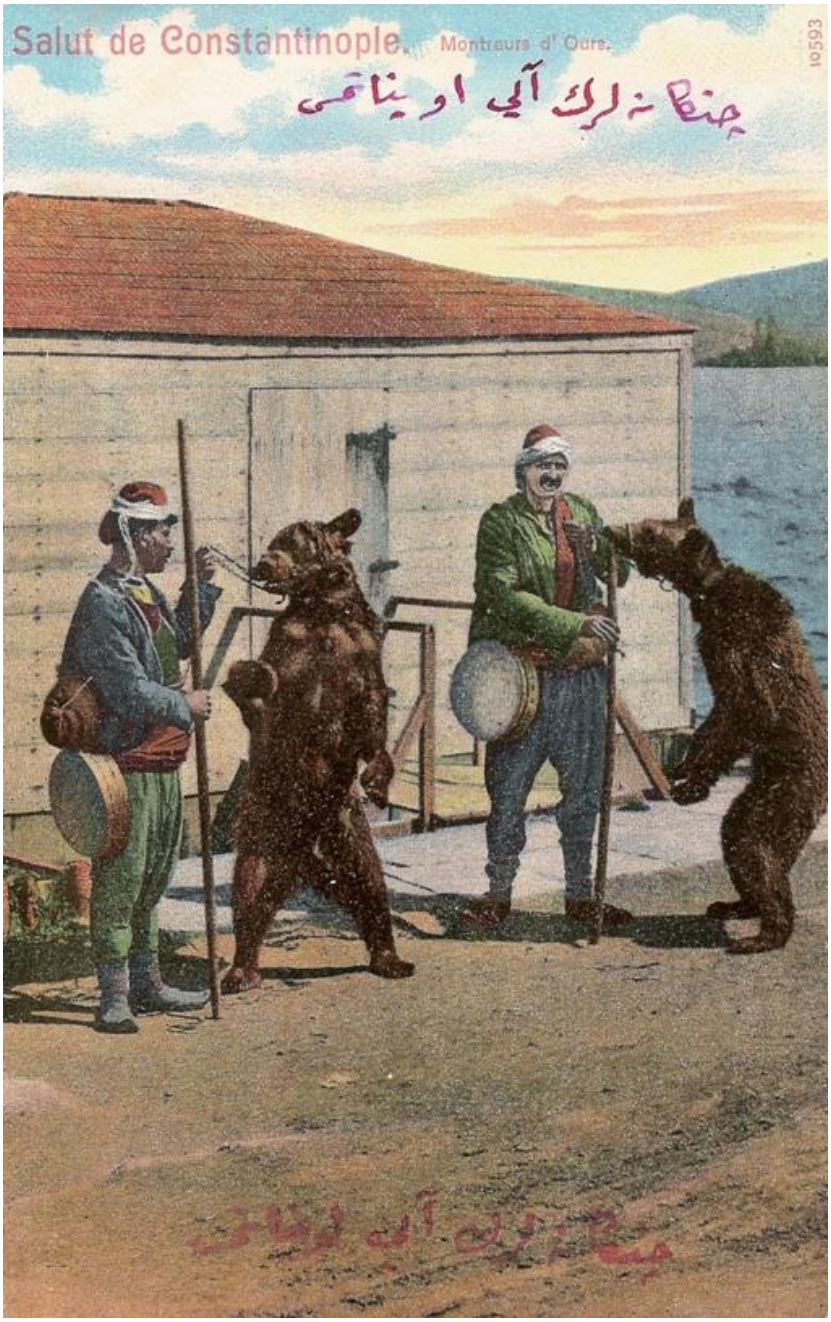

Figure 30. Dancing bears and Gypsy bear leaders in İstanbul in a postcard hand-colored from a photograph. (Editeur Max Fruchtermann [1852–1918]. Author's collection)

4.

LOOKS LIKE A BEAR, WALKS LIKE A BEAR, DANCES LIKE A HUMAN: BEAR LEADING IN TURKEY

> [H]uman language is like a cracked kettle
> on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to,
> when what we long to do is make music
> that will move the stars to pity.
>
> Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*

The practice of bear leading is said to have become somewhat rare in Turkish cities for some time before enjoying a revival in İstanbul and other major towns from the 1950s onwards:[190] this agrees with the narratives of my former bear leader informants, all of whom were born in the 50s and 60s at which time the fathers of most of them were occupied with the practice.

Monkey leading too, –although to a lesser extent and performed by different trainers– had survived in the Republic, at least until the 1970s, and the Kırkağaç province in Manisa was considered to be prominent in raising monkey-leading Roma in addition to bear performers.[191] One can assume that the Turkish saying *tenceresi kaynar iken, maymunu oynar iken* (literally "as his pot was boiling, as his monkey was dancing"), which denotes past times when one was making a good living and was in good spirits, originated with the actual practice of monkey leading. In 1935, the journalist Sermed Muhtar Alus (1887–1952), who gave wide coverage to his impressions of Gypsies in his

[190] "İzmir Muallimlerinin Tertib Ettikleri Seyahat," *Cumhuriyet*, April 3, 1938; and Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Ayıcı Çingeneler," in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Reşad Ekrem Koçu, 3rd vol. (İstanbul: Reşad Ekrem Koçu ve Mehmet Ali Akbay İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kollektif Şirketi, 1958–1971), 1534.

[191] Based on the author's field notes, 2011–2012.

myriad narratives of olden İstanbul, wrote of the entertainments along the shores of the Göksü River (historically known to Europeans as "the sweet waters of Asia"), a popular excursion spot during Ottoman times: among them, he mentions bear, monkey, and donkey leaders.[192] In 1969, a bear leader from İstanbul would reminisce, "All our ancestors were bear leaders. Since the years people clamored for justice and freedom..."[193] and add that "In those days we used to exhibit monkeys too."[194] In 1973, a letter to the daily *Milliyet* bemoaned the fact that bear and monkey performers had surged in the Sultanahmet area with the start of the tourist season.[195]

Figure 31. Postcard captioned "Bear Leaders of Cilicia."
(Editeur G[aston] Mizrahi [b. 1898], Adana. Author's collection)

[192] Sermed Muhtar Alus, "Dünün Genci Anlatıyor: Yakın Maziden Maceralar," *Cumhuriyet*, December 27, 1935.

[193] He may have been referring to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 whose slogan was "Liberty, Equality, Justice" with reference to the French Revolution.

[194] Suat Türker, "Ayı 10 Bin Liraya Bir Eşek 10 Liraya..." *Milliyet*, September 6, 1969.

[195] Anadolu Oto Stop ve Turizm İhtisas Kulübü, "Turistik Yapıların Önü Satıcılarla Doldu," *Milliyet*, May 24, 1973.

Yet, dancing bears seem to have outweighed their simian counterparts considerably, not only in size but also in number. A newspaper article from 1952, for instance, notes that there were a total of twenty-two bears being led in İstanbul, residing with their leaders in five different districts: twelve near Kar Kuyusu at Mecidiyeköy, two each in Üsküdar İbrahimağa and Kasımpaşa Kulaksız, and three each at Zincirlikuyu Tepeüstü and outside the city walls in Topkapı. Moreover, indicating that these bears were highly sought after at ballroom parties, weddings, and entertainment venues, the article also suggests that the practice was regulated since the bear leaders were given an "income booklet" (*kazanç karnesi*) for peddlers that included the category "Exhibition of wild and exotic [*vahşi ve acayip*] animals."[196] As if to corroborate their popularity at the time, the Hilton Hotel in İstanbul issued a curious call for animals for display at their 1955 New Year's ball:

> We are seeking good-natured and gentlemanly donkeys who are well-versed in the rules of etiquette, who will not soil our green carpets and will not stick their noses into our rare foliage. (...) In addition, we are also seeking a cute bear and an elegant camel calf, worthy of our hotel.[197]

The report published only a day later said the hotel had been "invaded" by donkey and bear leaders, and that they all claimed their animals were "exceptionally well-mannered and gentle."[198]

4.1. The Town Previously Known for its Bear Leaders

My informants come from a small town of Turkish Thrace famous for its bear leaders from the 1930s until the abolition of the practice. According to Turkish Statistical Institute (*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*) data, the town has experienced a steep population decline in

[196] Ümit Deniz, "Dünya Üzerinde Yalnız Türk Sosyetesine Has Eğlence," *Milliyet*, August 25, 1952.

[197] Leylâ Umar, "Hilton Oteli Yıl Başı Gecesi İçin İyi Huylu Eşek Arıyor," *Milliyet*, December 27, 1955.

[198] "Hilton Eşekçi ve Ayıcıların İstilâsına Uğradı," *Milliyet*, December 28, 1955.

recent years,[199] most probably due to diminishing employment opportunities. The monopolization of capital in the hands of local landowners, town people say, has idled factories in the surrounding area, with no new prospects of investment or development. Downtown, one can daily observe young men, a majority of whom are Roma, waiting around on the pavement, hoping for occasional work as porters.

Figure 32. Undated photocard showing a bear leader in possibly late Ottoman İstanbul. (Author's collection)

The town contains three adjacent "Gypsy neighborhoods" of single-storey houses, and scattered open public spaces where marriage and circumcision festivities are held. The infrastructure is visibly poor, with wastewater running down the hilly streets, as Ahmet reproachfully pointed out to me during my first visit in March 2011. Ethno-territorial concentration and segregation dominate these neighborhoods, so much so that

[199] Turkish Statistical Institute, *Adrese Dayalı Nüfus Kayıt Sistemi Sonuçları 2012* (Ankara: Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu Matbaası, 2013), accessed April 8, 2013, http:// www.tuik.gov.tr/IcerikGetir.do?istab_id=139.

one can almost draw a line between Romani houses and the settlements of *Gacal*s,[200] the term used for non-Roma by the of the region. Nevertheless, there is an exception to this segregation; the outskirts of these neighborhoods are co-inhabited by the more well-to-do Romanies along with Pomaks and Turks, creating an ostensible 'buffer zone' where class meets ethnicity, and morever, seems to trump it.

Figure 33. The January 13–20, 2010 cover of the weekly humor magazine *Gırgır* featured the Selendi incidents of 2010 with a depiction of a Romani bear leader, evoking the occupation's long-standing association with the Roma as well as employing a play on words around the pejorative use of "bear" in Turkish slang: "– We don't want Gypsies here! Get lost! – Come on guys, don't! It's wrong! It's shameful! Let's go Big Boy, don't sink to their level!"

[200] As is the case in many other languages, the generally used term to denote non-Roma in Turkish is *Gaco* (Gadjo). The misnomer *Gacal* utilized in this region must have originated from the actual *Gacal*s, a people thought either to have descended from Pechenegs or to be non-Slavicised Bulgarian Turks once residing in the Ludogorie (Deliorman) region of Bulgaria. Hasan Öztoprak (*İstanbul'un 72 Milleti: Kuruluşundan Bugüne İstanbul'da Yaşayan Kavimler, Halklar, Milletler, Etnik ve Dinsel Gruplar* [İstanbul: Kafekültür Yayıncılık, 2013], 57–58) suggests that the long-standing ethnic Turkish inhabitants of the Turkish Thrace have historically been incorrectly referred to as *Gacal*s.

Although the town generally provides an accommodating rural environment for its populous Romani residents, seemingly innocent of violent socio-ethnic clashes such as the Selendi incidents of 2010[201] or the intense economic competition and contention that transpire mostly in big cities, particularly İstanbul,[202] socialization between the Roma and *Gacal*s is very limited and latent discrimination sometimes rears its ugly head. The conditions of the elementary school located next to one of the Romani neighborhoods I visited in Thrace further illustrates the discriminatory treatment Romani children experience in school, as is also stated in the recent report of the European Roma Rights Center on Turkey.[203] Fatma, the wife of Mustafa, who devotes most of her time to caring for their disabled elder son, told me that they sometimes catch sight of the teachers sitting around and smoking out in the garden during class time. She thinks they are shirking their duties because the Romani pupils now constitute the majority. As a matter of fact, the centrally located school was once attended by all town children; however, according to Fatma, the *Gacal*s did not want their children to commingle with Romanies and transfered them to a more distant school, even though it meant long commutes for the children and considerable travel expenses for their parents.

The circumstances and perception of education were even more unfavorable for my former bear leader respondents. They either never received a formal education or dropped out of elementary school, often as a result of their family's choice, their own unwillingness, as well as physical and financial disincentives complicating their school attendance. Upset by his own grand-children's indifference to education, Hüseyin Amca

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[201] On New Year's eve of 2009, a Romani man was denied tea because of his ethnicity at a coffeehouse in Selendi, Manisa. The coffeehouse owner was claimed to have said "I don't serve tea to Gypsies" ("Çingenelere çay vermem"). Following the disputes the Romani man was severely beaten and hospitalized, as a result of which his father passed away, giving in to his failing heart. In a matter of days, the events transformed into lynching of the Roma and they were further condemned with expulsion to a neighboring borough. See "Romanların Gözünden Selendi'deki Linç Olayları," *Radikal*, January 7, 2010.

[202] See, for instance, Egemen Yılgür, *Nişantaşı Teneke Mahallesi: Teneke Mahalle Yoksulluğundan Orta Sınıf Yerleşimine* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012); and Udo Mischek, "*Mahalle* Identity *Roman* (Gypsy) Identity under Urban Conditions," in *Gypsies and the Problem of Identities: Contextual, Constructed and Contested*, eds. Adrian Marsh and Elin Strand (Stockholm: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2006), 157–162.

[203] "Turkey: A Report by the European Roma Rights Center," 18–20, accessed July 17, 2013, http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/turkey-country-profile-2011-2012.pdf.

blamed his father for not sending him to school and added: "Ignorant himself, he left me ignorant too."[204] On the other hand, Mehmet's father had enrolled him to school, but developing bronchitis in the dead of winter, he dropped out after only three months.

Figure 34. Possibly late Ottoman stereoscopic card featuring a bear-leading family said to be on the Turkish road from the Balkans. (Author's collection)

4.2. Revival of Bear Leading in the Republic

Bear leading had been brought to this town in the 1930s by three Romani elders who went on to play a central role in the training process. Although Hüseyin Amca was the only one to faintly recall that his grandfather had migrated to this town from Bulgaria, these bear-leading elders might have come from the Balkans as well. Indeed, historical sources attest to a rapid population growth in Turkish Thrace between 1907 and 1935, and the

[204] "Kendi cahil, beni de cahil bıraktı."

majority of this growth is considered to be affiliated with Turkish immigrants "returning home" from the Balkans.[205] Likewise, the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey brought a large number of Romanies to the budding Republic, notably from Salonica to İzmir.[206] Further field research and linguistic analyses of Romanes are bound to shed more light on the migration patterns of both Thracian and Aegean Roma. That bear leaders in certain parts of Turkish Thrace used to be called *meçkari*[207] after *mečkari* (derived from *mečka*, meaning "she-bear"[208] in Serbo-Croatian) which was used to denote bear leaders Serbia,[209] might be considered a clue illustrating these patterns.

4.2.1. Schooling Bears

My respondents describe having been introduced to the practice of bear leading at home and having started to perform this patrilineal occupation by themselves at the age of eleven or twelve. Bear cubs would be purchased from hunters who generally shot mother bears to capture their young. Then they would be chained and trained by the elders who would put on their nose rings (*hırızma*/*hızma*/*halka*) and trim their claws. Involving stretching the cub's legs and tying them to four pegs, this was no one-man job and usually required the participation of at least three or four men.[210] The children would take over after the bear had been properly trained and was ready to be led.

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[205] Martin Wagner, "İstanbul Havalisinin Plânı [1936]," in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi İstanbul Planlama Raporları 1934-1995*, ed. Şener Özler (İstanbul: TMMOB İstanbul Büyükkent Şubesi, 2007), 58.

[206] Alper Yağlıdere (*İzmir Romanları: Yaşam - Kültür - Alışkanlıklar* [İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2011], 130–131) argues that among those Roma residing across İzmir who indicate having immigrated from abroad, 50.6 percent comes from Salonica. Also see Suat Kolukırık, "Geçmişi Aynasında Lozan Çingeneleri: Göç, Hatıra ve Deneyimler," *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyolojik Araştırmalar E-Dergisi* (May 20, 2006), accessed August 7, 2011, http://www.sdergi.hacettepe.edu.tr/suatk.pdf; and Gönül İlhan, *Bizim Mahalle Tenekeli Mahalle* (İstanbul: Heyamola Yayınları, 2011), 27, 50.

[207] Ali Mezarcıoğlu, personal communication, March 7, 2011.

[208] Ronald Lee, "The Rom-Vlach Gypsies and the *Kris-Romani*," in *Gypsy Law: Romani Legal Traditions and Culture*, ed. Walter O. Weyrauch (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001), 204.

[209] Vukanović, "Gypsy Bear-leaders," 108.

[210] An observation from the early 90s Bulgaria, for instance, reads: "In Dryanovets, (...) we were unable to find a single man or boy over 6 years old from the *ursar* group of bear

Figure 35. A boy leading a bear in Mersin. The inscription on the reverse side is dated February 26, 1963. (Author's collection)

Training consisted of teaching bears to mimick belly dancing, to lie down and roll over, to salute like a soldier, to wrestle with the leader, and most famously and memorably of all in the Turkish context, to imitate "how women faint at the hammam" (*kadınlar/kocakarılar/kaynanalar hamamda nasıl bayılır*). Either due to reluctance or simply because they themselves did not take part in the process, bear leaders were quite sketchy about the methods of training, popular opinion about which has been the principal reason for the condemnation of the practice becoming widespread.

Nevertheless, I was told that training usually started when the bear cubs were two or two and a half months old, and involved beating and pulling the cub by the chain until he or she took the desired posture, and by rewarding the animal with sugar. They denied that the bears were placed on hot iron plates as is customarily claimed. Based on their childhood reminescences, non-bear-leader Romani locals such as Ahmet and Mustafa

trainers. All the 'men' had gone to a nearby village to help a bear trainer to cut bears' claws." (Ilona Tomova, *The Gypsies in the Transition Period*, trans. Mark Omer Edgar Bossanyi [Sofia: International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 1995], 34.)

also objected to the rumors about training bears on hot plates, arguing that a bear with burnt soles would be of no use to the leader. During our long conversation in September 2012 over a dozen glasses of tea at the coffeehouse where he temporarily worked per diem, Mehmet also stressed that they would not neglect the animals' health and in case of injury or sickness they would take them to the Veterinary School of İstanbul University in Avcılar:

> Sometimes [the bears] would step on glass or fire, and their hands (*sic*) would get wounded. We would take them to the vet, the vet would knock them unconscious, you know, handle them. [Then w]e would lay them on a vehicle, a pickup.[211]

Figure 36. The inscription on the back side of this bear-leading photograph reads "Bear leading on the First Boardwalk of İzmir, the most beautiful one and much frequented by foreigners. But this bear is really worthy of the First Boardwalk. Like a musician, he is holding a stick like a *kaval* (a woodwind instrument) and emitting gutteral sounds like those of a *kaval*. The bear leader is holding the beat on his tambourine. The bear and his handler are greatly admired by those watching and listening to them." (Foto Akşam, Orhan Aydın, İzmir, March 30, 1962. Author's collection)

[211] "Bazen cama basardılar, ateşe basardılar, elleri yara olurdu. Veterinere götürürdük, veteriner bayıltırdı onları, hallederdiler yani onları. Koyardık bir arabaya, açık bir kamyonete."

On the other hand, Hüseyin Amca was more keen on accentuating the rapport leaders established with their bears, and on praising their intelligence:

> [T]his thing they call a bear is very close to human beings. It gets accustomed, plus it is observant and does exactly what you tell it to do. (...) Just as you first teach a human being the ABC, it learns the same way, gets it through its head. Don't dismiss them as just animals, they are very smart animals.[212]

Yet, recurrent European accounts of training bears on hot plates, however exaggerated or contradictory they might be, coupled with the visual documentation of a bloody nose piercing and de-clawing scene from Bulgaria,[213] may suggest that there is indeed some truth to the claim – at least in the European context. In a 1959 article, T.P. Vukanović relates the treatment of bears by the Ursari in excruciating detail:

> Before [the bear] begins its training its teeth are extracted or filed (...). If the bear is old and ill-tempered, the Bear-leaders sometimes remove one of its eyes, or the sight of both eyes by searing them with red-hot tools. (...) Then a ring is put through their nose, and a leather muzzle, made of a few strong thongs of hide, fastened to the jaws of the fierce beast. (...) When necessary, Gypsy trainers keep a savage bear at a distance by a club fastened to its collar by a metal ring.[214]

Reportedly basing this information on his personal observations in the Balkan Peninsula during 1936–1957, Vukanović goes on to describe various methods at great length:

> Ursari train their bears to dance when they are still young by using red-hot irons, viz. one hot iron is cooled with water and then put under the cub's rump, and others under its front paws so that it is forced to jump about. Besides that it must suffer a good deal of cudgelling, accompanied by the Bear-leader's beating of his tambourine, so that the animal grows familiar with the instrument and its rhythm. By many trainers this procedure is repeated day after day, until the young bear is perfected in its dancing tricks. Its early pains are so sharp that, after a couple of weeks or so, it starts squealing out of fear and begins to mumble and dance as soon as it sees its chief trainer.
>
> But, perhaps, the most usual way of training a bear is the following. In the Gypsies' camp, on a wide space of grass, a huge fire is lit upon which is placed a great slab of stone (...). When this is red-hot some Gypsies lift it from the flames with iron bars and then put it on the ground near the fire. Then they lead the bear or young cub up to the slab, holding him by three chains, one of which pulls to the left and another to the right, while the third faces the bear

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[212] "[B]u ayı denen şey çok insana yakın. Alışıyor, sonra çok dinlek, ne söylersen aynı şekilde yapıyor. (...) Nasıl bir insan ilk gittiği zaman a b'yi öğretiyorsun, aynı şekilde o da öğreniyor, o da kafasına koyuyor. Hayvan dediğin alıp atma, çok akıllı hayvanlar."

[213] La fondation Brigitte Bardot, accessed December 1, 2012, http://www.fondationbrigittebardot.fr/international/animaux-sauvages/ours.

[214] Vukanović, "Gypsy Bear-leaders," 114.

> from the front. When the animal is dragged up to the slab the Gypsies first of all pour cold water on it, and then all three pull the chains to the ground so that the animal has to sit down with his rump on the stone. As soon as the bear is seated his posterior starts to burn and he springs up, growling, while at the same moment one of the Gypsies (...) begins beating the tambourine and singing one of the tunes from the repertoire of these Bear-leaders' songs over and over again, until after a few weeks or months of such continuous training the bear starts dancing whenever he sees a club or a tambourine.[215]

However, he is skeptical about the Ursari's own accounts of their methodology:

> According to certain Ursari, who are very reluctant to reveal their methods of training, the animals are taught dancing and other tricks by the use of sugar and sweets. And it may be a fact that Gypsy Bear-leaders do tranquilize their angry bears with sugar, which is often given to them as a reward after tricks performed before the public. But that sort of treatment is very far from the real training the poor bear has to undergo when it is being taught to dance.[216]

At the time, the training process in Turkey was either much gentler or its details remained unknown. In 1956, a newspaper column by psychiatrist and author Fahri Celâl Göktulga (1895–1975) focused on taming hunted wild bears through the inflicton of hunger, rather than the actual training process:

> To begin with, [the bear] is careful not to be captured by the Gypsy. However, the Gypsy is a skilled hunter and his tricks are unlimited. He digs a deep hole and lightly covers it. [The bear's] weight causes it to fall right into the hole, and then he has had it... The first step is to starve the bear. They give him no food or water for two or three months[!]. They can tell that the animal has reached its limits when it begins to lick its paws. At that point it is easy to extract the unfortunate from the hole into which it has fallen. By God it becomes as gentle as a lamb. It is then that a nose ring is placed on it. This is hunger after all, one will agree to anything for a bite... And once the nose ring has been placed, the bear obediently and submissively follows the Gypsy.[217]

[215] Ibid., 115.

[216] Ibid., 114–115.

[217] F[ahri] Celâl Göktulga, "Ayıya Dair," *Cumhuriyet*, December 16, 1956.

Figure 37. Photograph featuring a bear-leading boy in front of a car with an İstanbul license plate on the İzmir-Ephesus route. (Author's collection)

Indeed, the most fervent opponents of the practice such as Refi' Cevad Ulunay (1890–1968) who wrote on the subject repeatedly in his column in the daily *Milliyet*, would condemn bear dancing –and heap racial slurs on Romani bear leaders– solely based on the application of nose rings and the beating that took place during performances. That beating was integral to the whole process alongside feeding sugar was expressed by a bear leader from İstanbul in 1969 as well: "If they misbehave, we batter them a little. After all, were we never slapped in school?"[218]

4.2.2. Leading the Bears to the Big City

There were two kinds of bear leading in Turkey, one rural and the other urban. The former usually involved collecting crops to sell from farmers in exchange for a performance,

[218] Türker, "Ayı 10 Bin Liraya."

which was a common occurrence in the Balkans as well.[219] And bear leading was once an integral part of the provincial fabric of Turkish towns and villages, so much so that the Theatrical Village Plays Group within the Afyon Kocatepe University's Center for Research and Practice in Ethnology features bear dancing in its repertoire.[220]

Yusuf Amca, the eldest of my interlocutors, used to practice bear leading solely in Thracian villages. Unfortunately, he fell too ill to receive visitors not long after our brief introduction at the coffeehouse located inside one of the Roma quarters of the town, in the part predominantly inhabited by musicians. While a group of Romani musicians outside the coffeehouse played traditional tunes for the groom-to-be as part of the daytime celebrations of the two-day wedding (the custom there), he told me that back in the day he would visit mills and farms, put on a performance with his bear, and get paid in kind (such grains as wheat). Leading a nomadic life, he would at times beg to make ends meet.

Figure 38. Photograph taken in June 18, 1954 in Van, at the premises of the Boys' Institute of Arts and Crafts. (Author's collection)

[219] Marušiakova [Marushiakova] and Popov, "Bear-trainers in Bulgaria," 108; Vukanović, "Gypsy Bear-Leaders," 117.

[220] Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Halkbilim Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi, "Köy Seyirlik Oyunları," accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.aku.edu.tr/web/Sayfa.aspx?ID=57JQM25NDAU847032AQ101.

Born in 1955, Hüseyin Amca also used to travel around in villages with his bear before coming to İstanbul. Despite his father's expressed disapproval, he took off with his grandfather at the age of twelve and together they itinerated throughout Thrace, even wandering from village to village down to İzmir. They had to show their identity cards in order to obtain permission from village headmen prior to their performances, and while these permits did not involve any payments, it happened now and again that they were not granted access to the village. They would receive payment in grains which they would collect in cooking oil cans whose tops had been cut off. At times, they would also receive cash payments for performances before villagers hanging out at coffeehouses, especially for wrestling spectacles. Hüseyin Amca also reminisced about the warm hospitality of 'Anatolian folk' who treated them honorably, on occasion accommodating them in their guest rooms and welcoming them at their table. It is not surprising that he should emphasize this final detail,[221] given the still prevailing unwarranted belief that even food prepared by Gypsies may be unclean.[222]

Bear performances in the city, on the other hand, entailed only cash payments and most of my respondents were in this latter category which was considerably more lucrative. Generally they all agreed that it earned them much more than their elders had ever been able to by walking about in villages or by getting their bears to walk on people's backs to relieve their pain.[223] This folk remedy was known to be carried out in Bulgaria and probably the Balkans at large as well.[224]

This residual practice seems to have been an interesting subject for the Turkish dailies of the time. Thus, a column of the daily *Milliyet* shared a reader's childhood memory from the year 1927:

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[221] "Anadolu tarafındakiler öyle insanlıklı insanlardı. (...) Gelir senlen beraber yemek yer. (...) Adamlar hiç şey etmezdi, muhtarı olsun, ağası olsun, çok saygı duyardılar adamlar yani."

[222] For a recent incident, see Çingenelerin Sitesi, "Çingenenin Yemeği Yenmezmiş!" March 25, 2011, accessed March 28, 2011, http://www.cingeneyiz.org/cingeneyemegi.html.

[223] Mehmet: "Bizim büyüklerimiz bu işi yaptığı zaman bizim kazandığımızı kazanamadılar ve bizim yaptıklarımızı yapamadılar. Onlar o tarihte köylere giderdi, kasaba, sokak aralarında gezerdi."

[224] Marušiakova [Marushiakova] and Popov, "Bear-trainers in Bulgaria," 113.

> My late grandfather and I had just come out of Friday prayers and returning home. As we walked up the hill between our neighbor's home and my grandfather's garden, I came face to face with a sight so terrifying that I immediately climbed up a nearby plum tree. A man of thirty whom I knew to have lower back pain was lying face down on the ground. On his back was a sizeable bear. Its master was holding its chain and giving him commands: "And a one, and a two, and a three..." to which the bear was responding by pushing down on the man' back. Eventually he stood up with a satisfied expression on his face and paid the bear leader generously.[225]

In 1987, the picture of such a 'bear treatment' scene published in the daily *Cumhuriyet* was captioned with a humorous take on the ways of the 'prototypical Turk' (*yurdum insanı*). Involving a man "who was undergoing physical therapy and praying 'May God lead one onto the street, under a bear, but may He please spare him the hospital," the caption read:

> A man by the name Mehmet Uçan was complaining of backpain. He had visited every doctor in town, gotten rheumatism shots and courses of muscle relaxants, but nothing had worked. He was very much afraid of being the casualty of an incorrect treatment, and so he rejected the option of physiotherapy. When he met Ali Sert, a bear leader from İzmir, he said to himself "This is the safest way" and surrendered to the bear "Grizzly Boy" (*Boz Oğlan*). The fee was collected by Ali the bear leader, Grizzly Boy's secretary.[226]

As was the case in villages, wrestling with bears used to comprise another part of urban performances. Bear leaders not only put on wrestling spectacles themselves, but also placed bets on the slim chance that daring participants from the audience would floor their burly ursine opponents:

> The streets of the modern city of İstanbul are often the stage for wrestling matches pitting humans against chained and half-starved bears. In broad daylight, in the very center of the city, ragged bear leaders holding tambourines in one hand and sticks in the other strip down to their waists and, for the sake of a few coins, challenge the bear: "Here, big boy!"[227] they say. Then the wrestling match begins. The suffering bear sometimes powerfully claws its human rival, and then pays dearly for it. All the while, spectators clap and urge the wrestlers on.[228]

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[225] Teoman Erel, "Ayı Masajı," *Milliyet*, February 21, 1984.

[226] Ahmet Tan, "Güvenli Tedavi," *Cumhuriyet*, July 19, 1987.

[227] Notwithstanding the fact that a considerable fraction of them were female, dancing bears have customarily been referred to as "Big Boy" (*Kocaoğlan*) in Turkey, both by bear leaders and the general public.

[228] Suat Türker, "İstanbul Sokaklarında Herşey Yapılabilir: Ayı Güreşi Bile," *Milliyet*, August 4, 1967.

> On Sunday, "Bear wrestling" was held in front of the Haylayf Beach between Florya and Çekmece. The bear leader cried out "Is there anyone who will wrestle my bear?" If the bear won, the loser was to pay 5 Lira. Anyone who defeated the bear would receive 5 Lira. By the evening, however, no one had managed to beat the bear.[229]

Figure 39. A bear leader wrestling with his bear in İstanbul in 1968–1969. (The date and location is deduced from the theatrical poster that appears in the back on the right, announcing the play *Kırk Kırat* [*Quarante carats* by Pierre Barillet and Jean-Pierre Gredy, 1966] which was staged in İstanbul during 1968–1969 by Kent Oyuncuları.) (Author's collection)

Urban bear leading was by no means limited to the three major cities of İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir. As a matter of fact, pictorial evidence and anecdotes[230] attest to its

[229] Hasan Pulur, "Ayı Güreşi," *Milliyet*, June 27, 1967.

[230] See, for instance, Mustafa Ekmekçi, "Göcek'te Bir Gezinti..." *Cumhuriyet*, August 16, 1988; Coşkun Tunca, "Fransızların Türk Gecesi," *Cumhuriyet*, August 31, 1988; and Chris Hellier, "The Unbearable Sadness of Dancing," *World Magazine* (May 1991): 27. Furthermore, Hüseyin Avni Özen (*Bak Şu Ayının Yaptığına*, 26, 30) relates two incidents that transpired in 1970 and 1980 in Artvin, a northeastern Turkish city known for its large –yet by now largely declining– bear population: both incidents involve peasants of Artvin coming across unattended bear cubs and taking them home with high hopes of making

presence in eastern provinces or around summer resorts along the Mediterranean coast. However, İstanbul was easily the center of bear leading and displaying activities. And it was there that Mehmet, Murat and Ömer had ever worked in.[231]

Mehmet's father and grandfather had been leading bears in villages before he moved to İstanbul –the major locus of internal migration in Turkey, starting especially with the 1950s and incrementally intensifying over decades – with his brothers at the age of eleven, in 1972. They were settled in Edirnekapı along with 35–40 fellow Roma, including Murat, behind the premises of the Municipal Sanitation Directorship, in a shanty house for which they soon acquired a deed. This location was in fact noted to be a known "bear camp" of the city in a news piece about the death of a dancing bear from the bitter winter of 1979.[232] Starting to lead bears in 1974, Mehmet would pursue the profession continually for twenty years until its abolition.

Figure 40. A bear leader posing for the camera with his bear at what seems to be a children's party, date and place unknown. (Author's collection)

domestic pets out of them. In both cases the bear cubs became more and more unmanagaeble as they grew up, and since the animal had already grown accustomed to being fed, the peasants unwillingly resorted to selling the bears to bear-leading Gypsies in Erzurum.

[231] Mehmet: "Bizim sonradan yetişmeler İstanbul'dan dışarı çıkmazdılar."

[232] Güngör Gönültaş, "Avrupa'yı Bile Dize Getiren Karakışa Naciye de Dayanamadı," *Milliyet*, January 22, 1979.

By the 1980s, indications are that bear leading in İstanbul had evolved into a practice exlusively targetting tourists rather than locals; "We had no business with Turks," Mehmet said.[233] Bear leaders would meet arriving cruise ships at Karaköy and hang around outside fancy hotels, waiting for guests to come out. Mehmet proudly told me of travelling around with their bears in their own vehicles from one district to another, in contrast to their predecessors who wandered mostly on foot and at times commuted by public transportation.[234] Focusing on neighborhoods frequented by tourists and working no more than a couple of hours a day year round rather than taking time out during winter, their daily route included Aksaray, Laleli, Cağaloğlu, Sultanahmet, Sirkeci and even Tarabya. And the bulk of their income came from posing for photographs for tourists, sometimes earning as much as 100 or 200 dollars per picture, rather than making the bears actually perform. Functioning as interactive travelling zoos, as it were, they thus marked a significant shift in the nature and implications of the practice.

My former bear leader interlocutors reported that they earned a great deal of money but that they accumulated none, instead spending it all for their own entertainment. Mehmet recounted that time, both bragging and bemoaning their prodigality:

> In those days, I blew 5000 dollars in one night at the Çakıl Night Club! There was no one to show us the way, what we earned, we spent, there was no other way. (...) I would have owned an apartment in the best part of İstanbul now. (...) We used to make very good money in those days. It would be a fortune now, I would earn 15-20 billion. Because we understood [the tourist], everything about him, we would take that money. Sometimes there would be rich tourists, they would open their wallets and we would point at the money, we would say give me this much, then we would take the money.[235]

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[233] "Türklerle bizim işimiz yoktu."

[234] Mehmet: "Hiç ayakta gezmiyorduk, herkesin arabası vardı o zaman." In the early days, bear leaders were sighted riding the ferryboat to cross Bosphorus. ("Ve Ayılar Vapura Bindiler," *Milliyet*, June 17, 1968.) In Bulgaria, as of the late 1980s Ursari "g[o]t around mostly by train. They r[o]de in mail, freight, or even passenger cars. A special ticket [was] bought for the bear, the price being calculated according to the animal's approximate weight. People with monkeys [were] more mobile, because they [could] also travel by bus. (Marušiakova [Marushiakova] and Popov, "Bear-trainers in Bulgaria," 113.) Yet, bears were not allowed on trams, with signs prohibiting their access. (Ingvar Svanberg, personal communication, February 4, 2011.)

[235] "Ben bir gecede, o tarihte, Çakıl Gazinosu'nda 5000 dolar yedim, bir gecede! Bizi yönlendiren yoktu, bugün bulduk bugün yedik, başka çaresi yoktu. (...) İstanbul'da benim şimdi en lüküs yerde dairem olurdu. (...) Biz o günler çok güzel paralar kazanıyorduk. Şimdi servet olacak, ben günlük 15-20 milyar para kazanırım. Çünkü [turistin] dilinden biz anlıyoz, her yönünden yana, biz o paraları alırdık. Bazen zengin turistler oluyordu,

Around tourist-laden districts, they would sometimes chance upon large tourist buses as well, in which case the tour guides would make a bargain with them for a group performance. Murat mentioned one of his bears named Papaz which drew great attention: "Papaz was blond, I used to bedeck him with ornaments, the tourists just loved those ornaments."[236]

Invitations to upper class events such as the aforementioned Hilton New Year's ball kept on coming until the early 1990s, in addition to regular performances at fashionable night clubs (*gazino*) of the time and occasional ones at private parties held mostly for foreign dignitaries. Indeed, in a 1989 news piece, readers are informed that the new star of actress and singer Ahu Tuğba's show at the Çakıl night club was a bear who reportedly earned more money than the human performers. Noting that dancing bears are in great demand, Ahu Tuğba said in the interview "The bear's appearance lasted three minutes. 50 thousand lira for three minutes was a pretty good number. The vocalists were upset because the bear made more money than they did."[237]

Mehmet told me of regularly taking the stage at hotel night clubs, four or five times a month. He was also once called to appear at a private event organized in honor of foreign businessmen at the Beyaz Köşk (White Mansion) at Tarabya. Hüseyin Amca, on the other hand, remembered attending an exclusive gathering that took place at a hotel. Among the guests, reportedly, was the mayor of New York. The three bear leaders that performed that evening were not allowed to collect payments from the audience, but instead cut a deal for a fixed sum of money in return for their entertainment services. He delightedly reminisced with delight about the attention they received: "You should have seen all the hoopla in there, people snapping pictures."[238] Murat, too, was a regular at night clubs, more often than not catching the attention of ladies with his good looks and gifted voice, according to his friends. He even received offers to go on stage as a soloist, but his late first wife did not let him pursue a career as a singer.

Bear leaders were also in demand to appear in movies and television shows alongside local celebrities, and were at times featured in foreign documentaries. For

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açıyordu cüzdanı, biz de ellerimizle gösteriyorduk, bu parayı ver diyorduk, alıyorduk o parayı."

[236] "Papaz, sarışındı, bir süslüyordum, gelen turistler süslerden bayılıyordu."

[237] Mert Ali Başarır, "Ahu'nun Ayısına Veto," *Cumhuriyet*, February 28, 1989.

[238] "Görücen içerde nasıl şakşaklar, fotoğraf çekmeler."

instance, prominent director Zeki Ökten's 1975 feature comedy *Hanzo* opens with a bear leading scene in the heart of Taksim Square. In 1989, the daily *Milliyet* reported on the filming of a bear leading segment to be aired in the tourism-themed episode of a new television program:

> A segment that is bound to be of interest is the video clip named "Yeke Yeke." [The 1987 hit single by Mory Kanté, originally "Yé ké yé ké."] Here, a group of musicians from Sulukule will present an instrumental intepretation of "Yeke Yeke" while a little bear hired for 200 thousand lira will occasionally make its appearance. The sections with the bear were filmed in Sultanahmet and watched with great interest by large numbers of tourists. The filmmakers had a great deal of trouble dispersing the crowds.[239]

Figure 41. A pair of bear leaders in front of a hotel in Alanya, November 1961. (Author's collection)

Tony Gatlif's 1993 documentary film *Latcho Drom* (literally "safe journey") provided insight into the lives of Gypsies/Roma in India, Egypt, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, France, Spain as well as Turkey. Significantly, the section on Turkey shortly featured Mehmet leading his bear, surrounded by children with wondering eyes. Hüseyin Amca noted that film companies all knew where they resided and would come up to them when a certain production required a bear leading scene.

[239] "'Yeke Yeke'ye Ayı Desteği!" *Milliyet*, April 10, 1989.

4.3. *İmdat ile Zarife*

The settlements of bear leaders in İstanbul were visited by director Nesli Çölgeçen and his crew in 1989 in preparation for his next feature film, celebrated as "the first film in the history of Turkish cinema in which the leading role was built around an animal."[240] Written by Nesli Çölgeçen, Hakan Aytekin, and İrfan Eroğlu, *İmdat ile Zarife* (İmdat and Zarife, 1990) was also one of a kind for being centered upon the occupation of bear leading. It tells the story of a Romani bear leader by the name of İmdat, played by the acclaimed actor Şevket Altuğ, and his female bear Zarife.

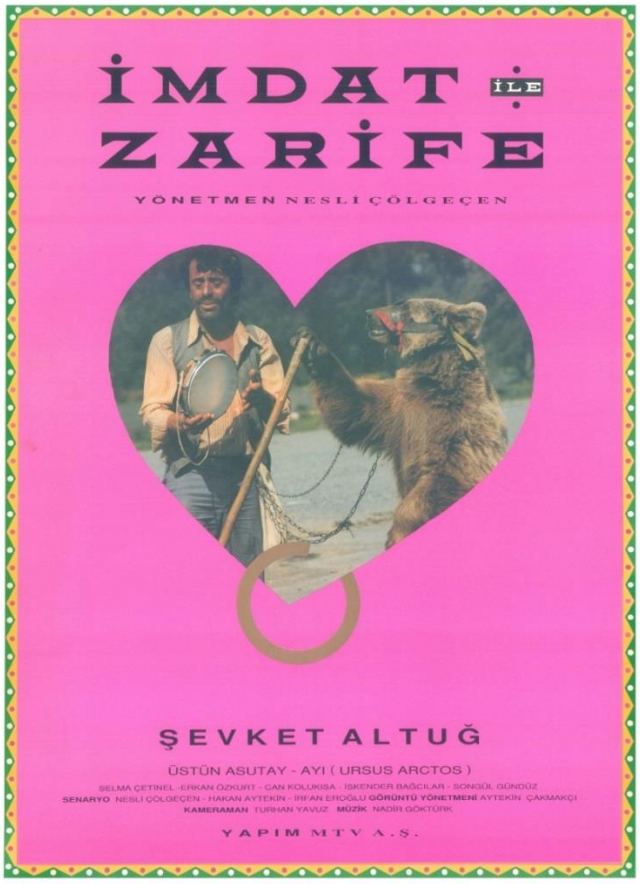

Figure 42. The poster of *İmdat ile Zarife*, kindly presented to the author by the producer Reha Arın.

[240] Ayça Atikoğlu, "Başrolü Bu Kez 'Ayı' Aldı," *Milliyet*, September 25, 1990.

Following the opening crawl that reads (in English)

> The scenes you will witness shortly show how a bear cub is trained. These scenes are real and have been filmed for documentary purposes. They have been added to the film to demonstrate just how tragic this subject is. For this reason we ask you to bear with us and watch these unpleasant scenes which last for about three minutes.

the movie begins with 'educational' scenes about how a mother bear is killed and her cubs are captured by hunters. Filmed in Bolu,[241] Çölgeçen assured me that the so-called hunting was supervised by veterinarians who administered sedatives to the grown bear. Despite the grave warning, though, the training segments do not involve the rumored 'hot plate' method, but rather display some gentle smacking. And neither do they show such procedures as nose piercing, or nail trimming. Nevertheless, I was told that this short section had elicited many negative viewer responses when shown on television and that therefore it would probably not be included in a potential DVD release:

> It becomes an issue on television, because it is a cub. You know, television goes straight into the family. There is no problem at the cinema... (...) When it was broadcast on the TRT (Turkish Radio and Television), the TRT complained about this, the scene elicited lots of viewer reactions. I mean, people interpret the torture of that bear cub as torture, so they say, why did you show this on television, our kids were very disturbed, that sort of thing.[242]

Yet, Çölgeçen agreed that the 'hot plate' method must be pure hearsay as he never encountered it over the course of their extensive research and filming:

> We included [that scene] also in order to do away with some slander, because in those days, among the public, there was the slander about red-hot tin. There is no such thing, what red-hot tin, says the man. 'If we put the animal on red-hot tin, would it stay there? Plus, why would we harm the animal, hurt his feet, he is our meal ticket.' What nonsense... (...) It gratuitously libels the bear leaders, the Gypsies. it slanders them. Granted, training the bear cub is tantamount to torturing it, yes, but not to that extent. There are such stories. It isn't that bad at all.[243]

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[241] Lale Filoğlu, "Ayının Adı Zarife," *Cumhuriyet*, September 1, 1990.

[242] "Yavru olduğu için televizyonda sorun oluyor. Direkt aile içine giriyor ya televizyon. Sinemada bir problem yok da... (...) TRT'de yayınlandığı zaman, TRT'nin böyle bir şikâyeti oldu, seyirciden çok tepki aldı bu sahne. Yani o yavru ayının işkencesini, işkence olarak algılıyor halk, niye gösterdiniz televizyonda, çocuklarımız çok rahatsız oldu falan diye."

[243] "[B]irtakım şaibeleri de yok etmek için ortaya koyduk [o sahneyi], çünkü halk arasında o tarihlerdeki şaibe kızgın sac üzerinde. Öyle bir şey yok, ne kızgın sacı diyor adam, kızgın sac üzerine koyarsak o hayvan durur mu orada. Ayrıca niye hayvanı zedeleyelim, yaralayalım ayağını, hayvan bizim ekmek paramız diyor. Ne kadar saçmasapan bir şey...

Indeed, *İmdat ile Zarife* was meant to represent truthfully the lives of bear leading Roma. With that intention in mind, Çölgeçen and his crew visited Roma quarters for observation and 'auditioned' some twenty real-life dancing bears out of which they chose four. Moreover, aside from four professional actors taking part in the film, the rest of the cast were all Roma from the Sulukule and Kuştepe neighborhoods. The eponymous star of the film, the three-year-old bear Zarife was actually named Ayşe and attended by her leader Kadir who was also employed throughout the filming.

The movie opens with İmdat and Zarife at Sultanahmet, taking advantage of the presence of a busload of tourists to stage a performance, before they are chased into the back streets by the municipal police. As the chase continues, they find themselves among a group of demonstrators carrying signs that read "Save the Green" (*Yeşili Koru*) and "Nature Comes First" (*Önce Doğa*). Some members of the group set about to knock İmdat around, meanwhile letting the police catch up with the fugitives. Despite İmdat's cries of "It's a living, man!"[244] they load both the bear and her leader onto a van only to abandon them in a remote wooded area and exclaim "Let me not see you in town ever again!"[245] Significantly, the van used in the film actually belonged to the municipality police, and its driver had a great deal of experience carrying captured dancing bears.

From police intervention and incarceration to appearances on stage at night clubs and ballroom parties, *İmdat ile Zarife* depicts the realities of the day, which was an aspect of the production that the director and his crew made a point of depicting. However, the conspicuous message of the film throughout is how anachronistic the practice is and how out of place bears are in the big city; this message is made even more explicit in the flyer of the movie:

> Bear leading is illegal in Turkey. Yet, some of the Gypsies still pursue this "occupation" for the sake of those who enjoy watching this "dance" and are willing to pay for it. There are also many who are against it. (...) "İmdat ile Zarife" is not built exclusively upon Gypsies and the bears they lead. It also has a message about everyone and everything that has been torn away from

(...) Ayıcıları, Çingeneleri gereksiz yere töhmet altında bırakan, şaibeli bilinen yönü. Tamam, yavru ayıyı eğitmek, o hayvana işkence yapmak demek, evet, ama o kadar da efsanevi değil, ne hikâyeler var, hiç o kadar da değil."

[244] "Ekmek parası be abicim bu!"

[245] "Bir daha kentin içinde görmeyeyim seni!"

> its nature and naturalness: "Natural life can only be preserved in its natural habitat."[246]

That the word "occupation" is –tellingly– accentuated signals the mentality that reduces the practice to a pastime, and a 'cruel' one at that, despite the long-standing and sweeping history of bear leading as a Romani profession that has been the bread and butter of countless families. In fact, Nesli Çölgeçen would reiterate this opinion after telling me that the bear leaders had immediately accepted their offer to take part in the movie: "They regarded this as a profession," he said.[247] Disassociating the practice from livelihood would indeed facilitate the subsequent abolition of the practice, presumably making it easier on the conscience of those initiating and intervening, and making it possible for the conditions of the bear leaders to go unquestioned by the public.

In the movie, a city-dweller's scornful reaction to İmdat is "Isn't it shameful that you chain the bear and make her dance like this? (...) In what age are we living?" Furthermore, the staged perspective of Zarife is full of yearning for nature: she longingly stares at freely flying birds, and even at one time breaks her chains to run off into the woods and hug the trees. As she becomes more and more ill-tempered and increasingly defies her leader, İmdat feels obliged to set Zarife free in a meadow. He says, "Who knows, you might be making me dance in the next world."[248] Yet, despite this 'liberation' scene, the movie ends on a mournful note with a closing crawl that reads (in English)

> Zarife was free now but could not hunt in the forest because she had lost her natural instincts. She was forced to head for the nearest town to find something to eat. The "savage bear that had come down from the mountains" created panic in the town and finally "savage" Zarife was cornered and killed.

Needless to say, one of my first questions to Çölgeçen was his inspiration for this movie. According to an interview he gave in 1990, he had initially been hesitant to pursue his idea as the pre-production of *İmdat ile Zarife* coincided with the screening of Jean-Jacques Annaud's 1988 film *L'ours* (The Bear) in Turkish theatres. But seeing that *L'ours* approached bears from a very different angle, he had decided that cancelling production

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[246] "Ayı oynatmak Türkiye'de yasadışı. Ne var ki, Çingenelerin bir kısmı, bu 'oyunu' seyretmekten zevk alıp da para ödeyenler için, bu 'mesleği' hâlâ sürdürüyorlar. Bu işe karşı olanlar da çok. (...) 'İmdat ile Zarife', yalnızca Çingeneler ve onlar tarafından oynatılan ayılar üzerine kurulu bir film değil. Doğasından ve doğallığından kopmuş - kopartılmış her şey herkes için ortak bir mesajı da var: 'Doğal yaşam, ancak doğal ortamında korunabilir.'"

[247] "Bunu meslek olarak görüyorlardı."

[248] "Bakarsın öbür dünyada da sen beni oynatırsın."

was uncalled for.[249] His response to my question was quite telling in the sense that it echoed and accentuated the underlying reasons of the abolition as voiced by the authorities and opponents of the time:

> One day I saw two bear leaders at once in front of the Etap Marmara [now The Marmara Hotel, in Taksim]. They were making the bears dance, jingle jangle. They constituted such a contrast set against the hotel that I said to myself "How backward!"[250]

"There was a lot of reaction against [the practice] in those days," he added. Produced with partial funding from the Ministry of Culture's Cinema Support Grant, the movie donated the earnings of its premiere to the Society for the Protection of Nature (*Doğal Hayatı Koruma Derneği*, est. 1975). In 1991, it was chosen "Best Picture" at the International Ecological and Nature Film Festival held at the Canary Islands, as well as receiving the Ministry of Culture Cinema Achievement Award in 1992. *İmdat ile Zarife* also aired on BBC, and hinting at the London-based World Society for the Protection of Animals that pioneered the abolition in Turkey, Nesli Çölgeçen strikingly remarked that "It was thanks to our film that [bear dancing] was banned [in Turkey]." Reha Arın added:

> After the film was screened, when you look at the pros and the cons of the film, what was done to those bears stopped at once. In my opinion, that is the most significant influence that the film had. (...) It focused public opinion on the issue, that it was wrong, (...) it is an important gain concerning the [issues] of environment and animals.[251]

Charged with claims of representing public opinion on the issue and hailing a well-meaning yet far-fetched conception of environmental conservation, in the end *İmdat ile Zarife* might indeed have helped change the course of history by drawing the attention of international animal protection associations to the continuing practice of bear dancing in Turkey.

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[249] Filoğlu, "Zarife."

[250] "Bir gün Etap Marmara'nın önünde iki ayıcı birden gördüm. Şakkıdı şukkudu oynatıyorlardı ayıları. O kadar büyük bir tezat oluşturuyorlardı ki otelin önünde, ne kadar çağdışı dedim."

[251] "[B]u film yayınlandıktan sonra bu film ne getirdi, ne götürdü diye baktığınız zaman, o ayılara yapılan şeyler bir anda kesildi. Filmin en büyük etkisi bence o oldu. (...) Kamuoyunun dikkatini çekti, bu yapılan işin yanlış olduğu, (...) çevre ve hayvan şeyinde önemli bir kazanımdır."

5.

ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION AGAINST AND CLASS DISCRIMINATION AMONG THE ROMA

A popular pejorative saying dating back to Ottoman times goes "There are 72,5 nations in İstanbul/Turkey"[252] (*İstanbul'da/Türkiye'de 72,5 millet var*), with that "half nation" (*buçuk millet*) denoting the Gypsies. The saying survived well into the Republican era[253] and even surfaced very recently: towards the end of 2012, the prospective architects of the highly controversial Çamlıca Mosque project announced that they planned the height of the dome to be 72,5 meters from ground level, in reference to the so-called 72,5 nations of İstanbul.[254] Due to public reaction this measurement was later changed to 72 meters,[255] but curiously enough, not rounded up to 73. Whether out of malice or sheer ignorance, the Gypsies were thus left out entirely.

The "half nation" designation is not "merely a humorous euphemism for the Gypsies,"[256] as Ingvar Svanberg suggests, but epitomizes the ethno-religiously lower, or more significantly, in-between status assigned to the Romani population of the Empire.

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[252] Another version of the saying puts it at 66,5 nations.

[253] See, for instance, an article published in a popular history journal: Hüseyin Namık Orkun, "Çingenelere Dair: Bu, Buçuk Millet İçin de Yarı Buçuk Sayfa Ayıralım," *Resimli Tarih Mecmuası* 3, 33 (Sept. 1952): 1734–1735.

[254] Medya Roman, "Camide Buçuğun Ne İşi Var?" November 19, 2012, accessed November 27, 2012, http://medyaroman.blogspot.com/2012/11/camide-bucugun-ne-isi-var.html. Other 'meaningful' references in the design of the mosque include a minaret of 107,1 meters after the 1071 Battle of Manzikert, and a dome diameter of 34 meters after İstanbul's license plate code!

[255] Medya Roman, "Camide Buçuk Olmayacak," February 19, 2013, accessed April 12, 2013, http://medyaroman.blogspot.com/2013/02/camide-bucuk-olmayacak.html.

[256] Ingvar Svanberg, "Marginal Groups and Itinerants," in *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, ed. Peter A. Andrews (Weisbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichart Verlag, 1989), 602.

Indeed, as far as historical evidence go, the Roma have never been recognized as 'complete Muslims,' neither have they been deemed 'complete Turks,' thus finding themselves in what I would call an 'ethno-religious vacuum,' falling through the cracks of both confessional and nationalistic categorizations. Furthermore, this Ottoman heritage has constituted the basis of prejudiced treatment and perception of the Roma on the part of both Republican authorities and the Turkish public at large.

5.1. Ethnic Discrimination against the Roma

Umut Özkırımlı asserts that

> The form of nationalism adopted by the state in Turkey is "ethnic," because it foregrounds Turkishness in both discourse and practice. Turkishness was never defined on the basis of "citizenship," but always included the cultural dimension. What is meant by that dimension is mostly religion (albeit not stated explicitly) and language. There were times when Turkishness was related to race and blood. This is most clearly evidenced by the fact that minorities that subscribe to Turkish culture and speak Turkish are still regarded with suspicion.[257]

A clear illustration of this "suspicion" is the appropriation of the word 'citizen' and its customary coupling with ethnonyms in Turkish. Thus, in a subtle yet purposeful attempt to emphasize their Otherness (vis-à-vis the contructed and fostered supremacy of 'ethnic Turks') and subsume their ethno-religious identities under the rubric of an unattainable Turkishness, Jews of Turkey are commonly specified as "Jewish citizens" (*Yahudi vatandaşlar*), Armenians as "Armenian citizens" (*Ermeni vatandaşlar*), and so forth.[258] This also holds true for the Roma as well, whom Zoltan Barany has observed to "comprise a most unusual ethnic group, not only in Eastern Europe but also in the larger, global

[257] Umut Özkırımlı, "Türk Milliyetçiliğinin 'Etnisiteyle' İmtihanı: Bir Utangaç Aşk Hikâyesi," in *Türkiye'nin Yeniden İnşası: Modernleşme, Demokratikleşme, Kimlik*, ed. E. Fuat Keyman, trans. Utku Kavasoğlu and Sebla Küçük (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2013), 93–94.

[258] For discussions regarding Turkish citizenship as formulated in the constitution, as applied in courts, and as inscribed in and practiced by the Republican mindset, see Mesut Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012 [2006]); and Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar: Kavramlar, Teori, Lozan, İç Mevzuat, İçtihat, Uygulama* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010 [2004]).

sense." For Barany, "The uniqueness of the Gypsies lies in the fact that they are a transnational, non-territorially based people who do not have a 'home state' to provide a haven or extend protection to them."[259] The official language of the state, as well as the mainstream media, are replete with references to the Roma of Turkey as "Romani citizens" (*Roman vatandaşlar*) or its seemingly more inclusive yet equally patronizing version, "our Romani citizens" (*Roman vatandaşlarımız*). Among its many precedents, a recent incident provides a stark example of this appropriation: in late June 2013, the governor of Adana, Hüseyin Avni Coş, used in an unrelated context the racist old saying that goes "When a Gypsy sets out to boast of his exploits, he speaks of his thievery,"[260] which signifies boasting about inappropriate things. Following considerable negative response, the governor paid a visit to the Adana Roma Association for Social Aid and Solidarity (*Adana Romanlar Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği*) where he declared

> Our Roma citizens are an important value and an inseparable part of our society and culture. (...) I have heard rumors to the effect that some people who do not know of and cannot abide our love and respect for our Roma brothers are trying to paint us as anti-Roma. These are completely wrong. For us, our Roma brothers are first-class citizens of our state. In our happy and joyful days, we are one. We cry together and laugh together.[261]

Indeed, this facile language of inclusion is a manifestation of the dominant discourse of "tolerance" in Turkey, prescribing that "Turks are tolerant and hospitable," that "racism has no place in our history, as in the West," and that "the other *millet*s in the Ottoman Empire have enjoyed tolerance."[262] As Wendy Brown argues,

> tolerance as a political discourse concerned with designated modalities of diversity, identity, justice, and civic cohabitation (...) involves not simply the withholding of speech or action in response to contingent individual dislikes or violations of taste but the enactment of social, political, religious, and

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[259] Barany, *East European Gypsies*, 1–2.

[260] "Çingene kahramanlıklarını anlatmaya kalkıştığı zaman hırsızlıklarından bahsedermiş." (Murat Karaman and Ziya Ramoğlu, "Vali Coş: Bunun Hesabı Sorulacak," *Sabah Güney*, June 26, 2013.) In his written statement after the events, the governor ludicrously defended himself by saying that this proverb dates back to the eighteenth century, with its original that goes "Merd-i kıpti şecaatin arzederken sirkatin söyler." (Sümeyra Tansel, "Merd-i Vali Coş Sirkatin Söyler," *Taraf*, June 30, 2013.)

[261] Medya Roman, "Irkçı Deyimin Kullanıldığı İddiası Tartışma Yarattı," July 1, 2013, accessed July 1, 2013, http://medyaroman.blogspot.com/2013/07/irkc-deyimin-kullanldg-iddias-tartsma.html.

[262] Kenan Çayır, "Gruplararası İlişkiler Bağlamında Ayrımcılık," in *Ayrımcılık: Çok Boyutlu Yaklaşımlar*, eds. Kenan Çayır and Müge Ayan Ceyhan (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2012), 6.

> cultural norms; certain practices of licensing and regulation; the marking of subjects of tolerance as inferior, deviant, or marginal vis-à-vis those practicing tolerance; and a justification for sometimes dire or even deadly action when the limits of tolerance are considered breached.[263]

Indeed, while the notion of tolerance implies a state of peaceful coexistence at first glance, it is in fact informed and disguised by power relations immanent in the society. After all, it is the 'powerful' that tolerates the 'weak,' and not vice versa.

An earlier common reference to the Roma in Republican Turkey has been the explicitly racist expression "swarthy citizen" (*esmer vatandaş*), which is thought to have been introduced during the Prime Ministership of Adnan Menderes (1950–1960).[264] In the absence of social critique, and perhaps even held out at the time as an accommodating alternative to the pejorative term 'Gypsy,' this problematical phrase remained a widely used exonym for the Roma in Turkey well into the 1990s.[265] Nonetheless, despite a relatively heightened awareness (or rather, a preoccupation with political correctness), the expression now and again shows up in such official documents as the correspondences of local administrations[266] and police reports[267].

Although the conditions and socio-political standing of the Roma within the Republican nation-building process are strikingly understudied, laws and regulations shed some light on the state's attitude towards the Romani population. For instance, stipulated principally to allow for the forced resettlement of Kurds within the Turkish Republic,[268] the Settlement Act passed on June 14, 1934 included a provision that Melek Göregenli specifies as "an example (...) of the limitation of citizenship rights by law and

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[263] Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 13–14.

[264] Ali Arayıcı, *Çingeneler: Avrupa'nın Vatansızları* (İstanbul: Kalkedon Yayınları, 2008), 244. It has also been suggested that for a period of time this expression actually appeared in the "pass books" of the Roma: "Gypsies," in *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, ed. Peter A. Andrews (Weisbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichart Verlag, 1989), 141. I am not sure what the author means by "pass book" here, and have not been able to obtain independent verification of this fact.

[265] For instance, the caption of a picture of a dancing bear being transported on a horse cart published in a daily ("Meçhule Doğru..." *Hürriyet*, November 1, 1993) reads: "Even if they change countries, the 'swarthy citizens' do not change their habits. As with Turkey, many gypsies in Bulgaria earn their keep by making bears dance."

[266] "'Esmer Vatandaşlar'a Tazminat Hakkı!", *Zaman*, April 13, 2010.

[267] Adnan Keskin, "Esmer Vatandaş Olduğu Anlaşıldı," *Taraf*, March 14, 2013.

[268] Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar*, 90–91.

thereby of the [legitimation] of discrimination, through the direct use of the name of a group or community".[269] Article 4/1 of this law states that "A: Those that are not bound to Turkish culture, B: anarchists, C: spies, Ç: nomadic gypsies, D: those that have been deported shall not be accepted into Turkey as migrants."[270]

Even though Göregenli suggests that this particular paragraph of the law had been intended to prevent migration of Gypsies from Bulgaria and Greece, and that it was never actually enforced,[271] cases of immigration of Turks from Bulgaria tell a different story. During the Turkish exodus from Bulgaria in the 1950s, with "Approximately 800 refugees (...) being accepted per day," the Turkish-Bulgarian border was shut down a few times by the Turkish government due to the claim that "Bulgaria was sending people without visas or with fake visas to Turkey." In 1951, another such closure concerned Bulgaria's "insert[ion of] Gypsies among the Turkish immigrants." The border was re-opened only after "Bulgaria accepted the return of the Gypsies whom it had sent with fake visas."[272] Likewise, during the mass migration of 1989 that was "euphemistically called a 'grand excursion'" by the Bulgarian government,[273] Roma were again rejected in spite of the fact that they had relatives in Turkey.[274] Further research might reveal similar instances of repatriation of Romani immigrants based on this Act.

An amendment to this paragraph of the article was initially proposed in 1993, but it was turned down by Süleyman Demirel, then Prime Minister, on the grounds that "The ratification of this proposal would create public opinion in favor of the admission of Gypsies of other nationalities into our country as migrants, and would create migration

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[269] Melek Göregenli, "Önyargıyı ve Ayrımcılığı Azaltmak," in *Ayrımcılık: Çok Boyutlu Yaklaşımlar*, eds. Kenan Çayır and Müge Ayan Ceyhan (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2012), 249.

[270] "İsk[â]n Kanunu (Mülga)," accessed July 13, 2012, http://mirekoc.ku.edu.tr/sites/mirekoc.ku.edu.tr/files/tr_leg11.pdf.

[271] Göregenli, "Önyargıyı ve Ayrımcılığı Azaltmak," 249.

[272] Ömer Turan, "Turkish Migrations from Bulgaria," in *Forced Ethnic Migrations on the Balkans: Consequences and Rebuilding of Societies, Conference Proceedings, 22–23 February 2005, Sofia, Bulgaria* ([Sofia]: International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, and Meiji University, n.d.), 87, accessed February 5, 2012, http://www.imir-bg.org/imir/books/Forced_Ethnic_Migrations.pdf.

[273] Ali Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 18.

[274] Aksu, *Çingene Olmak*, 113.

pressure at our borders."[275] The Settlement Act of 1934 was finally abrogated in September 19, 2006 and was replaced by another whose Article 4 no longer included the exclusionary stipulation targeting "nomadic Gypsies."[276]

A notoriously fervent proponent of pan-Turkist ideology, Hüseyin Nihâl Atsız (1905–1975), is known to have made declarations that provide examplary glimpses into the position of Gypsies/Roma in the mindset of the nationalist/racist elites of the early Republic. Following his trip to Çanakkale towards the end of 1933, he would write: "How many Jews, how many Gypsies, how many Greek junk [*bozuntu*] there are in the city!.."[277] Alongside other ethno-religious constituents of the country, Atsız could not "even conceive of [Gypsies] as citizens. He proposed the banishment of Gypsies to India, or if that is not practical, their forced resettlement in Hakkari so that they can be 'set straight.'"[278] For him, "The Gypsies are a wound among us. To Turkify the Gypsies, to admit them into our midst and corrupt the purity of Turkish blood would be tantamount to murder."[279] Moreover, in his plea on May 3, 1944, during the proceedings of what came to be known as the "Racism–Turanism Trial" of 1944–1945, Atsız proclaimed:

> Rejecting racism means agreeing to the presence, one day, of a Jewish president at the head of this state, or an Armenian prime minister, or black army commanders, or Gypsy professors. By rejecting racism, the prosecutor has revealed himself to agree to such a situation. I, however, shall never agree to it.[280]

Another legal provision that specifically targeted Gypsies/Roma appeared in the Act on the Residence and Movement of Aliens in Turkey. Adopted in July 15, 1950, Article 21/3 of this Act reads: "The Ministry of the Interior is authorized to expel stateless

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[275] Ibid., 115.

[276] "İskân Kanunu," accessed May 23, 2012, http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.5543.pdf.

[277] [Atilla Dirim], "28 Aralık 1933: Irkçı Nihal Atsız, Trakya Olayları'nın Zeminini Hazırlıyor," December 27, 2010, accessed July 14, 2013, http://www.marksist.org/tarihte-bugun/2710-28-aralik-1933-irkci-nihal-atsiz-trakya-olaylarinin-zeminini-hazirliyor-.

[278] Güven Bakırezer, "Nihal Atsız," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce, Cilt 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009 [2002]), 415.

[279] Emre Arslan, "Türkiye'de Irkçılık," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce, Cilt 4: Milliyetçilik,* ed. Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009 [2002]), 418–419.

[280] "Nihal Atsız'ın Savunması," accessed July 28, 2013, http://www.nihal-atsiz.com/yazi/nihal-atsizin-savunmasi-2.html.

or foreign-national gypsies and alien nomads."[281] This particular provision of the Act was only amended in January 5, 2011.[282] While their enactment is perfectly in line with the early Republican aspirations of Turkification, the fact that these laws have been revoked as late as in the 2000s, especially when joined by the persisting use of the phrase "our Romani citizens," delineates the Turkish government's problematic attitude towards the Roma of Turkey. On the other hand, the Roma Initiative of 2009, part of the AKP government's cosmetic undertakings towards democratization, did turn a new page in the relationship of Romanies with the Turkish state in that it sparked a dialogue with the leaders of Roma organizations. Yet, to the disappointment of a great number of budding Roma associations, the Initiative fell short of attracting long-awaited European Union grants for Roma inclusion projects. Most importantly, it failed to correspond to the day-to-day violations of the rights of the Roma concerning such urgent and unalienable matters as housing, employment, and education; and in that sense, it remains inconclusive and unfulfilled.

"[C]onstituted through social contact," ethnicity "refers to relationships between groups whose members consider themselves distinctive, and these groups are often ranked hierarchically within a society."[283] Along the same lines, Baskın Oran specifies four hierarchical categories that citizens of the Republic of Turkey comprise in the eyes of the state: 1) Hanafi, Sunni, Muslim –and secular– Turks; 2) Muslim non-Turks such as Circassians and Pomaks, for they are "adherent to Turkish culture" (*Türk kültürüne bağlı*) but not "of Turkish stock" (*Türk soyundan*); 3) Kurds, for they refuse assimilation; and 4) non-Muslims, for they are "regarded as impossible to assimilate."[284] Where should the Roma be placed in this hierarchy? More importantly, where do they situate themselves?

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[281] "Yabancıların Türkiye'de İkamet ve Seyahatleri Hakkında Kanun," accessed February 8, 2011, http://mirekoc.ku.edu.tr/sites/mirekoc.ku.edu.tr/files/tr_leg2.pdf.

[282] "Yabancıların Türkiye'de İkamet ve Seyahatleri Hakkında Kanun," accessed July 16, 2013, http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.3.5683.pdf.

[283] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London and New York: Pluto Press, 2010 [1994]), 23, 10.

[284] Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar*, 167–168.

Contrary to their counterparts in most European states,[285] Gypsies/Roma have never been granted minority status in Turkey. "A direct repercussion of the Ottoman '*Millet* System'"[286] and thus observing primarily a confessional demarcation, the Treaty of Lausanne signed in 1923 did not extend minority status to each and every ethnic group of Turkey, only to select non-Muslims. Moreover, "the notion of minority is considered to be damaging to 'the indivisible unity of the republic'"[287] and this disposition has invariably been fostered by official declarations, court decisions, and the political discourse of ruling parties and dominant classes. In a manner that suggests that they take the dominant discourse of the nation-state as their main frame of reference, the Roma of Turkey have objected to being regarded a minority.[288] Instead, them seem to have formed "wounded attachments," to borrow Wendy Brown's term,[289] to Turkish nationalism (which also intrinsically implies the supremacy of –Sunni– Islam); "wounded" in the sense that these attachments accommodate both an awareness of the persisting exclusionary treatment and a constant struggle to emphasize unwavering loyalty to the state and to Islam in their continual negotiations of identity:

> The dominant group defines the marginal group through the lenses of the dominant social norms, religion, ethnic identity, and economic and occupational status. Conversely, (...) the marginal man learns to see himself from two viewpoints, that of his group and that of the group he aspires to be a member of.[290]

Thus, as a result of what seems to be an identification with the dominant discourses of the Turkish state, my bear leading interlocutors were keen to associate their plight during

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[285] "The Soviet Union recognized the Gypsies as a national minority in 1925, and Gypsies who wished to could be so classified in their 'internal passports.' Later the same principle was applied in communist Yugoslavia. In Britain, the Gypsies were recognized as an ethnic minority in 1976, after considerable hesitation and debate, and thus protected from discrimination by the Race Relations Act." (Shahar, "Religious Minorities," 14)

[286] Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar*, 72.

[287] Ibid., 152

[288] Mustafa Canbey, "Çingeneler Kendilerine Azınlık Diyenlere Tepki Gösteriyor: 'Hiç Yok Birbirimizden Farkımız'," *Sosyal Politikalar Dergisi*, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.sosyalpolitikalar.com.tr/derg-boeluemler/kapak-/kapak-dosyasi/114-cingeneler-kendilerine-aznlk-diyenlere-tepki-goesteriyorqhic-yok-birbirimizden-farkmzq.html.

[289] Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," *Political Theory* 21, 3 (Aug. 1993): 390–410.

[290] Barany, *South European Gypsies*, 58.

and following the abolition of the practice with particular authorities in office rather than with the state and its policies at large. It seemed as if, in their eyes, it was not the Turkish government, but rather specific individuals who were responsible. An uncanny hush would fall over the conversation when I uttered the word "state," whereas the names Bedrettin Dalan, Nurettin Sözen, Hayri Kozakçıoğlu and İsmet Silahçılar, all local administrators of the time, were pronounced and criticized freely. Yet it was Mehmet who said: "If it's banned, it's banned. You cannot possibly go against the state,"[291] pointing to an inevitable yielding to the overarching political mechanism whose intervention resulted in their destitution.

During one of my visits to the Thracian 'town of bear leaders,' as Hüseyin Amca, Mustafa, and I were sitting at Hüseyin Amca's *bakkal* (small convenience store) located in one of the Roma quarters, a middle-aged Romani woman stepped in to buy some salt. At that moment we were conversing about how Romanes is fading into oblivion in the region; Mustafa was telling me that they no longer speak the language among themselves, that their command of it is rapidly waning, and that the younger generations do not even get to learn it. He turned to the lady, formerly "of the basket-weavers" (*sepetçilerden*), and inquired her about the reason she didn't ask for salt in Romanes. Her response was quite telling: "We are no longer Romani, we are Turks. Mixed we are, mixed."[292]

Indeed, throughout the interviews, my Romani interlocutors deployed the terms Turk, *Gacal*, Roma and Gypsy at times interchangeably, at other times contradistinctively. While "Turk" and "*Gacal*" were usually synonymous, the choice between using "Gypsy" or "Roma" proved to be a matter of hierarchy or political intent. Most of my respondents referred to themselves as Roma and at times implicated a stratification and distancing from the exonym Gypsy burdened by pejorative connotations: Hüseyin Amca once said "I am of the civilized Gypsies."[293] Ahmet, informed by the word's proclivity to political reappropriation, set out to correct his relatives as we were sitting at his brother's house: "Don't say Romani, say Gypsy."[294] More significantly, the ethnonyms Turk and Romani seemed to be permeable, especially during conversations about mistreatment, prejudice, and discrimination. The emphasis on

[291] "Yasaksa yasak. Devletle uğraşamazsın."

[292] "Biz artık Roman değiliz, Türküz. Kırmayız, kırma."

[293] "Ben medeni Çingenelerdenim."

[294] "Roman deme, Çingene de."

"Turkishness" was especially evident when positioning themselves vis-à-vis Kurds, whom they largely seemed to regard as separatists. One, for instance, would say reproachfully "They can come out and say 'We are Kurds' but we don't come out and say 'We are Roma'," [295] stressing that they only demand equal treatment and rights free of prejudice. Likewise, reporting the results of fieldwork on the Roma in Turkey, Adrian Marsh notes "Many respondents were at great pains to stress their commitment to the state. (...) they also made it clear that they were antagonistic towards other groups (most frequently Kurds) who sought to undermine the integrity of the Republic." [296]

Symbols of the nation-state as well as a demonstration of Islamic devotion seem to hold a crucial place in associational settings as well. For instance, the offices of an İstanbul Roma association I visited in the early days of my fieldwork presented a dizzying effort to capture the essence of both national and religious commitment: two ample-sized Turkish flags, one covering a wall of the cozy office, the other carefully laid out on a desk; various posters reminiscing the conquest of İstanbul, or depicting such sacred relics as the mantle of the Prophet, or displaying Islamic aphorisms; and finally, covering the wall behind the desk of the association's president, a sizeable green broadcloth adorned with Qur'anic verses.

Moreover, loyalty to the state mechanism is often articulated in a pro-military, if not militaristic, framework. Ahmet uttered proudly that "Among our folks, girls are not allowed to marry men who have not [yet] served in the military." [297] In their recent article, Suat Kolukırık and Şule Toktaş deduced that "The military is not only liked but also respected for it represents, in the eyes of the Roma, an institution of 'power and authority' that 'treats everybody equally'." [298]

> Despite the fact that social deprivation does not affect solely Gypsy communities in Turkey, the prevalence of anti-Gypsy prejudices, manifest in the daily experiences of individuals belonging to these communities in their

[295] "Onlar çıkıp Kürdüz diyebiliyor, biz Romanız diye çıkmıyoruz ortaya."

[296] Marsh, "Ethnicity and Identity," 28. Also see Selin Önen, "Citizenship Rights of Gypsies in Turkey: Cases of Roma and Dom Communities," PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, 2011.

[297] "Askere gitmeyene kız verilmez bizde."

[298] Suat Kolukırık and Şule Toktaş, "Turkey's Roma: Political Participation and Organization," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, 5 (Sep. 2007): 771. Also see Udo Mischek, "The Professional Skills of Gypsies in Istanbul," *Kuri* 1, 7 (Fall/Winter 2002), accessed March 20, 2012, http://www.domresearchcenter.com/resources/links/mischek17.html.

> interaction with non-Gypsies, reveals a high degree of unequal treatment on an ethnic basis.[299]

Furthermore, anti-Roma attitudes and actions among the Turkish public –culminating in lynching and resulting in the further banishment of Romani residents from neighborhoods or towns by local authorities– are escalating,[300] not to mention systematic urban transformation projects that have brought about the effective exile and added marginalization and segregation of hundreds of Romani families. While the destruction of the Sulukule neighborhood in İstanbul has been the most notable and visible of these, a similar pattern can also be observed in numerous locales inhabited by the Roma across the country.

On the other hand, discrimination against the Roma on the grounds of religious adherence and devotion, as discussed in Chapter 3, seems to persist, leading them to plead on occasion that they are 'Muslims, not Gypsies.'[301] As we were having tea downtown

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[299] "Unequal Citizenship: Human Rights Violations against Turkish Gypsies," in *We are Here!*, 55.

[300] In addition to the aforementioned Selendi incidents of 2010, Bursa recently witnessed the lynching of its Romani inhabitants and the consequent demolition of their houses. In July 2013, disputes arising from horse manure and the injury of a young woman by the gun fired by a Romani man quickly turned into mass assault towards the Roma, upon which the Bursa Municipality demolished the houses of the Roma in a matter of days (accompanied by claims of "coincidential timing") and confiscated their horses. (Nilay Vardar, "Adli Bir Olay Roman Mahallesinde Lince Dönüşüyor," Bianet, July 23, 2013, accessed July 23, 2013, http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/148669-adli-bir-olay-roman-mahallesinde-lince-donusuyor; Nilay Vardar, "Romanlar Sürgünden Korkuyor," Bianet, July 25, 2013, accessed July 26, 2013, http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/148719-romanlar-surgunden-korkuyor) Although a clear hate crime based on ethnic membership, in the absence of relevant legislation, the assailants were charged only with causing damage to property. (Fatih Karakılıç, "Roman Vatandaşların Arabalarını Ateşe Verdiler," *Zaman*, July 22, 2013.) As the processing of arrestees were in progress, the Romani and non-Romani residents of the neighborhood (Ali Mezarcıoğlu makes an excellent point as to how the ethnicity of the Roma are specified in the media while that of the assailants is not: "Medya Bursa'da Provokasyon Yapmamalı," Medya Roman, July 22, 2013, accessed July 22, 2013, http://medyaroman.blogspot.com/2013/07/medya-bursada-provokasyon-yapmamal.html) "agreed on peace" on the condition that the Roma withdraw their legal complaints (Nilay Vardar, "Mahalleli 'Barış Anlaşması' İmzaladı, Sıra Yerel Yönetimde," Bianet, July 29, 2013, accessed July 29, 2013, http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/148798-mahalleli-baris-anlasmasi-imzaladi-sira-yerel-yonetimde).

[301] Nermin Sungur, Sinan Gökçen and İsmail Kayhan, "Bir Kültür Kayboluyor: Çingeneler," *Yeni Gündem* 4, 72 (July 19–25, 1987): 16; Kolukırık, "Lozan Çingeneleri;" also see Elin Strand, "*Romanlar* and Ethno-Religious Identity in Turkey: A Comparative

before he left for the nearby mosque prior to the call for prayer, Hüseyin Amca told me that on occasion he encounters hurtfully exclusionist behavior directed towards themselves at daily prayers. He recalled *Gacal* mosque-goers pointing fingers at them, muttering the word "Gypsy" pejoratively among themselves,[302] and even keeping their distance from them during prayers, leaving Romani believers feeling isolated and shunned, not to mention insulted. Reminiscent of the Ottoman practice of doubting the Muslim faith of the Roma, an even more conspicuous incident took place in Yalova in an elementary school attended mostly by Romani children: Romani pupils were handed a survey to be filled by their parents and it included such questions as "Do you believe in God?", "Who is your prophet?", "Do you perform ghusl?", and "Have you had your child circumcised?" The survey sparked reaction from local Romanies as well as Roma associations across Turkey, who were told by the Manisa governorship that the study was conducted by the Theology Faculty of Uludağ University in Bursa.[303]

5.2. "*Les Tch[ingianés] de la pire espèce*": Class Discrimination against the Bear-Leading Roma

In *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Thomas Hylland Eriksen reasons that

> There may be a high correlation between ethnicity and class, which means that there is a high likelihood that persons belonging to specific ethnic groups also belong to specific social classes. There can be a significant interrelationship between class and ethnicity, both class and ethnicity can be criteria for rank, and ethnic membership can be an important factor in class membership.[304]

Perspective," in *Gypsies and the Problem of Identities: Contextual, Constructed and Contested*, eds. Adrian Marsh and Elin Strand (Stockholm: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2006), 97–104.

[302] "Çingene bunlar, Çingene." It is worth mentioning that the Prophet Muhammad threatened those who differentiate among Muslims on the basis of ethnicity (*qawm*) with banishment to the lowest levels of hell.

[303] "Böyle Anket Olur mu?" Medya Roman, December 20, 2012, accessed April 12, 2013, http://medyaroman.blogspot.com/2012/12/boyle-anket-olur-mu.html.

[304] Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 11.

In the case of Romani people, a construction of identity informed by negotiations of class and ethnicity, both of which are grounded in maintaining privilege, seems to be ever-present. In her article discussing both interethnic and intraethnic relationships of the Roma through an exploration of Romani musicians in Romania, Margaret Beissinger conceptualizes Romani sub-groups as "situated on the boundaries between class and ethnicity."[305] Zoltan Barany, too, asserts that "many Roma do not consider themselves part of a cohesive ethnic group but identify themselves with a tribe or other subgroup to which they belong."[306] It should further be noted that the main marker of identity for sub-groups and the identifier for class among the Roma appears to be occupation: indeed, references to social stratification and class distinctions framed by occupational concentration can be observed in narratives both 'from the outside' and 'from within,' both in exonyms and endonyms alike.

> Especially characteristic of the Balkans (here we include also Wallachia and Moldova), as well as of the Gypsy communities who emigrated from this region all over the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are the cases of ethnonyms connected to certain occupations or professions.[307]

Although the authors, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, caution against a strict association and observe that "Not every professionym is an ethnonym," the overlapping of endonyms or exonyms and professionyms are very common among the Roma. However, it occasionally happens that the profession in question was last practiced a few generations earlier or even perhaps never actually practiced by the particular group bearing its name.[308]

Such an association between endonyms and professionyms appears to hold true for the Turkish context as well. Moreover, despite the two decades passing over the abolition of bear dancing, bear leaders are still acknowledged by and in turn identify themselves with their old occupations (as *ayıcı*). Adrian Marsh has observed this as well:

> Whether metal-workers, bear-leaders or comb-makers, the shift in occupation had left its heritage in self-identifications and narratives of migration. (...) occupation was felt to be an important indicator of identity, and particular

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[305] Margaret H. Beissinger, "Occupation and Ethnicity: Constructing Identity among Professional Romani (Gypsy) Musicians in Romania," *Slavic Review* 60, 1 (Spring 2001): 26.

[306] Barany, *East European Gypsies*, 77.

[307] Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, "'Gypsy' Groups in Eastern Europe: Ethnonyms vs. Professionyms," *Romani Studies* Fifth Series, 23, 1 (2013): 64.

[308] Ibid.

> occupations especially so as they were considered to be more "Gypsy" than others (...), so much so that previous "traditional" occupations remained an integral part of many respondent[']s sense of self.[309]

Such a stratification following prior occupations may perhaps, to a certain extent, have originated from the Ottoman legacy and culture of guilds, as comprehensively listed and depicted in Evliyâ Çelebi's *Seyahatnâme*. Furthermore, it may signal a preservation of class distinctions, even if the associated occupations no longer exist. Within this stratification, Romani musicians, in Romania as elsewhere, comprise a higher class with regard to other occupational groups, albeit within the confines of a so-called "low-status ethnicity."[310] Owing to a public –even if essentialist and exoticized– appreciation of their talents and higher levels of engagement with different societal circles, Romani musicians seem to have indeed enjoyed a comparatively more favorable place both among Romani sub-groups, or "ethnicised niches"[311] defined by occupation, and among Turkish society.[312]

In his unequaled study of the language of the Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire, Alexandre Paspati observes a "sentiment of mutual disdain" between sedentary and nomadic Gypsies, one that evokes aversion based on language as well as manners and religious (in)difference, echoing Evliyâ Çelebi:

> The Sedentary, speaking of the Nomads as barbarians, mock their unintelligible, coarse, and guttural pronounciation, their nudity, and their crass ignorance. The Nomads, for their part, call the Sedentary *Kalb-tchingianés*, *Rayá-tchingianés*, *Kalpazán-tchingianés*, *Lákhos* (Wallachian), and avoid as much as possible any interaction with them. This sentiment is not exactly due to the lifestyle change of the Sedentary, but mainly to their religious difference, because the Nomads are for the most part Muslim, but have no more respect for their faith than do the Sedentary for the Christian faith. The Nomads accuse the Sedentary of changing their religion according to the convenience of their position, and of being Muslims, or simultaneously Christians. This is a reproach which, in my personal experience, is proper to the Nomads and particularly to the class called Zapári [bear leaders]. It is curious to hear this people speak of religion, and to accuse each other, since they have respect for no faith and

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[309] Marsh, "Ethnicity and Identity," 27.

[310] Beissinger, "Occupation and Ethnicity," 25.

[311] "Unequal Citizenship," 92.

[312] For studies of Romani musicians in Turkey, see, for example, Sonia Tamar Seeman, "'You're Roman!' Music and Identity in Turkish Roman Communities" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2002); and Özgür Akgül, *Romanistanbul: Şehir, Müzik ve Bir Dönüşüm Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Punto Yayınları, 2009).

> are ignorant of any religious principle. For all, any moral or religious sentiment is of no use, given that one cannot derive any profit from it.[313]

Furthermore, within his deragotary editorialization, Paspati qualifies bear leaders (*ritchiniéngoro*), whom he regards to be "distinguished from fellow Gypsies by their savageness and rudeness," as "Gypsies of the worst kind" (*les Tch[ingianés] de la pire espèce*).[314] Even though he did not further elaborate this qualification, one can observe bear leaders to have historically been subjected to indifference, and at times discriminated by fellow Roma who seem to have considered their profession to be of a lower social standing. For instance, following the demolition of houses in Sulukule in 1966, leaving 2500 Romani inhabitants of the neighborhood doomed to dwell only in ten tents distributed by the authorities, a national daily published a reportage on the issue. Having complained about their dire living conditions, the Sulukule Roma were asked about a neighboring assemblage of tents:

> A short distance away, beyond the city walls, was a larger assemblage of tents. I pointed to it. He glanced them and frowned.
>
> – Present company excluded, sir, they are not our kind. As I said, present company excluded, they are bear leaders. As everyone knows, we are the grandchildren of [Sultan Mehmed] the Conqueror..[315]

In another instance, while voicing their disdain for the appellation "Gypsy," some Roma in İzmir were noted in an article as saying "Bear leaders are Gypsies," not them.[316] In the early days of my fieldwork, when I asked a prominent figure among Romani activists, he had told me that his circle was not affiliated in any way with "bear-leading Romani brothers," employing an inclusive language but a dismissive tone.[317] Another time, during my visit to a Roma association in İstanbul, I was told that there may have been bear leaders living in tents closeby prior to the abolition of the practice, but at the time none of them had had any contact with the bear-leading Roma whom they explicitly qualified as "the lowest stratum."[318]

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[313] Paspati, *Études sur les Tchinghianés*, 13.

[314] Ibid., 22, 460.

[315] "2500 Sulukule Sâkini 10 Çadırda Yaşıyor," *Milliyet*, May 1, 1966. It appears that the Sulukule Roma still tend to refer to this notion of having deep roots in the city (Danielle van Dobben, personal communication, March 7, 2012).

[316] Kolukırık, "Lozan Çingeneleri."

[317] "Buradan kimsenin ayı oynatıcısı Roman kardeşlerimizle alakası yok."

[318] "En alt katman."

When I approached the subject of their relationships with other Romani occupational groups, Mehmet confined himself to merely saying that while they did know and at times got together with bear leaders from other cities, they did not socialize with Romani musicians or other vocational groups, aside from occasionally encountering each other at the night clubs where they each took the stage, one with musical instruments and the other with bears. Hüseyin Amca, however, did hint at the negative attitude they received from other Roma in İstanbul: "The people of İstanbul, including the Romani, were more civilized. When they came face to face [with us], they would say hey, these are bear leaders. They viewed us as somewhat... They did, we have to speak the truth."[319]

As exoticized subjects of insistent stereotypes, as Muslims ascribed with a 'questionable faith,' and as an ethnic minority that never asked for and was never granted that status (and therefore the appropriate acknowledgment and privileges, even if on paper), the Roma were thus deemed susceptible to the advent of governmental policies in the name of modernization. That the Romani community found the legislative and organizational opportunities to form associations only after the mid-2000s,[320] that different occupational groups were already detached and stratified, and that the bear-leading Roma were considered to constitute a lower class among the Romani community at large, appear to have resulted in an escalation of the marginalization and vulnerability of bear leaders in Turkey.

[319] "İstanbul'un halkı, Romanları olsun, daha medeni olurdu. Şimdi böyle karşıdan geldiği zaman, ha bunlar ayıcı derdi. Biraz şey görürdü. Onlar görürdü şimdi, gerçeğini konuşmak lazım."

[320] Akgül, "Türkiye Çingenelerinin Politikleşmesi," 215–218.

6.

"FOUR LEGS GOOD, TWO LEGS BAD":[321] THE LIBERATION OF BEARS

> Beware, my body and my soul, beware above all of crossing your arms and assuming the sterile attitude of the spectator, because life is not a spectacle, because a sea of sorrows is not a proscenium, because a man who cries out is not a dancing bear.
>
> Aimé Césaire, *Return to My Native Land*

In October 1993, a bear rescue operation was carried out at the Maçka Gardens of İstanbul in the dead of night. The bear leaders did not usually share accommodations with their bears, which they typically chained nightly to the trees in the garden or to the rocks on the shores of Yenikapı, next to the counters of fishmongers. On the morning of October 6, 1993,[322] the bear leaders came to the gardens for another day of work, only to find all their 'ursine workmates' gone. All that was left behind were broken chains around tree trunks and numerous spotlights scattered on the ground, as my respondent Ömer vividly recalled. The abolition process is said to have lasted until 1996, spanning all locales acrossed the country where the practice was encountered.[323]

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[321] Needless to say, this phrase is borrowed from George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, 22.

[322] This specific date, which my former bear leader informants could understandably not recollect after two decades, is indicated in an article presenting the results of research conducted on three of these confiscated bears that were transported to the Ouwehands Zoo in the Netherlands: Paul Koene, "Adaptation of Blind Brown Bears to a New Environment and its Residents: Stereotypy and Play as Welfare Indicators," *Ursus* 10 (1998): 579. A news piece published the next day points at the same direction: Hakan Akpınar, "Ayılar Uludağ'da Toplanıyor," *Hürriyet*, October 7, 1993.

[323] World Society for the Protection of Animals, "Dancing Bears in Turkey" accessed February 25, 2011, http://wspa.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/279.

Figure 43. Bear leading scene from İstanbul in an undated postcard titled "The Gypsy and his bear." (Photo. Melih Alpayçetin, Doğan Kardeş Kartpostalları. Author's collection)

There had reportedly been discussions about the abolition of the practice and the removal of the bears from the city a few years earlier. Bear leaders had in fact been summoned by Bedrettin Dalan, the elected metropolitan municipal mayor of İstanbul in office from March 26, 1984 until March 28, 1989:

> Dalan gave the order, he said to the municipalities "catch them." So they caught us and took us to the Beggars' Camp at Okmeydanı. And Dalan came and held a meeting. He said, look guys, you take many liberties, you go in

> and out of all sorts of places, and we receive many complaints against you. So we will ultimately take away your animals but we will give you a sum of money, or we will give you a job.[324]

Although this endeavor was postponed at that point, already in 1986 there had been talk of the Municipality collecting bears from Romani bear leaders either to kill or release them into the wild.[325] Little did the bear leaders know that on May 27, 1988, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism[326] had already issued a circular to governors, calling for an end to bear dancing and requesting that bear leaders be given job training courses for a different 'career path.'[327] Yet nothing had come of these intentions and apparently the initiative was temporarily suspended. Prior to the overnight confiscation of bears in 1993, it seems that another circular was issued by the Ministry of Tourism in April 1992 to be delivered to governorships and municipalities, prohibiting bear leading particularly around touristic districts.[328] In 1993, despite a lack of a fair warning, the bear leaders were

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[324] "Dalan emir verdi, yakalayın dedi belediyelere. Yakaladılar bizi, getirdiler bizi Okmeydanı'ndaki dilenciler kampına. Dalan da geldi, toplantı yaptı. Bakın arkadaşlar dedi, siz çok serbest geziyorsunuz, her yere dalıp çıkıyorsunuz, sizin aleyhinizde bize çok şikâyet geliyor. Biz sonunda sizin hayvanlarınızı toplayacağız ama size bir bedel vereceğiz, yahut da size bir iş vereceğiz."

[325] "Ayılar Kent Dışına Çıkarılıyor," *Milliyet*, April 19, 1986; and Melih Aşık, "24 Ayı Nasıl Kurtuldu?" *Milliyet,* December 13, 1986.

[326] This office operated as two separate ministries as of January 24, 1989 until April 29, 2003.

[327] Nihat İşiten, "Bakan Titiz'den 'Ayı' Genelgesi," *Milliyet*, May 31, 1988: "Citizens from all walks of life occupy themselves with 'making bears dance' in order to earn their living or to supplement their income. In fact this is not about making bears dance but about forcing the bear to act according to its owner's wishes by causing them great pain. In this sense, this is genuine torture. And ignorant people encourage these performances by giving money. Among them are tourists as well. Most probably foreign tourists watch this not with pleasure but rather with astonishment, and they secretly blame us for allowing this to take place. Of course similar sentiments are also felt by sensible citizens. For this reason, I sincerely ask for your help in definitively prohibiting the practice of making money by torturing these creatures, and also in ensuring that [the bear leaders] become gainfully employed by teaching them a skill that is in demand in your local job training courses."

[328] Torun Dede, "Ayı Oynatma," *Milliyet*, April 19, 1992: "The Ministry of Tourism has sent a circular to provincial governors and mayors prohibiting "bear dancing" this year, particularly in touristic avenues and streets. Bearing the signatures of both Ulpay Öner, the Ministry's Director of the Office of Establishments, and Akın Demirer, Assistant to the Undersecretary, the circular demanded that a number of measures be taken and be rigorously implemented prior to the tourist season. Ministry officials stated that walking bears, making them dance, and thereby earning money by disturbing the tourists should categorically not be permitted, particularly in the touristic avenues and streets of large

quick to conclude that the twenty or so animals[329] had been seized by the municipality, and their suspicions were confirmed when they confronted the authorities. By that time Nurettin Sözen had taken office as Metropolitan Mayor (from March 29, 1989 until April 1, 1994) with former Emergency Rule Governor Hayri Kozakçıoğlu as Governor of İstanbul (from August 19, 1991 until November 1, 1995):

> Of course we figured out that it was them who took [the bears]. So we went back to the Metropolitan Municipality. We went to Sözen. Hayri Kozakçıoğlu was the Governor. There were about 35–40 of us. [Sözen and Kozakçıoğlu] had discussed [the issue]. They took one person in [for a conversation]. They said: From now on this bear business is prohibited around Turkey. Orders came from the outside.[330]

The municipality, once again, promised them employment in its facilities, or compensation from the foreign sources that had pioneered the effort and on which the Turkish authorities were keen to lay the 'blame.' They were given the run around for some time, and neither promise materialized. Further efforts by bear leaders to compel the municipality or the governorship to deliver on their promise proved futile, as Mehmet recalls:

> We got together and went [to the Governor's Office], to speak to Hayri Kozakçıoğlu. They did not let us in. He had a right-hand man, İsmail [surname]. A real tough guy. We told them that we had promised money. So İsmail [surname] said "go away and come back in a couple of hours." We

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cities. It was stated that the police or municipal authorities would take the necessary steps to achieve this goal, also taking into consideration complaints voiced by local inhabitants. In addition, the Ministry of Tourism (...) requested that tourists walking about or shopping along avenues and streets should not be bothered by peddlers or shoeshiners. Furthermore, the activities of people who corner tourists in train and bus stations and airports and force them to go to guesthouses, hotels, and shops from which they receive kickbacks were also prohibited."

[329] My formerly bear-leading interlocutors provided contradicting numbers for the confiscated bears in İstanbul, ranging from fifteen to thirty. On the other hand, Koene ("Blind Brown Bears," 579) indicates fourteen bears were taken from the gardens and Nazmiye Güneş ("Dansçı Ayıların Rehabilitasyonları Sırasında Kan Parametrelerindeki Değişiklikler" [PhD diss., Uludağ University, 1995]) specifies eighteen bears brought to the Veterinary School of Uludağ University, while the daily *Hürriyet* reports the initial number to be twelve (Akpınar, "Ayılar Uludağ'da Toplanıyor") and *Milliyet* to be sixteen (Nazım Alpman "Ayılara Seminer," *Milliyet*, January 14, 1994). A later report from the bear sanctuary specifies twenty-seven dancing bears (Kasım Şahin, "Ayının Aylık Masrafı Asgari Ücretin 10 Katı," *Milliyet*, August 21, 1995).

[330] "Anladık tabii onların aldığını. Tekrar büyükşehire gittik, Sözen'e gittik. Hayri Kozakçıoğlu da valiydi. Aşağı yukarı 35-40 kişiyiz. İkisi konuşmuşlar. Onlardan bir arkadaş almışlar içeri. Demişler ki: Bundan sonra bu ayı olayı Türkiye civarında yasak. Dışardan emir geldi."

> returned and again they did not let us in. Hayri Kozakçıoğlu shouted from his office, "No, no job, no money, no nothing!"[331]

Given the way in which the bears were taken and their handlers repeatedly and summarily cast aside, it is not surprising that the bear leaders considered themselves robbed. Looking back, "They stole our bears, they committed theft," proclaimed Murat.[332] Some of my respondents went on to earn their living by peddling or collecting scrap parts and recyclable materials to sell, while others immediately returned to their hometowns in Thrace where most are currently unemployed and looked after by their grown-up children; they were all ultimately left empty-handed:

> The truth is that they chased us. And we trusted them. [They said] all is well, we will notify you, we are processing you, we will provide you with job opportunities. We believed them, and we left. And as soon we did, we received a letter, all of us, from the Municipality. [They said] guys, things are not working out, you'll have to fend for yourselves, we cannot find positions for all of you at once.[333]

Unlike their counterparts in Eastern European countries or India who were handed a lump sum in exchange for each bear, the only thing bear leaders in Turkey received in return for their bears was a statement detailing the justifications for the prohibition of their occupation: disturbing the peace, setting a bad example for children, and threatening public health. Were these justifications grounded, though, or were they obscuring some other reasons? First and foremost, from the vantage point of animal protectionist discourse and agencies, the campaign was certainly a long overdue intervention to free the bears from pain and enslavement for the sake of entertainment.

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[331] "Toplanıp gittik [valiliğe], Hayri Kozakçıoğlu'nla görüşmeye. Görüştürtmediler bizi. Bir sağ kolu vardı onun, İsmail [soyadı]. Böyle çok sert bir adamdı. Bize söz verilmişti, para vereceklerdi dedik. Şimdi git, iki saat sonra gel dedi İsmail [soyadı]. Yine gittik, görüştürmediler. Hayri Kozakçıoğlu 'Yok, iş de yok, para da yok, hiçbir şey yok!' diye bağırdı odasından." Based on his personal communications with the bear leaders, Nazım Alpman (*Başka Dünyanın İnsanları Çingeneler* [İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 1997 (1993)], 34) relates an even harsher reaction of the İstanbul municipal police chief: "Fuck off! What money? If I had the authority, I would have thrown you all into the ocean!.."

[332] "Çaldılar ayılarımızı, hırsızlık yaptılar."

[333] "Kovaladılar bizi açıkçası. Biz de itimat ettik. Tamam, biz size haber vereceğiz, sizin işlemlerinizi yapıyoruz, size bir iş imkânı sağlayacağız [dediler]. İnandık, ayrıldık. Ayrılmamızla beraber bize bir yazı geldi, bütün arkadaşlara, belediyeden. Arkadaşlar sizin işiniz olmuyor, siz bakıcanız başınızın çaresine, hepinize birden kadro yok [dediler]."

6.1. The Development of Animal Protection in Turkey

Although the first comprehensive Animal Protection Act of the Turkish Republic was only passed in 2004 and enacted in 2006, the Ottoman Empire had a long history of engagement with relieving animal suffering, as is frequently –and nostalgically– evoked today. It is possible to trace this history in virtually all ranks of the Empire, from the highest authorities to private initiatives, from imperial edicts to pious foundations established by individuals. One such imperial decree promulgated during the reign of Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–1595), for instance, ordered horse-driving porters not to load their "lame and horseshoeless and worn-saddled horses and mules beyond their capacity."[334] Towards the end of the nineteenth century, such decrees were complemented by regulations concerning the maintenance and slaughtering of livestock as stipulated in municipal ordinances of İstanbul.[335]

Pious endowments (*evkaf*, pl. of *vakf*) either entirely dedicated to the care of certain animals or having stipulations in their endowment deeds (*vakfiye*) concerning animal welfare remain remarkably understudied. Nevertheless, it is well known that such foundations came into existence early in the Ottoman Empire, long before the formation of European-inspired animal welfare organizations at the beginning of the twentieth century.[336] For example, one foundation established in 1778 in İstanbul mandated that fresh bread be daily purchased and fed to stray dogs.[337] Indeed, from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth, it is difficult to find a travelogue about Ottoman İstanbul

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[334] Altınay, *İstanbul Hayatı*, 113.

[335] Ayşe Menteş Gürler and Şule Osmanağaoğlu, "Türkiye'de Hayvanları Koruma Kanununun Tarihsel Gelişimi," *Kafkas Üniversitesi Veteriner Fakültesi Dergisi* 15, 3 (2009): 327–328.

[336] For an overview of the treatment of working animals in Islamic law, see Celâl Yeniçeri, "Çalışma Hayatında Emekçi Hayvanlar, Hz. Peygamber'in Onlar İçin Getirdiği Haklar ve Bu Çerçevede Gelişen Fıkhî ve İdarî Anlayışlarda Hayvan Hakları," in *Peygamber ve Sonrasında İslâmın Emeğe Bakışı ve Emek Hayatını Düzenlemesi: Hukukî-Ahlâkî-İktisadî-Felsefî Yönleriyle Emek ve Emekçi Hayvanlar* (İstanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2009), 167–191; and for a discussion of Islamic jurisprudence regarding the legal basis for such endowments, see İsmet Sungurbey, *Hayvan Hakları: Bir İnsanlık Kitabı* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Basımevi ve Film Merkezi, 1993, expanded 2nd ed.), 237–258.

[337] *Tarihte İlginç Vakıflar* (Ankara: Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2012), 14.

that does not mention the city's tens of thousands of street dogs and how they were regularly fed and taken care of.[338] This fascination also eventually led to the emergence of an industry producing tourists' mementos, notably commercial photographs, magic lantern slides, and especially postcards.[339] Another endowment founded in Aydın as early as 1544 included in its deed the stipulation that drinking basins be built for the animals of locals and passengers.[340] Others, established in 1707 and 1889 respectively, contributed in the construction and maintenance of a pigeonhouse in Bursa, and the feeding and protection of storks in the Ödemiş town of İzmir.[341]

Nevertheless, it would take until 1912 for "the first Association established in the country with the goal of protecting animals and extending a compassionate and loving hand to these friendly and useful creatures, and especially to inculcate feelings of love and assistance toward those unfortunate creatures among the citizenry"[342] to be founded under the auspices of the Sixth Municipal District governance (*Altıncı Daire-i Belediye*) in İstanbul.[343] Owing to the pioneering efforts of Alice Washburn Manning (1861–1947), wife of a Robert College professor, and Lady Charlotte Alice Lowther, wife of the British Ambassador, the İstanbul Society for the Protection of Animals (*İstanbul Himâye-i Hayvânât Cemiyeti*) was born out of the need for an organization to safeguard the interests of animals, especially in response to a professed intention to stage bullfights in the city in

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[338] The most notable of these include Edmondo de Amicis, *Constantinople*, trans. Caroline Tilton (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1878 [1st ed. undated]); Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople 1554–1562*, trans. Edward Seymour Forster (Oxford: The Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1968 [1595]; and Wratislaw, *Adventures*.

[339] İrvin Cemil Schick, "İstanbul's Great Dog Massacre of 1910: A Case of Spatial Contestation" (paper presented at Boğaziçi University, May 20, 2010). For a selection of such postcards and photographs, see İrvin Cemil Schick, "İstanbul'da 1910'da Gerçekleşen Büyük Köpek İtlâfı: Bir Mekân Üzerinde Çekişme Vakası," *Toplumsal Tarih* 200 (Aug. 2010): 22–33; Ümit Sinan Topçuoğlu, *İstanbul ve Sokak Köpekleri* (İstanbul: Sepya Kitaplar, 2010); Catherine Pinguet, *İstanbul'un Köpekleri*, trans. Saadet Özen (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2009 [2008]).

[340] *Vakıflar*, 40.

[341] Ibid., 84, 93.

[342] *Türkiye Hayvanları Koruma Cemiyeti 1961 Senesi Raporu* (İstanbul: Halk Basımevi, 1962), 5.

[343] Comprising of Pera, Galata and Tophane, this district was inhabited predominantly by foreigners and local non-Muslims (Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* [Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993 (1986), 38].

1912, not to mention the notorious dog massacre of 1910.[344] Interestingly, the –ostensibly honorary– administrative board of the Society was comprised of some leading figures of the Committee of Union and Progress government, the very government responsible for the 1910 dog massacre, as Cihangir Gündoğdu has observed.[345] Moreover, informed by a crude version of the utilitarian approach to animal suffering, each year the Society single-handedly killed "in a humane manner" thousands of stray cats and dogs culled and brought by individuals or municipal police officers.[346] While World War I brought an end to its activities only two years after its inception, the Society was once again established in İstanbul in March 6, 1924. In time it adopted the title Turkish Society for the Protection of Animals (*Türkiye Hayvanları Koruma Derneği*, THDK) and in 1950 was officially recognized as a nation-wide non-profit organization.[347]

> The functions with which this association must deal are to purchase those animals that are unable to perform a service and for whom living has become great suffering and thus to prevent their torture; to put to sleep with the latest methods and painlessly those dogs whose existence endangers public health in the city and that the Municipality has captured; to attempt to make the transportation of animals by means of trains and ships free of suffering; to ensure that chickens are not transported on top of each other in cages, or hanging by their feet; to provide free treatment for sick animals; and to lighten the load of overburdened animals and carriages. In addition, to inculcate love for animals among the people and thereby ensure that animals are well treated; to give conferences in schools and cultivate compassion for animals among children with the same goal; to reward those who treat their animals well; to punish, with help from the police and gendarmerie, those who trap birds and thus to protect birds; to prevent experimental surgery on live animals, or at least work to limit such experiments to qualified personnel in schools.[348]

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[344] Berfin Melikoğlu, "Türkiye'de Kurulan İlk Hayvanları Koruma Derneğinin Tarihsel Gelişimi," *Veteriner Hekimler Derneği Dergisi* 80, 1 (2009): 39. Also see Ayşe Menteş Gürler, Berfin Melikoğlu and Şule Osmanağaoğlu, "A Historical Evaluation of Animal Protection Efforts of Non-Governmental Organizations in Turkey," *Kafkas Üniversitesi Veteriner Fakültesi Dergisi* 17, 6 (2011): 901–908.

[345] Cihangir Gündoğdu, "The Animal Rights Movement in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Republic: The Society for the Protection of Animals (1912)," in *Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 2010), 384.

[346] The numbers are provided at the end of each annual report.

[347] Melikoğlu, "Hayvanları Koruma Derneği," 40–42.

[348] *Türkiye Hayvanları Koruma Cemiyeti 1947 Senesi Raporu*. İstanbul: Hüsnütabiat Basımevi, 1948, 5–6.

In addition to these objectives, the members of the Society were fiercely opposed to animal fights and attempted to establish a legal basis against them by lodging continuous appeals to the authorities. Their attention seemed to be centered on camel wrestling and cockfighting, for which they succeeded in obtaining a proscriptive –yet apparently not lasting– ruling from the İstanbul Municipality in 1934.[349] With regard to animal welfare, the only general punitive legislation of the time seems to be the "Mistreatment of Animals" article of the 1926 Criminal Code that stipulated "Anyone who behaves mercilessly toward animals or needlessly beats or injures them or noticeably drives them so hard as to tire them beyond reason shall be sentenced to a light fine up to ten Liras."[350]

Aware of the need for wider-ranging regulations, the Society submitted a twenty-article legislative proposal to the government for the protection of animals, on the grounds that "to make the love of animals a national trait as it is among other civilized nations, it is necessary to impose certain rules and implement them to the letter. This will manifest the loftiness of our civilization and is furthermore in line with our interests." Designating fines and the confiscation of animals for those who contravened the proposed law, the Society set up a stipulation against "Those who stage cockfights, camel wrestling, and other animal fights, those who sponsor them, and those who allow them to be staged," and explained their motive as: "The deplorable condition of animals forced to fight each other or exhibited under painful circumstances does not at all exert a positive influence upon those who see them, and particularly children. This is confirmed by the latest scientific opinions." Notably, the Society's proposal also involved criminalizing "Those who make money by exhibiting animals, those who torture and make suffer the animals they exhibit by failing to emulate their natural living conditions," which, though not as specifically as cockfighting and camel wrestling, implicated bear leaders as well.[351]

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[349] *İstanbul Himayei Hayvanat Cemiyeti 1934 Senesi Raporu* (İstanbul: L. Murkides Matbaası, 1934), 5.

[350] "Türk Ceza Kanunu (Mülga)," accessed January 3, 2013, http://www.ceza-bb.adalet.gov.tr/mevzuat/765.htm.

[351] *Hayvanları Nasıl Koruyabiliriz? İstanbul Himayei Hayvanat Cemiyetinin Hayvanları Himayeye Matuf Teklifleri* (İstanbul: Arkadaş Matbaası, 1932), 8, 16.

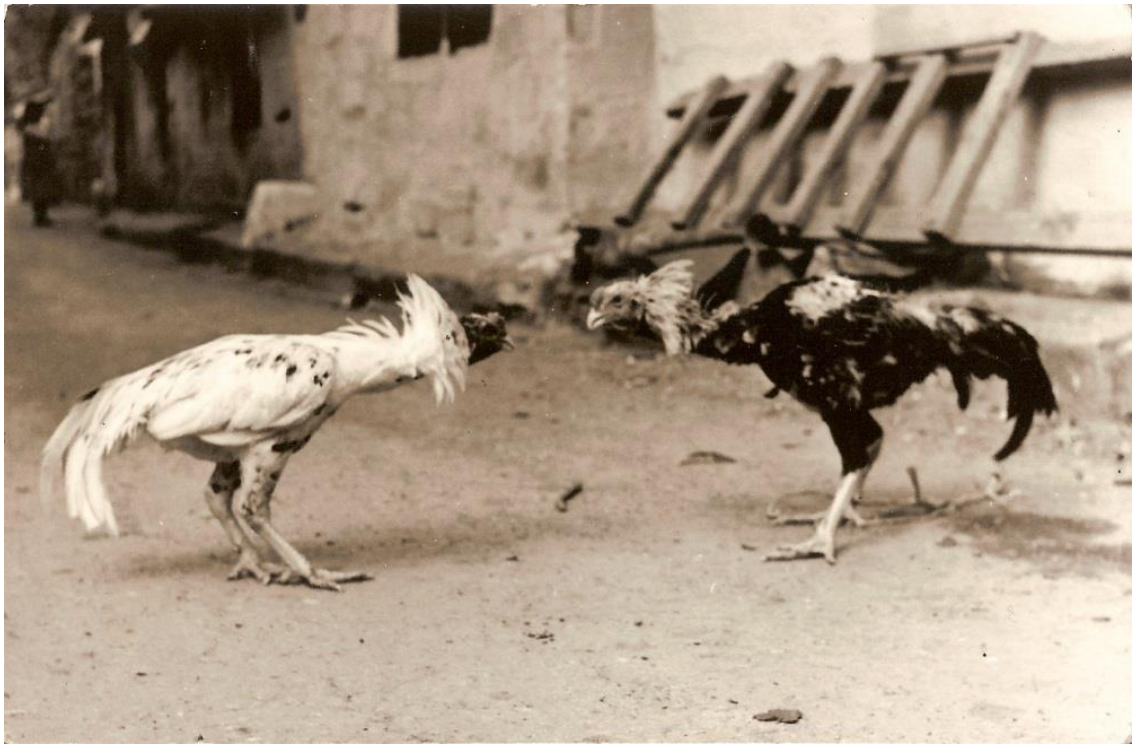

Figure 44. Snapshot of the moment 'pecking order' is about to be established between two cocks, place and date unknown. (Author's collection)

However, opposition to bear leading does not appear to have been highlighted in the annual reports of the Society. On the contrary, despite mention of bears having been treated at its facilities, the Society did not emphasize bear leading as a societal nuisance, as it did for cockfighting and camel wrestling. Two bears and a monkey were reported to have undergone treatment in the Society's hospital in İstanbul in 1935.[352] The following year, a bear with an abscess on its head was brought to their free clinic and was cured thanks to a challenging but rewarding treatment process, while another one was listed among animals "*abbattus humainement*."[353] Interestingly, in neither of these cases was there a reference to bear dancing, despite the fact these animals were, in all likelihood, performing bears. While I have not had access to all annual reports of the Society, those I was able to review only contained two exceptions to this. In the former instance of 1947, it is declared that

> As our Association has been receiving denunciations and complaints about bear dancing in the streets, our Institution has asked the Municipality to

[352] *İstanbul Hayvanları Koruma Cemiyeti 1935 Senesi Raporu*. İstanbul: L. Murkides Basımevi, 1936, 5–6.

[353] *Rapport de la Société Protectrice des Animaux Istanbul: Année 1936*. İstanbul: Imprimerie L. Mourkides, 1937, 7.

> prohibit the performance of such animals in the street in accordance with Article 20 of the Municipal Police Ordinance, and, as a result of vigorous prosecution by the police, those who have dared [to engage in this practice] have been fined numerous times.[354]

In the latter of 1953, two bear cubs were listed as having been confiscated by municipal police officers (on what legal basis, we are not told) from their handlers to be transferred to the Atatürk Forest Farm and Zoo in Ankara (est. 1925).[355]

Figure 45. Two caged bears at the Atatürk Forest Farm and Zoo in Ankara, c. 1929. (Author's collection)

In addition to the aforementioned 1935 law proposal of the İstanbul Society for the Protection of Animals, two more drafts were prepared on the initiative of the legal scholar Prof. İsmet Sungurbey and submitted to the Parliament by the Ministry of State for Human Rights and the General Directorate of Environmental Preservation in 1995. They too failed to be codified[356] and animals remained bereft of extensive legal protection until

[354] *Türkiye Hayvanları Koruma Cemiyeti 1947 Senesi Raporu*, 9.

[355] *Türkiye Hayvanları Koruma Cemiyeti 1953 Senesi Raporu*. İstanbul: Halk Basımevi, 1954, 8.

[356] Menteş Gürler and Osmanağaoğlu, "Hayvanları Koruma Kanunu," 328; Menteş Gürler, Melikoğlu and Osmanağaoğlu, "Animal Protection Efforts," 906. See Sungurbey, *Hayvan Hakları*, 102–123 for this draft.

2006. Nevertheless, societal concerns for animals in general and for performing bears in particular ostensibly predated legislative action.

6.2. Attitudes towards and Earlier Attempts against Bear Leading

Despite a significant pictorial and narrative legacy[357] depicting crowds of people of all ages enjoying the spectacle, the history of intermittent interventions and prohibitions on bear –and monkey– dancing in the Republican era can be traced back to the early date of 1925. In this respect, local or international newspaper articles and commentaries make up for the lack of availability of official documents and correspondences. The public gardens regulation of 1914, mentioned in Chapter 3, can perhaps be taken as the first intervention against the mobility of bear leaders in the context of urban control. In the wake of the recent establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the *New York Times* reported a news item of particular concern for Romani bear leaders in İstanbul:

> Riding the tide of Western civilization which is pouring into the new Turkey and sweeping away one picturesque custom after another, the Prefect of Constantinople Dr. Emine (*sic*) Bey,[358] has banished from the streets of the city all the dancing bears and performing monkeys who, with their gypsy masters, have delighted countless children in the past.

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[357] Aside from these anecdotal accounts, such literary works as Pierre Loti's [Julien Viaud] *Aziyadé: Extrait des notes et lettres d'un lieutenant de la marine anglaise, entré au service de la Turquie le 10 Mai 1876, tué sous les murs de Kars, le 27 Octobre 1877* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1895 [1879]); Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's *İnsanlar Maymun muydu?* (İstanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, n.d. [1934]); Osman Cemal Kaygılı's *Çingeneler* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1972 [1935]); Müjdat Gezen's *Gırgıriye* (İstanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 1997); and Moris Farhi's *Young Turk* (London: Telegram, 2012 [2004]), to name a few, feature bear and/or monkey leading. Although only remotely related to the practice, one might also mention Rafi Zabor's novel *The Bear Comes Home* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998 [1979]), the inspiration for which, as the author shared in an interview, was the bear leading spectacles he encountered in İstanbul (Yıldız Yağcı, "Esin Kaynağım, İstanbul'un Ayıları," *Milliyet*, August 11, 1998).

[358] This was Mehmed Emin [Erkul] (1881–1964) who served as the Mayor (*Şehremini*) of İstanbul between June 8, 1924 and October 12, 1928. For more information, see Osman Nuri Ergin, *İstanbul Şehreminleri*, ed. Ahmed Nezih Galitekin (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1996 [1927–1928]), 583–584; and Rakım Ziyaoğlu, *İstanbul Kadıları – Şehreminleri – Belediye Reisleri ve Partiler Tarihi: 1453-1971: İdarî-Siyasî* (İstanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1971), 307–320.

The report went on to specify the reasons for this decision:

> It appears that they have also bitten many of their young admirers; hence they have been ordered into exile.
>
> Another reason given for the edict is that the custom of blocking the traffic with dancing animals tended to make the country ridiculous in the eyes of visiting foreigners.[359]

Figure 46. A bear refreshing himself in a pond at the at the Atatürk Forest Farm and Zoo in Ankara, c. 1929. (Author's collection)

It must be by virtue of this first Republican prohibition that bear leading in İstanbul came to be temporarily rarely encountered, at least for a time, as noted in Chapter 4. A local newspaper article in 1930 condemned the municipality's decision and even called out to the İstanbul Society for the Protection of Animals:

> Can you deny the special attraction of a swarthy, large-boned Gypsy man with a handlebar moustache jingling his tambourine and making a huge bear belly dance?.. What is most strange is that they have banned bear leading, as if there was nothing else left to do by way of preserving animal rights! Fed daily with nuts offered by audiences in exchange for a few dance moves, and treated in Gypsy homes as members of the family, who knows how much the poor little bears have suffered because of this ban! Here is an issue that the Society for

[359] "[Constantinople] Bans Dancing Bears. Constantinople Prefect Also to Banish Trick Monkeys from Streets," *The New York Times*, September 27, 1925.

> the Protection of Animals could urgently address in this time of unemployment...[360]

Figure 47. The 'behind the scenes' of bear dancing, place and date unspecified. (Author's collection)

Later, in 1960, another columnist alluded to yet another ban, but apparently an ineffective one.[361] Indeed, despite occasional incidents of incarceration due to what was argued to be public disturbances or the lack of a permit,[362] bear leaders had been able to sustain their profession and keep public interest alive in big cities as well as small tourist towns along the southern coast. Bear dancing was mentioned in the press with increasing frequency from the 1950s onwards; this allows us to trace the public discussions that took place in the decades leading up to the abolition. Some columnists wrote in favor of bear leading:

> While the bear is a mountain animal, we have trained it, brought it into the city and the neighborhood, taught it skills with which to earn sustenance. Maybe there are those who consider this cruelty and get angry with bear leaders. That is wrong! Very wrong! (...) Riding horses, forcing them to draw carriages, making camels jump over trenches, yoking oxes, all this is not cruelty and... Making a bear dance in the street is cruelty... Is that not an incorrect judgement? So long as it is well treated, bringing a bear to town is

[360] Agâh İzzet, "Çingenelere Kıymayınız!" *Cumhuriyet*, January 27, 1930.

[361] [Refi' Cevad] Ulunay, "Ayılar ve İnsanlar," *Milliyet*, August 5, 1960.

[362] For instance, about two bear leaders without permits taken into custody for questioning in Konya, see "İki Ayı ile Sahipleri Nezarete Alındı," *Milliyet*, April 17, 1965; and about five of them temporarily detained in İstanbul for "blemishing the seaside panorama" and disturbing foreigners, see "Ayılara Gözaltı," *Milliyet*, May 25, 1990.

> a blessing. We have a heart that wishes to do good to bears too... (...) If you are to be ashamed, inhabitants of Istanbul, you should be ashamed of the dirty, filthy streets fouled not by bears but by your own doing![363]

Some have found the provisions of the 1988 circular unjustified and untimely:

> Prohibiting Turkish citizens not only from gambling but also from making bears dance is a very polite and refined deed. So refined, in fact, that we just don't get it. (...) If anyone should say "Westerners train their animals without causing them pain, whereas our bear leaders cause a great deal of pain," do not believe them. (...) Furthermore, in this "polite" country, it is fanciful to pity artistic bears, whereas massacres of dogs and cats is a daily occurrence.[364]

However, not all of them were sympathetic towards the practice, and even less so towards the bears' Gypsy handlers. While these newspaper columns may have merely reflected the opinions of particular individuals, that they were published in the national press, in papers with high circulation, must have had an impact on molding public opinion. The most trenchant criticism came from the renowned journalist Refi' Cevad Ulunay who seems to have been particularly preoccupied with the ethnicity of the bear leaders, above and beyond the suffering of the bears or the image of the country. In one such piece, he paints quite a gruesome picture:

> From far far away came the sound of a bear leader's jingleless tambourine. I waited, and soon two gypsies came down the hill, beating on tambourines and walking a small, perhaps month-old bear cub. (...) The gypsy in front roughly tugged at the rope he had tied around the cub's neck and the one behind continuously beat it. The entire neighborhood had gathered, watching this torment with impudent gazes. There were elderly, wise-looking men among them. Not one of them reproached the gypsies, saying "Hey, you butchers, what do you want from this animal?" The gypsies wanted that tiny cub to get up on its hind legs and perform tricks, but the animal knew nothing and fell down trembling whenever the stick was raised at it. (...) Is there no Municipal Police in this country? Should one not take this animal from them and transfer it to a zoo?[365]

Appealing for the intervention of authorities in addition to going well beyond the margins of hate speech, he goes on further in two other columns I will quote here at length:

> [T]wo bear leaders were staging a "performance" in front of our house, supposedly making their bears dance. Every now and then, these two executioner-faced gypsies would prod the poor, suffering animals with the thick sticks in their hands, or shake their nose rings, making them cry pathetically. Such violence had never been seen anywhere in the world. I want to rush out into the street and beat the hell out of those two gypsy

[363] B[urhan] Felek, "Ayılar ve Dayılar," *Cumhuriyet*, June 2, 1969.

[364] Teoman Erel, "Ayıların İşsizliği," *Milliyet*, June 4, 1988.

[365] [Refi' Cevad] Ulunay, "Bir Yavrunun Mihneti," *Milliyet*, July 1, 1965.

inquisitioners, but first of all I am in no state to fight, and secondly there are people in the windows and doors of all the apartment buildings, watching this lovely spectacle with relish, with pleasure, with big grins on their faces. (...) They are not ashamed! They are not embarrassed! They are making themselves accomplices to the gypsy torturers by giving them money and laughing. (...) I swear! I was ashamed of being human. Just think about it: in the year 1968, in the streets of Istanbul, the unofficial capital city of civilized Turkey, bears with noserings are being made to dance. Where is the police? Where is the Municipality? Where is the Society for the Protection of Animals? (...) Could a district officer not take along two policemen, raid gypsy neighborhoods, and save these poor, suffering animals from torture? (...) The Municipality and their police forces must put an end to this gypsy cruelty.[366]

Figure 48. Postcard in which a bear leader and his bear pose for the camera in Tophane Square, İstanbul, c. 1966. (Author's collection)

[366] [Refi' Cevad] Ulunay, "Vahşet," *Milliyet*, February 16, 1968.

> That gypsy, may his hand be severed at the root, had put a nosering on it, and a leash around his neck, and he was beating him out in the street in front of everyone in order to make it dance; if you only knew! (...) If I weren't sick, I would have rushed out into the street in my pajamas, grabbed the gypsy by his throat, and wrestle him to the ground. (...) The Municipal Police is an institution that protects the oppressed from the oppressors. The Municipality is charged with getting rid of the ugliness in the city. Gentlemen, gentlemen! What more do you need before you intervene? And what are you waiting for? (...) My most beloved police officers! How can you tolerate the fact that these gypsy butchers are torturing innocent animals in front of everyone and especially the "tourists" who come to visit İstanbul?[367]

In the context of the denouncement of bear leading, cruelty to animals was thus ethnicized with petty references to the time-honored stereotype of Gypsies as executioners.

6.3. Ethnicization of Cruelty to Animals

The global history of initiatives to protect non-human animals from the domination and oppression of humans seem to go a long way in revealing culturally constructed class, national, and ethnic differences both within and across societies. This history has, indeed, never been *only* about the welfare of animals; rather, "Animals and their bodies appear to be one site of struggle over the protection of national identity and the production [and reproduction] of cultural difference."[368] In the context of imperial Russia,

> As part of more generalized bourgeois concerns about the moral improvement of "dangerous classes" and bringing order and cleanliness to burgeoning cities, animal protection was a fashionable concern for traditional social elites as well as the emerging middle class, a civic, charitable activity claiming its own niche in the evolving "public sphere."[369]

In the English case, as early as the 1830s "the English humane movement had begun to claim kindness to animals as a native trait," while ascribing cruelty to either foreigners or lower classes, thus positioning "compassion" at the faultlines of nationality and class.

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[367] [Refi' Cevad] Ulunay, "Bunun Sonu Gelmeyecek mi?" *Milliyet*, May 10, 1968.

[368] Glen Elder, Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel, "*Le Pratique Sauvage*: Race, Place, and the Human-Animal Divide," in *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands*, eds. Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 72.

[369] Nelson, "The Body of the Beast," 97.

Furthermore, at the meeting that led to the foundation of the RSPCA in 1824, the Society's objective was openly expressed as

> not only "to prevent the exercise of cruelty towards animals, but to spread amongst the lower orders of the people (...) a degree of moral feeling which would compel them to think and act like those of a superior class." If cruelty to animals represented, in general, the triumph of humankind's baser nature, the kind of cruelty that individual humanitarians found most distressing was likely to signal what they considered the most dangerous threat to social order. In the view of the RSPCA and its supporters, that threat came from the uneducated and inadequately disciplined lower classes, and it was their duty, once the source had been identified, to counter it.[370]

In the meantime, the hunting adventures of the aristocracy, for instance, continued to enjoy immunity from any sort of interference or condemnation. As a matter of fact, "Norms of legitimate animal practice are neither consistent nor universal. Instead, codes for harmful animal practices are heavily dependent on the immediate context of an event."[371] It would be pertinent to say that these immediate contexts are almost always in the service of prioritizing, if not re-establishing, the interests of privileged classes. In this sense, the "process of animal-linked racialization works to sustain power relations between dominant groups and subordinate [communities.]"[372]

A close look at the stipulations of the Turkish Animal Protection Act and an analogy with extant and emergent forms of animal performance may offer valuable insights into the ethnicization of cruelty to animals in the context of bear leading. The Animal Protection Act No. 5199 of June 24, 2004 (in effect since May 12, 2006, following the publication of its governing regulations in the Official Gazette), presented to the Parliament with the objective of "the prevention of the victimization, whether by humans or natural circumstances, of all animals and most notably domestic animals, for their care and protection from ill treatment, and for the safeguarding of their right to live and their health,"[373] contains ambiguous, if not contradictory clauses concerning the capturing, keeping, training and exhibition of wild animals. "Principles" include "It is of the essence not to tear wild animals away from their natural habitats, not to deprive a free-roaming

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[370] Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, 127, 135.

[371] Elder, Wolch and Emel, "*Le Pratique Sauvage*," 73.

[372] Ibid., 72–73.

[373] "Geçmiş Dönem Kanun Tasarısının Metni," accessed November 24, 2012, http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tasari_teklif_gd.onerge_bilgileri?kanunlar_sira_no=22810.

animal of its freedom,"[374] while "wild animals" are defined as "Undomesticated and unacculturated [*kültüre alınmamış*] vertebrate and invertebrate animals living freely in nature."[375] However, the chapter on the "Trade and Training of Animals" indicates that the *trade* of these so-called wild animals will be specified by the governing regulations, which, incidentally, does not include any reference to them.[376]

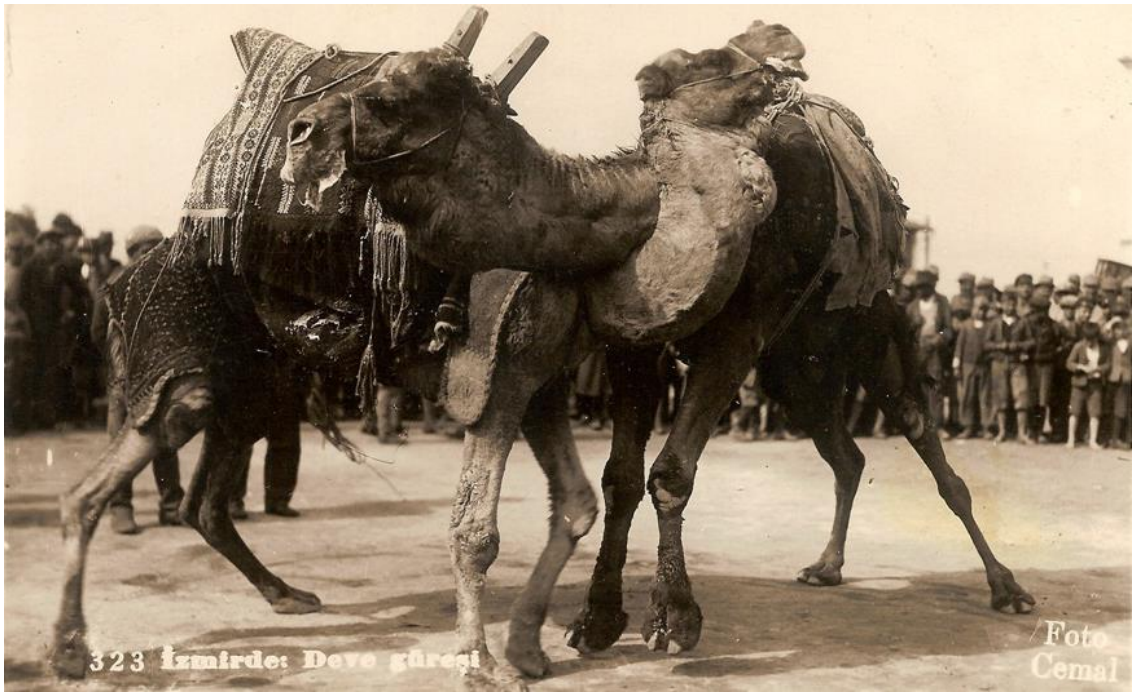

Figure 49. Camels foaming at their mouth in the heat of battle.
(İzmir, Foto Cemal. Author's collection)

Moreover, it is stipulated that "Animals must not be trained using methods that exceeds their natural capacity or force, that injure them, that cause them needless pain, or that instill bad habits in them,"[377] a statement which, had it not been for its abolition, bear dancing would possibly be a contravention. But more importantly, even though the "Training" clause of the Animal Protection Act explicitly interdicts "Making animals

[374] Article 4 ("Principles") Paragraph f of "Hayvanları Koruma Kanunu," in *Türk Hukukunda Hayvan Hakları Mevzuatı: Yasa - Yönetmelik - Genelge ve Yararlı Bilgiler*, eds. Celal Ülgen and Coşkun Ongun (İstanbul: İstanbul Barosu Yayınları, 2010), 31.

[375] Article 3 ("Definitions") Paragraph h of "Hayvanları Koruma Kanunu," 30.

[376] Ibid., 36; "Hayvanların Korunmasına Dair Uygulama Yönetmeliği," in *Türk Hukukunda Hayvan Hakları Mevzuatı: Yasa - Yönetmelik - Genelge ve Yararlı Bilgiler*, eds. Celal Ülgen and Coşkun Ongun (İstanbul: İstanbul Barosu Yayınları, 2010), 49–93.

[377] Article 10 ("Trade of Animals") of "Hayvanları Koruma Kanunu," 36.

fight with another live animal," it continues with this curious addendum: "Traditional performances having folkloric purposes and not involving violence may be staged subject to approval by the Ministry and permission from Provincial Councils for the Protection of Animals."[378] And it appears that it has been this very stipulation that has legally and socially vindicated camel, cock-, and bullfights, which may be considered analogous to bear leading in terms of spectatorship and captivity, and perhaps helped preserve their existence to this day, despite countless appeals of the Society for the Protection of Animals since the early Republican period.[379]

Figure 50. Two camels in the "knot" (*bağlama*) position during a bout, date and place unspecified. (Author's collection)

[378] Article 11 ("Training") of "Hayvanları Koruma Kanunu," 37.

[379] The İzmir branch of the Turkish Animal Rights Federation (HAYTAP, est. 2008) recently appealed to the Manisa Governorship with regards to the prevention of ongoing cockfights and called for the enforcement of the existing Animal Protection Act (Esin Önder, e-mail message to Dünya Yalnız Bizim Değil online platform, May 29, 2013). In addition, for an exemplary insight into the cockfighting circles in İstanbul in the 1980s, see Osman Balcıgil, "Beyler! 3 Kilo 100 Gram Yavrumuz Var: Üürüüüüü..." *Yeni Gündem* 21 (May 1–15 1985): 20–21.

Camel fights, still performed and cherished as part of 'national culture,' are held in the Southern Marmara, Aegean and Western Mediterranean Regions of Turkey between December and March each year, that is, during the camels' mating period.[380] Part of the revenues of the festivals are channeled to annually selected charitable causes.[381] Camel wrestling takes place between two male offsprings of a crossbreed between female dromedaries (one-humped) and male Bactrian camels (two-humped) called *tülü*. It is portrayed by its proponents as "a visual feast utilizing all sorts of physical force, tricks, and techniques based upon the aggressiveness and domination instincts of camels during the time when they are in heat (...) taking all necessary measures to prevent them from harming each other."[382]

> At the start of a contest a female in heat is introduced to spur the two males on before being hastily led away. (...) The camels use their necks and shove with their chests. They butt and lean against one another, in what they believe is a fight for sexual precedence. Often the fight is just a matter of half-hearted butting, but sometimes one will use his foreleg to trip his opponent. Their mouths have been tied before the match, otherwise they might bite off each other's scrota. But still lots of saliva is spewed. Bouts usually last ten to fifteen minutes and they frequently end in draws because of fears of injury to expensive fighting camels.[383]

[380] For a detailed presentation of the geographical distribution of camel fights in Turkey, see Vedat Çalışkan, "Geography of a Hidden Cultural Heritage: Camel Wrestles in Western Anatolia," *The Journal of International Social Research* 2, 8 (Summer 2009): 125–128.

[381] Saner Gülsöken, *Ayırın Develeri* (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2010), 125.

[382] Süleyman Yükçü, *İki Kültür İki Güreş: Deve Güreşi - Boğa Güreşi* (İzmir: Altın Nokta Basım Yayın, 2011), 21, 6.

[383] Robert Irwin, *Camel* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 185.

Figure 51. The "tether men" (*urgancı*) try to rescue a defeated former champion from under the victor in Balıkesir. (Foto Ege, A. Solel. Author's collection)

Despite these sympathetic portrayals and a favorable positioning in contrast to the bullfights of Spain (not the bull-on-bull fights of Turkey as in Figure 52), however, it has been reported that "Camels wrestle until one of them is defeated, or until its owner gives up. These rules cause many camels to be severely injured, be crippled, or even die."[384] Moreover, while the fights are predicated on the male camel's instinctive aggression towards fellow male rivals, preparation for fights involve intense exercise in the form of long-distance and paced hikes, as well as the trimming of the animal's molars so that they will not cut into the roof and floor of the mouth when tightly shut with a rope.[385] Those camels who have aged, become crippled or just exhausted their fighting capacity are consequently dispatched to slaughterhouses in Aydın where they are processed into sausages to be consumed at the next camel wrestling festival.[386]

[384] "Develerin Güreşi," *Milliyet*, January 11, 1994.

[385] Yükçü, *İki Kültür İki Güreş*, 30–36.

[386] Çalışkan, "Hidden Cultural Heritage," 132.

Figure 52. Postcard featuring a bullfight held in Artvin, date unknown.
(Authors's collection)

During the very years when the Society for the Protection of Animals was battling against camel wrestling, some journalists were championing it for its wider touristic benefits:

> A European reporter watched camels wrestling in İzmir. Qualifying it as one of the Orient's most attractive characteristics, he presented this fight to his readers as follows: (...) The reporter relates the fight of two male camels as if enchanted. We observe that seeing the camels prancing about, facing off, butting heads, tackling and shoving each other appears to have made the reporter quite exuberant. (...) Our country has many such specialties. Camels are not the only animals that are made to wrestle among us. Goat, goose, and cock fights are also organized. Spain is famous all over the world for its bullfights, which all foreigners rush to watch. How great it would be if measures were taken, particularly in regions to which we aim to attract travellers, likewise to highlight the characteristics of those regions! It would then be possible for all visiting foreigners to see what one foreign reporter happened to observe by sheer coincidence, and if this possibility were publicized everywhere, then this would constitute an attraction for travel afficionados.[387]

[387] "İzmirin Deve Güreşleri," *Servetifünun*, September 15, 1932.

In 1969, a daily reported that Americans visiting Turkey had developed a passion for camel wrestling.[388] In 1975, a Turkish enterpreneur set out to organize camel fights in Italy, France, Spain and Sweden.[389] In the first ten months of 1989, foreign dailies and journals published a total of 918 pages on the touristic aspects of Turkey, announced the Ministry of Tourism. Aside from blurbs about the country in general, specific topics of interest included camel wrestling.[390] Indeed, camel fights have enjoyed a place in local, and to a more limited extent, international tourism. Moreover, in a recent publication of the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, it was claimed that further governmental promotion would transform camel wrestling into the "savior of stagnant winter tourism."[391]

The year authorities began confiscating bears from Romani bear leaders, the Ministry of Culture issued an ordinance concerning camel fights, mainly to prohibit wagering on camels, but also to regulate the breed of fighting camels as well as stipulating that a camel shall compete only once per day and for a maximum of 10–15 minutes.[392] No other form of intervention seems to have taken place then or since. In fact, there was a wave of opposition from local animal protectionists directed at the practice of camel wrestling in March 2012, followed by concerned discussions in the camel fighting community, but the parliament did not seem to take the appeals seriously.[393]

In *The Politics of Public Memory*, Esra Özyürek observes that "The idea of tradition (...) involves a conscious remembering and careful performing of past practices."[394] Moreover, the play of consciousness in the shaping of collective memory is informed by political agendas that are far from innocent and "Historical phenomena portrayed as

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[388] "Amerikalılar Deve Güreşine Merak Sardı," *Milliyet*, June 17, 1968.

[389] "Avrupa'da 'Deve Güreşi' Düzenliyoruz..." *Milliyet*, April 13, 1975.

[390] Cengiz Kuşçuoğlu, "Turist Avı," *Milliyet*, November 20, 1989.

[391] İhsan Yakut, *Ege'nin Deve Güreşi Şenlikleri* (İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kent Kitaplığı, 2009), 161–162.

[392] "Deve Güreşi Yönetmeliği," *Milliyet*, January 30, 1993.

[393] "200 Yıllık Güreşe Karşı Direniş Timi," *Star Ege*, March 18, 2012; Zafer Şahin, "Deve Güreşi Yasaklanıyor," *Yeni Asır*, 20 March 2012; Seyfullah Ayvalı, "Deve Güreşleri Kültür Değildir," Haber Tire, accessed March 29, 2012, http://www.habertire.com/deve-guresleri-kultur-degildir-haberi.html; "Güreş Yasaklanırsa Sucuk Olurlar," *Hürriyet*, 25 March 2012; for discussions among camel wrestlers, see http://www.deveciler.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=3369&sid=6aa15602bb6801ec22b30e47da8cde90, accessed 29 March 2012.

[394] Özyürek, "Introduction," 8.

'heritage' are cultural treasures [that] reek of omissions and suppressions."[395] Today the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which notably appears to have taken part in the camel wrestling festivals as a financial patron, along with respective municipalities,[396] celebrates these fights as a 'Turkish tradition' and dates its existence back to the times of Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839).[397] Camel wrestling is thus historicized and situated in a folkloric register, yet the far more deep-rooted historicity of bear dancing is conventionally neglected, suggesting that history is, in fact, not the main concern. While embracing the practice of camel wrestling, the Ministry opted for disowning bear leading; in other words, as it abided by foregrounding what was apparently deemed an "exemplary form of national culture,"[398] the Ministry hastily discarded what must have been regarded as a dispensible "exotic anachronism,"[399] particularly one attributed to an obsessively Othered ethnicity. In this sense, between two relatively similar animal performance practices, one was legally outlawed, the other vindicated; one was publicly condemned, the other socially sanctioned or at the least excused. More importantly, while camel wrestlers are honored, if not rewarded monetarily, bear leaders were deprived of their only livelihood, cast away, and silenced.

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[395] M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1998 [1996]), 377.

[396] Gürsel Tuncer, "Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Deve Güreşi Düzenliyor," *Milliyet*, December 8, 1982; Gülsöken, *Ayırın Develeri*, 129. New resolutions have been taken to curtail the cost of camel wrestling festivals afflicted on municipalites: "Deve Güreşleri İçin Toplandılar", *Çizgi*, 14 January 2011.

[397] "Deve Güreşleri," accessed March 29, 2012, http://www.kultur.gov.tr/TR/belge/1-1834/deve-guresleri.html. The renewed content of the website does not (yet?) include this previously published text on camel wrestling, but lists it under "Folk Sports" alongside wrestling, horse racing, javelin throwing, bullfighting (see Figure 52), cockfighting, and hunting.

[398] Martin Stokes, "'Beloved Istanbul': Realism and the Transnational Imaginary in Turkish Popular Culture", in *Mass Mediations: New Approaches to Popular Culture in the Middle East and Beyond*, ed. Walter Armbrust (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2000), 227.

[399] I borrow this expression from Schick, "Dog Massacre."

Figure 53. A bear leader surrounded by children on the streets of İstanbul, c. 1960. (Author's collection)

6.4. Leading the Bear Leaders a Dance: The Intervention of Animal Protection Societies

It is curious to observe that in global comparison, Turkey –and Greece– set quite early precedents while many other countries including Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Hungary and India, where the practice had been most prevalent, followed suit only in the 2000s. Moreover, the Turkish case appears to have served as a benchmark (or rather a reference for 'what not to do') for subsequent anti-bear-leading campaigns undertaken two decades later. These later campaigns seem to be in particularly stark contrast to the Turkish model in terms of establishing at least some level of communication with bear leaders, and more importantly, compensating them to some extent in return for confiscating the bears – all to ensure the end of the practice.

Figure 54. A Romani bear leader resting with his bear in possibly Bulgaria, c. 2000. (http://aj-rromale.tumblr.com/post/10722431500/a-romani-bear-trainer-rests-under-a-tree)

The Belitsa Dancing Bear Park was established near Sofia in 2000, funded by Fondation Brigitte Bardot and the Austrian-based Vier Pfoten (Four Paws), two years prior to the outlawing of the practice of bear dancing in Bulgaria where the last three dancing bears were rescued in 2007.[400] The one-off payment made to bear leaders in exchange for each animal was around 1000–1500 Euros, and 5000 Euros only for the last three bears – nevertheless, not an amount significant enough to start a business.[401] In Serbia, one of the final fronts in continental Europe, the last dancing bear was rescued in

[400] Fondation Brigitte Bardot, "Bulgaria," accessed November 18, 2011, http://www.fondationbrigittebardot.fr/site/fbb_a.php?Id=146.

[401] Witold Szabłowski, personal communication, November 15, 2013.

2009 and transferred to the Belitsa Park.[402] The same year, a young Romani was spotted with his bear in Korçë, Albania where apparently the practice is not yet prohibited.[403]

Figure 55. A young Romani waiting for tourists to take pictures with his bear in Korçë, Albania, 2009. (http://opowiadamyoswiecie.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264:niedwiedzia-przygoda&catid=37:bugaria&Itemid=7)

While the abolition of the practice in post-socialist Eastern European countries gives the impression of being related to processes of accession to the European Union, the last dancing bear of India, which currently accommodates four that each house hundreds of bears, was freed in December 2009.[404] Even though "till the early 1990s the

[402] Four Paws UK, "FOUR PAWS Rescues the Last Dancing Bears of Serbia," accessed December 31, 2012, http://www.four-paws.org.uk/projects/bears/belitsa-sanctuary/four-paws-rescues-the-last-dancing-bears-of-serbia/.

[403] "Niedźwiedzia Przygoda," accessed November 29, 2012, http://opowiadamyoswiecie.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264:niedwiedzia-przygoda&catid=37:bugaria&Itemid=7. I became aware of this website thanks to Witold Szabłowski.

[404] Karen Nugent, "Last of 600 Dancing Bears Given Sanctuary," *Telegram*, December 22, 2009. However, the struggle of animal protection organizations continue in Nepal, where as recent as November 2013 there was a "sighting of a small group of men near the India-Nepal border who were leading a bedraggled bear by a rope through his nose."

government encouraged animal performers in the tourist industry, employing snake charmers to perform for foreign tourists in government run hotels and even taking a bear leader with his bear to the government sponsored and organised India Festival held in Paris,"[405] in the late 1990s bear dancing would begin to attract the attention and intervention of international animal protection societies. The Indian Wildlife Protection Act ratified in 1972 had already established the prohibition of hunting and capturing bears and monkeys,[406] but the law was not enforced until 1993 when the government abruptly ceased to issue licenses to existing animal performers[407].

Figure 56. WSPA's anti-bear dancing campaign ad for India, 2000s.

The bear rescue program of India picked up in the early 2000s, following the introduction of a ban on the performance and exhibition of five animal species including

(International Animal Rescue, e-mail bulletin, November 22, 2013.) Three such bears were later announced to have been confiscated and "With the help of the local police and the Forestry Department the bears' captors were arrested." (International Animal Rescue, e-mail bulletin, December 16, 2013.)

[405] Aparna Rao, "Vanishing Cultures and Struggles for Survival: The Crisis in Peripatetic Lifestyles," *Bulletin of the International Committee on Urgent Anthropological and Ethnological Research* 41 (2001–2002): 72.

[406] Ibid., 73.

[407] Geeta Seshamani and Kartick Satyanarayan, *The Dancing Bears of India*, WSPA, August 1997, accessed January 7, 2012, http://www.apasfa.org/peti/dancing_bears.pdf.

bears and monkeys.[408] At this time, it was estimated that there were more than 1200 dancing bears across the country.[409] The "rehabilitation" of Kalandars, bear leaders who make up one of the "Other Backward Classes" categorized by the Indian government,[410] was reportedly given precedence to, and involved both providing Kalandars "seed money to begin another business" amounting to roughly 50,000 Rupees and sponsoring the education of their children: "By giving this man an alternative income and saving the bear from an ongoing life of misery and pain makes it a win-win situation for both bear and man," explained Mary Hutton of the Free the Bears Fund, the Australian partner among several international non-profit collaborators.[411]

In the Turkish case (preceded by the similar 1991 experience of Greece where the world's first bear sanctuary was established in 1993),[412] however, bear leaders were given no compensation, despite multiple assurances to the contrary from authorities.[413] As soon as the bears were captured, the Ministry of Tourism swallowed their words and declared "Bear leading is an illegal practice. If we give them money, we will have rewarded a criminal act, and that would not be right at all."[414] As illustrated above, the Municipality of İstanbul and the Ministry of Tourism had already attempted to rid the squares and streets of the country from bear exhibition spectacles. Moreover, Hüseyin Amca remembers having been approached in the İstanbul neighborhood of Şişli in the late 1980s, most likely by members of the THDK, and asked about the nourishment of his bear. As a response he had told them that if he were not to feed the bear properly, the animal would attack him, and reiterated the well-known Turkish proverb "A hungry bear

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[408] Brij Kishor Gupta and Bipul Chakraborty, "The Role of Zoos in the Rehabilitation of Animals in the Circus," *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 8, 4 (2005): 285.

[409] Wildlife SOS, "Dancing Bears," accessed July 8, 2011, http://www.wildlifesos.org/rescue/bears/dancing-bears.

[410] Seshamani and Satyanarayan, *Dancing Bears of India*.

[411] Claudette Vaughan, "Abolishing the Practice of Dancing Bears in India: Maneka Gandhi and Mary Hutton," accessed March 31, 2012, http://www.abolitionist-online.com/interview-issue02_dancing-bears_m.gandhi-m.hutton.shtml.

[412] World Society for the Protection of Animals, "Dancing Bears in Greece," accessed February 25, 2011, http://wspa.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id278.

[413] Melih Aşık, "Ayılar Doğaya," *Milliyet*, April 24, 1992; Yalçın Pekşen, "Ayılara Özgürlük..." *Hürriyet*, May 11, 1992; "Ayılara Kredi Bulundu," *Cumhuriyet*, July 9, 1992.

[414] Alpman, *Çingeneler*, 35.

does not dance" (*Aç ayı oynamaz*). Yet the definitive initiative came from the London-based international non-profit animal welfare organization World Society for the Protection of Animals (est. 1981) that approached the Turkish government in 1992.[415]

In the summer of 1992, WSPA representatives visited İstanbul to hold meetings with authorities. During their stay, they also visited the encampments of bear leaders in Kâğıthane, guided by the journalist Nazım Alpman. He would speculate that, having observed that "the living conditions of the Gypsies were not much better than those of the bears," they had perhaps become somewhat hesitant about proceeding.[416] Still, the campaign carried on. As part of a project called LIBEARTY, the WSPA collaborated with the Ministries of Tourism and Forestry as well as the member society THDK, and signed an engagement letter for the capture of what was then, with much exaggeration, estimated to be 300 dancing bears.[417] However, the whole process was characterized by utter confusion and uncertainty with respect to the aftermath of the confiscation: initial ideas varied between the immediate release of the bears into the wild and their confinement in zoos, later between custom-built facilities in Bursa Uludağ (in Bursa province), İstanbul or İzmir, accompanied by a temporary intention of encouraging tourists to go on a photo-safari – even the funding issue was yet to be clarified.[418] At least, the authorities could no longer even consider exterminating the bears, like they did back in 1988.[419] The long-awaited sanctuary finally opened its doors in August 12, 1995, in the Karacabey district of Bursa, on a 4-hectare land (later expanded to 20, and planned to be further enlarged to 30), where the majority of the ursine population of about sixty is now composed of bears wounded by hunters or injured by car accidents and otherwise

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[415] "Turistik Kocaoğlanlar Rapor Oldu: 'Türkiye'de Ayılara da İşkence Var'," *Milliyet*, February 26, 1992; "Japonya, Türkiye ve Yunanistan Uyarıldı: 'Ayılarınıza İyi Davranın!'," *Hürriyet*, February 26, 1992.

[416] Alpman, *Çingeneler*, 29.

[417] "Ayılara Kredi Bulundu."

[418] Aşık, "Ayılar Doğaya"; "Ayılara 'Özgürlük Kredisi' Geliyor," *Milliyet*, May 8, 1992; "Ayılara Kredi Bulundu;" Nazım Alpman, "Dans Eden Ayılara Özgürlük!" *Milliyet*, July 9, 1992; "Ayılar Uludağ'a," *Milliyet*, July 19, 1992; Erdoğan Paçin, "'Ayılara, İstanbul veya İzmir'de Yer Ayırın'," *Hürriyet*, September 22, 1992; "Ayılar Uludağ'a," *Milliyet*, October 3, 1992; Güneş Gürson, "Uludağ'da Ayılar İçin Huzurevi," *Cumhuriyet*, January 19, 1993; "Aman Ayılar Üşümesin!.." *Hürriyet*, May 30, 1993; "'Kocaoğlan' İçin 4,5 Milyar," *Milliyet*, September 1, 1993; Akpınar, "Ayılar Uludağ'da Toplanıyor."

[419] Aşık, "24 Ayı Nasıl Kurtuldu?"

unable to sustain their lives in the wild. To this day, the park is monthly funded by the German-based non-profit organization Pro Animale.[420]

However, in the period of more than a year leading up to the establishment of the sanctuary, the confiscated bears were kept under lock and key in the facilities of the Veterinary School of Uludağ University in Bursa. Alpman would quote a bear leader saying: "They said they would give our bears freedom, and then they stuck them in cages. Yet, they used to stroll all around İstanbul with us."[421] Furthermore, a report on the abysmal condition of the bears relayed that the bears were depressed, that one had been strangled by his chain, and another had fled out of his cage.[422] Following the confiscation, three of these bears (Köroğlu, Bora and Fiona, all blind) were transported to the Oewehands Zoo in the Netherlands to be studied and monitored, where, as of 2000, they still resided.[423] The authors of an article analyzing the eye lesions of one of these bears (Fiona?) reasoned:

> [T]he practice of using a "correction" stick to keep the bear on its hind limbs during "dancing" and to prevent it from attacking its trainer, the amount of scar-tissue, the cataracts and the retinal degeneration found, and the lack of signs of penetrating wounds, all point to post-traumatic, blunt lesions induced by deliberate beating with the stick on the eyes of the dancing bears by its "trainer." [424]

To be sure, bear dancing was indeed a *cruel* practice when seen through the lense of our modern understanding of animal suffering and the ever-advancing concept of animal rights. The bears' sensitive snouts were pierced and continuously tugged. The training process involved corporal and not-so-gentle persuasion in the form of beating, even if apparently not having them stand on red hot iron plates. Moreover, otherwise *wild* animals, bears were enchained and held captive for life in undeniable contradiction to their natural habitat, ethology, alimentation, procreation and winter dormancy.

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[420] "Ayılara Özgürlük," *Milliyet*, August 13, 1995; Özen, *Bak Şu Ayının Yaptığına*, 36; Harun Kaymaz and Haluk Yüksel, "Ovakorusu Barınağı'nın Alanı Genişletiliyor," March 15, 2013, accessed April 12, 2013, http://www.haberler.com/ovakorusu-ayi-barinagi-nin-alani-genisletiliyor-4428559-haberi/.

[421] [Nazım Alpman], "Uluslararası Doğal Hayatı Koruma Derneği 'Ayılardan Sorumlu' Başkanı Dr. Servheen ve 'Libearty' Türkiye Direktörü Venables: 'Türkiye Ayı Cenneti'," *Milliyet*, June 5, 1994.

[422] "Ayılar Zorda," *Milliyet*, July 25, 1994.

[423] Koene, "Blind Brown Bears"; "Dansçı Ayılar Hollanda'da," *Milliyet*, April 17, 2000.

[424] F.C. Stades, G.M. Dorrestein, M.H. Boevé and R.R.O.M. van de Sandt, "Eye Lesions in Turkish Dancing Bears," *The Veterinary Quarterly* 17, 1 (Apr. 1995): 46.

Figure 57. A bear leader sleeping side by side with his bear cub on the pavement, place and date unspecified. (Author's collection)

On the other hand, aside from the fact that it incorporated the infliction of pain, the training of bears was, using Jane Desmond's qualification for the training of marine animals, "a culturalization of the natural" compared to, for instance, zoos: "Whereas zoos present either a photographic, iconic sense of animals (displayed in cages) or a panoramic view of animals in a built environment, only performances display intense interaction between the animals and their environments, other animals and humans."[425] From the bear leaders' point of view, within the mimetic performance that was bear dancing, the relationship between the bear and the handler seemed to be defined not by an absolute domination, but rather by a liaison among peers, or workmates, with the bear leader featuring as *primus inter pares* and things getting tense from time to time. Mehmet, for example, would reminisce "The males would be real tough guys. [My bear] would attack me just as much as I beat him."[426] He still has deep scars on his legs from decades-old bites and scratches. Otherwise distressed by health and financial troubles and displaying

[425] Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 200, 151.

[426] "Erkekler kabadayı oluyordu. Ben ne kadar dövüyorsam onu, o kadar saldırırdı bana."

a degree of reluctance to hark back to the "old times," Murat's eyes would light up when talking about how he fed one of his bear cubs with a nursing bottle. Moreover, it is notable that apparently only the first circular of 1988 included a reference to the pain and suffering of the animals, explicitly calling the practice "genuine torture."[427]

Therefore, I contend that the Turkish government's contextualization of the anti-bear leading campaign as a 'civilizing project,' and its intricate relation to national identity in the face of cultural difference assumed a leading role in the process. For instance, a comment posted on February 12, 2009 to a blog entry about the end of bear dancing in Serbia read:

> The article forgets to mention that the bears were mistreated in Serbia by the Roma (Gypsies), not by the Serbian Government or ordinary Serbs. Makes you wonder about the West and Western NGO's constantly championing the "human rights" causes of Roma in Eastern Europe. Seems like the problem is not with the governments of Serbia, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, etc., but rather with the Roma population who continually shun attempts to civilize them.[428]

In a similar vein, in response to the question "Are you familiar with the 'historical attachments' between the Gypsies and bears?" the Director for Turkey of the WSPA's LIBEARTY Project, Andrew Venables, declared in a 1994 interview, perhaps inadvertently giving voice to the government's view: "Look, this is part of their culture. But tourists think that bear leading is peculiar to Turks. Yet there is no such thing in the culture of Turks. This is peculiar to the Gypsies."[429]

In 1994, Australian school teacher and psychologist Elizabeth Stanley published a children's book entitled *The Deliverance of Dancing Bears*, accompanied by anachronistic and Orientalist depictions of what appears to be a rural Turkish town. Having witnessed a bear dancing spectacle in Athens in 1979 for the first time, Stanley put pen to paper to tell about the plight of these animals:

> My research for the illustrations led me to focus on Turkey as the setting for the story. For in this country, the practice of dancing, captive bears, though unlawful, was still thriving. There was growing concern for the poor image it established amongst the increasing numbers of tourists, and for the serious depletion of the bear population in Turkey's mountainous regions, where the animals were relentlessly hunted.

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[427] İşiten, "'Ayı' Genelgesi."

[428] Accessed January 19, 2011, http://blogs.mirror.co.uk/science/2009/02/last-three-dancing-bears-rescu-html.

[429] [Alpman], "'Türkiye Ayı Cenneti'."

She was in for a happy surprise on her visit to İstanbul in October 1993, only a day after the bears at the Maçka Gardens were seized. Yet the setting of her story remained Turkey, and more importantly, her bear leader character was an evil man by the name Halûk who mistreated his bear:

> Halûk was full of anger and hatred, and he terrified the bear. She was so afraid of his wrath and cruelty that she would have lashed out at him in defense, had he not blunted his claws and sawn off her powerful teeth. Instead, she succumbed fearfully to the heavy chain latched to her ringed nose, and to the sting of the rod she felt across her back, as she was wrenched out of the refuge of her cage.

The bear-leading man depicted as full of "wrath and cruelty" was, needless to say, a "gypsy."[430]

More remarkably, Savaş Karakaş, the director and producer of the 2009 documentary *Kocaoğlan'ı Kurtarmak* (Saving Big Boy), which celebrates the end of bear dancing in Turkey as well as drawing attention to the extant suffering of bears and featuring Elizabeth Stanley reading passages from *The Deliverance of Dancing Bears*, admits that, in comparison with the 'dolphin parks' around Turkey,

> It was easier in the case of bears. After all, they were owned by Romani citizens. They are poorer people. It is easy to contend with them. They were told "You will not do this" and their bears were taken from them.[431]

Figure 58. The logo of the İstanbul Dolphinarium (est. 2008), the marine mammal show center that was the subject of the petition mentioned in the Introduction.

[430] Elizabeth Stanley, *The Deliverance of Dancing Bears* (La Jolla, California: Kane/Miller Book Publishers, 2003 [1994]), unpaginated.

[431] Neslihan Tunç, "Ayıların ve Yunusların Bilinmeyen Dramı," *Sabah*, January 16, 2010.

Indeed, today's flourishing marine mammal show centers, these emergent forms and venues of animal performance, are intricately circumsribed by capitalist and political relations, which in turn make them virtually impenetrable for animal rights groups, and can only be partially tackled through 'a taste of their own medicine': through the same capitalist networks that support their sales and promotion, as was the case in the opposition campaign mentioned at the beginning of this thesis.

These statements and the course of the confiscation strongly suggest that, on the part of the Turkish government, the anti-bear dancing campaign owed more to the ethnicity of the bears' handlers and an aspiration to retouch the country's touristic image than to a well-informed concern for the plight of the animals. This inference is further strengthened when combined with the fact that the rescued bears remained locked up in cages until the foreign-funded and -maintained bear sanctuary was completed, and that, in a global sense and compared to other human practices involving animals, the abolition of bear dancing constitutes one of the rare *ultimate* victories in the history of animal rights.[432] In short, bears seem to have not constituted a priority in a campaign designed to rescue them, even though that was the lasting impression of the bear leaders. Given their already marginalized, ethnically discriminated and socioeconomically disadvantaged status, bear-leading Roma were particularly vulnerable to intervention by authorities, and were easy targets for campaigns mounted by modern-day animal liberation organizations which, for all their good intentions, failed to address the human costs of the abolition. In this sense, a liberating movement played into the hands of cultural hegemony, both revealing and reproducing latent prejudices against the Roma, and thus further marginalizing them.

[432] Cf. not only residual and emergent forms of animal performance practices, but also such animal enclosures as zoos and aquariums, and especially multi-million industries of foodstuff and clothing/apparel/footwear production, not to mention such sectors as medicine, pharmaceutics, and even military that continue to rely heavily on animal experimentation.

7.

THE IMPACT OF VISIONS OF URBANISM AND TOURISM ON THE ABOLITION OF BEAR DANCING

> The spectacle is not a collection of images;
> rather, it is a social relationship between people
> that is mediated by images.
> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*

Inhabiting primarily the shrinking woodlands of the North and East Anatolian Regions of Turkey, brown bears are by no means strangers to the countryfolk of these areas. Despite the fact that their name is abused as a curse word in colloquial Turkish, the country's folklore is replete with 'bear tales' in which the animal features as a relative, a helping and playful friend, or a "feared rival of man: intelligent, teasing, certain of its tastes, a captor of virgins and a good husband on occasion."[433]

Human-bear encounters have elicited rare instances of bears kept as pets as well. An interesting case in point appears in the notes of René du Parquet (1833–1876), a Frenchman who spent the years 1863–1864 in İstanbul employed by the Imperial Ottoman Bank. During this short period, du Parquet made the acquaintance of the Algerian Emir Abdelkader (1808–1883) and visited his mansion near Hagia Sophia. The

[433] Gökalp, "L'ours Anatolien," 216; Boratav, "Ours en Anatolie." I owe many thanks to Maria Vasenkari for taking the trouble to send me the latter source, and to Ingvar Svanberg for informing me of the former. Indeed, legends of bears abducting women, taking them to their caves and courting them, with all the transgressive connotations of bestiality, seem to have greatly preoccupied the rural imaginary. Now and then these legendary instances have even made it into the daily press. See, for instance, "Dağa Kız Kaçıran Ayı Vuruldu," *Milliyet*, December 30, 1952; "Ayıdan Ders," *Milliyet*, June 18, 1953; "İki Ayı, Kocasını Dövüp Bir Kadını Dağa Kaçırdı," *Milliyet*, November 7, 1963; and "Babaannemi de Kaçırmışlardı," *Milliyet*, May 25, 2001.

Emir owned a bear whom he had purchased in İzmit and later took along with him to Paris. Du Parquet relates his visit in so many disparaging words:

> When we entered the courtyard, he briefly petted a young bear chained to the door of the barn; and he gestured at me to come and do the same. These two semi-wild creatures seemed to understand each other, to recall "their freedom in the mountains," and even to miss it![434]

Recent decades have also witnessed failed attempts at making pets out of bears in the northeastern parts of Turkey, as Hüseyin Avni Özen recounts;[435] yet, antagonistic encounters seem to dominate the relationship between the two species.

Figure 59. Reproduction as a tourist souvenir of a nineteenth-century Slovenian beehive painting, hand-painted on wood. (Author's collection)

As a result of gradual deforestation leading to a competition over territory and food sources, bear sightings around human settlements are on the rise.[436] Even though their species is considered to be "more respected and positively perceived than other predators in Turkey,"[437] in the confrontations between bears and humans, the double-edged sword is distinctly sharper on the bears' side. Besides ending up in an incomparably higher level

[434] René du Parquet, *İstanbul'da Bir Yıl*, trans. Sertaç Canbolat (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2008), 46.

[435] Özen, *Bak Şu Ayının Yaptığına*.

[436] One very recent incident took place in January 2014 in Bursa: Seyfettin Aras, "Bursa'da Şehir Merkezine Ayı İndi," *Radikal*, January 3, 2014. See the footage of the clumsy chase at http://webtv.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/6258/yavru-ayi-inegolu-birbirine-katti.aspx.

[437] Hüseyin Ambarlı and C. Can Bilgin, "Human-Brown Bear Conflicts in Artvin, Northeastern Turkey: Encounters, Damage, and Attitudes," *Ursus* 19, 2 (2008): 146.

of fatality for the bears, these deadly encounters appear to be more frequently the outcome of human harassment rather than of unprovoked bear attacks.[438] The award-winning 2010 documentary *Ayı ve İnsan: Bitmeyen Çatışma* (Bear and Man: The Endless Conflict), produced and directed by Ece Soydam, reports that more than four hundred complaints involving bears preying upon crops, apiaries, and livestock have been documented between 2000 and 2009. On the grounds of such public grievances and rare isolated incidents of human fatality, local administrations and the Central Hunting Commission on occasion tolerates or officially permits and encourages the – otherwise outlawed and subject to fine– hunting of bears whose numbers across the country are believed only to be around three to five thousand.[439]

For the urban populace, on the other hand, bear dancing provided the opportunity for an encounter and interaction that would otherwise have been impossible. Wildlife viewing[440] of sorts, coupled with entertainment, it is possible to infer that this practice elicited a combination of pride, fascination, superority, and amusement extracted from gazing upon the clumsy gestures forced out of the species-bending nonhuman. Moreover, a 1984 article about the Russian Bear Comedies would suggest that "part of their power as spectacle was the uncertainty about whether this wild forest creature would in fact assert its wildness and charge their trainer."[441] This is indeed a large part of the thrill that accompanies lion and tiger shows in circuses.

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[438] Ibid., 149.

[439] See, for example, Hülya Aydoğan, "Oy Avcılarının Hedefi Ayılar," *Milliyet*, February 11, 1995; Hülya Aydoğan, "Ayılara Ölüm Emri," *Milliyet*, August 22, 1996; Raif Ertem, "Avcı Değil Onlar," *Cumhuriyet*, July 10, 1997; "Ayıları Vurmaya Başladılar," Bianet, December 13, 2007, accessed August 13, 2012, http://www.bianet.org/bianet/hayvan-haklari/103247-ayilari-vurmaya-basladilar; Salih Tekin, "Katil Ayı Şimdilik Paçayı Kurtardı," *Radikal*, September 17, 2011. Interestingly, Andrew Venables, the Turkey Director of Libearty, declared in 1994 that "If bear hunting can be organized in controlled fashion and properly overseen, then limited bear hunting may be acceptable. However, the money gained from such hunting should be used to perpetuate the survival of the species." ("Türkiye Ayı Cenneti.")

[440] For a recent discussion of wildlife viewing, see John Knight, "Making Wildlife Viewable: Habituation and Attraction," *Society and Animals* 17 (2009): 167–184.

[441] Costlow, "For the Bear to Come," 91.

Figure 60. Bear leader surrounded by the locals of İstanbul, Baltalimanı, 1929. (Author's collection)

7.1. The Transformation of Urban Public Space

Towards the 1990s, the practice of bear dancing seems to have exhausted its novelty in the eyes of locals. It was also a time that witnessed an incremental growth in the private sector under the stewardship of the neoliberal Prime Minister Turgut Özal, and the increasing dissemination of global aspirations and patterns of consumption: the shift was from "spontaneous public enjoyment and congregation in streets and squares" with equal access to the spectacle, such as bear dancing, towards "using spaces especially designed for the entertainment of the masses,"[442] with more limited and class-discriminating access usually enforced through ticketing and pricing, such as stadiums, concert and exhibition halls, or in the realm of animal performance, marine mammal show centers. This shift from residual to emergent forms and to "spaces of controlled spectacle" appears to have,

[442] Teresa P.R. Caldeira, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2000), 199.

in the last instance, helped reshape the 'public taste' for entertainment and "narrow the list of people eligible to form 'the public.'"[443]

Social differentiation is congruent with spatial structures and practices: thus, as David Sibley has argued, marginalization "is associated not only with characterisations of the group but also with images of particular places, the landscapes of exclusion which express the marginal status of the outsider group."[444] Just as marginalized groups are associated with and confined to marginal –and often criminalized– spaces, privileged groups, too, have their own spaces, turning urban space into an arena where negotiations of belonging and entitlement transpire. Furthermore, spatial segregation is not only a result of social differentiation, but also productive of it. Hence, urban public space constitutes both the medium and the expression of social inequalities: "The look and feel of cities reflect decisions about what – and who – should be visible and what should not, on concepts of order and disorder, and on uses of aesthetic power."[445]

It follows, therefore, that urban public space is the perpetual locus of confrontation and contestation among differentially empowered social groups. Not only is the differentiation of space continuously policed in order to maintain boundaries and reproduce social differences, but, moreover, the space of the privileged expands at the expense of marginal spaces as marginal groups are pushed further and further away from the center, out of sight. Although the city is supposedly the *œuvre* in the making of which all citizens participate in the Lefebvrian sense,[446] in actual fact its development and reconfiguration obey the class interests of the dominant forces of society.

Since the scope of this study does not allow for delving deeper into the vast literature on urban studies in general and the sociopolitics of spatial segregation and urban transformation in particular,[447] I will confine myself to a few remarks on the position of

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[443] Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2003), 141.

[444] David Sibley, "Outsiders in Society and Space," in *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*, eds. Kay Anderson and Fay Gale (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire; [New York]: Halsted Press, 1992), 107.

[445] Sharon Zukin, "Whose Culture? Whose City?" in *The Urban Sociology Reader*, eds. Jan Lin and Christopher Mele (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 283.

[446] Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. and eds. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford, UK and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000 [1996]).

[447] Some recent works of note particular to the Turkish context include, in the chronological order of their publication, Çağlar Keyder, ed., *Istanbul: Between the Global*

the Roma within İstanbul's urban renewal. Indeed, decades after the comprehensive redevelopment of the city in the 1950s,[448] the mid-1980s began to witness the undertaking of major urban projects entailing the demolition of old neighborhoods and the profit-driven authorization of planning and construction permits for tourism zoning.[449] More significantly, these plans increasingly overlapped with efforts to scrutinize, control and exclude certain categories of individuals. In the 2000s, the transformation of the massive construction site that is now İstanbul culminated in more consolidated and destructive urban renewal projects, resulting, most demonstrably, in the demolition of the Sulukule

and the Local (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999); Ayfer Bartu, "Rethinking Heritage Politics in a Global Context: A View from Istanbul," in *Hybrid Urbanism: On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment*, ed. Nezar Alsayyad (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2001), 131–155; Çağlar Keyder, "Transformations in Urban Structure and the Environment in İstanbul," in *Environmentalism in Turkey: Between Democracy and Development*, eds. Fikret Adaman and Murat Arsel (Hants, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 201–215; Hatice Kurtuluş, ed., *İstanbul'da Kentsel Ayrışma: Mekânsal Dönüşümde Farklı Boyutlar* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2005); Çağlar Keyder, "Globalization and Social Exclusion in Istanbul," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, 1 (Mar. 2005): 124–134; David Behar and Tolga İslam, eds., *İstanbul'da "Soylulaştırma:" Eski Kentin Yeni Sahipleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006); Ayfer Bartu Candan and Biray Kolluoğlu, "Emerging Spaces of Neoliberalism: A Gated Town and a Public Housing Project in İstanbul," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 39 (2008): 5–46; Özlem Ünsal and Tuna Kuyucu, "Challenging the Neoliberal Urban Regime: Regeneration and Resistance in Başıbüyük and Tarlabaşı," in *Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe?*, eds. Deniz Göktürk, Levent Soysal and İpek Türeli (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 51–70; Çağlar Keyder, "Capital City Resurgent: İstanbul since the 1980s," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 43 (2010): 177–186; Zeynep Gönen and Deniz Yonucu, "Legitimizing Violence and Segregation: Neoliberal Discourses on Crime and the Criminalization of Urban Poor Populations in Turkey," in *Lumpencity: Discourses of Marginality*, eds. Alan Bourke, Tia Dafnos and Markus Kip (Ottawa: Red Quill Books, 2011), 75–103; Ela Ataç, "'Büyük Dönüşüm' Öncesi Türkiye Kentlerini Okumak, Anlamak: Sosyo-Ekonomik Statüye Bağlı Mekânsal Ayrışma Üzerinden Bir Değerlendirme," *Toplum ve Bilim* 126 (2013): 35–63; Seda Kalem Berk and Pınar Uyan Semerci, eds., *Kentsel Dönüşüm ve İnsan Hakları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2013); Tanıl Bora, ed., *Milyonluk Manzara: Kentsel Dönüşümün Resimleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013); Ayşe Çavdar and Pelin Tan, eds., *İstanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali* (İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 2013).

[448] Murat Gül, *The Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation and Modernisation of a City* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), especially ch. 6.

[449] Oktay Ekinci, *İstanbul'u Sarsan 10 Yıl (1983–1993)* (İstanbul: Anahtar Kitaplar, 1994).

quarter and the effective banishment of the 850 Romani families established there.[450] However, Roma evictions were not limited to the 2000s, nor to Sulukule.[451]

My bear-leading interlocutors were the victims of such urban projects as well. In the 1980s, most of them were living in houses they had built themselves in the neighborhood of Edirnekapı (the Byzantine Gate of Charisius) within the city walls, and others in tents in the district of Kâğıthane. At the beginning of the 90s, however, the houses in Edirnekapı were demolished by order of the Metropolitan Municipality. Although the bear leaders were compensated for their loss, albeit at only salvage value, the new location earmarked for them in Haramidere (in the far western suburbs of İstanbul, then an unpopulated vacant area) proved too remote for them to commute to and from major touristic areas where they earned their living. Ultimately, the bear leaders joined those dwelling in the Roma encampment in Kâğıthane.

> The transformations in the various spaces in the city all seem to lead to more rigid and policed boundaries, and consequently less indeterminacy and fewer spaces for contact between people from different backgrounds. These experiences engender fear and intolerance rather than expectation and excitement.[452]

In such an urban atmosphere, and as a result of the decline in local interest, the bear leaders increasingly catered to tourists concentrating in urban environments, from the mid-1980s onwards, most significantly in İstanbul. As the following pages will attempt to demonstrate, it was precisely this equal access character, high visibility, and newly discovered tourist-oriented quality of the practice that invited the scrutiny of concerned and ethnically prejudiced authorities and locals alike. Admittedly, due to the rise of the capitalist mode of production, the last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a sharp decline in, or even the complete disappearance of, residual occupations, many of which had provided the Roma with their livelihood: sieve-making (*elekçilik*), basket-weaving (*sepetçilik*), and tinsmithing (*kalaycılık*) among others.[453] However, the demise of bear

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[450] Danielle J. van Dobben, Gonca Tohumcu and Funda Oral, "Identity and Cultural Heritage in a Dislocated Romani Community in Istanbul, Turkey" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society, İstanbul, September 19–22, 2012). Also see Aslı Kıyak İngin and Tolga İslam, "Bir Roman Mahallesinin Yeniden Tanzim Edilmesi," in *İstanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali*, 167–175.

[451] See "Unequal Citizenship," especially 65–82.

[452] Caldeira, *City of Walls*, 319–320.

[453] For a demonstration of tinsmithing as kept alive by a small number of *kalaycı*s, see Medya Roman, "Kalaycı Romanlar Mesleklerini Yaşatıyor," December 29, 2013,

dancing stands closer to the demolition of old quarters associated with criminalized communities (or rather, the spatialized ethnicization of criminal activities), in the sense that it was not the natural outcome of an evolutionary process, but the result of violent intervention. In this process, the Ministry of Tourism and its aspirations of fashioning a modern and refined appearance for foreign tourists have played an essential role.

7.2. The Ethnopolitics of Tourism

As a frame of reference "within which most transformations during the last quarter of century can be better understood," globalization, as Çağlar Keyder succinctly puts it, "is received, and negotiated with in evolving local accommodations. It introduces new constraints and new opportunities; and, it is within this newly structured space that local (national and municipal) initiatives gain meaning."[454] Infused with discourses accentuating its geopolitical and imagined role in connecting East with West in the Republic's arduous path towards Westernization, globalizing İstanbul has historically been the center complicating the country's modernization as well as constituting its locus and focus. Indeed,

> Istanbul was condemned as an unpromising site for national regeneration; the labyrinthine complexity of the streets, its "mixed" population and schizophrenic placelessness ("between" Europe and Asia) serving as a telling foil for the nation builders' vision of a modern society. The city, and what it looks like, has always been a crucial issue for Turkey's modernizing elites.[455]

In this vision, Martin Stokes goes on to say, "The ordering principle is (...) *insistently visual*."[456] Turkey's tourism policies, too, seem to have been informed and shaped by concerns for visuality and visibility, while the treatment of animals has been deployed as little more than a measure of development assumed to leave its imprint on the country's image in the eyes of foreign visitors.

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accessed December 29, 2013, http://medyaroman.blogspot.com/2013/12/kalayc-romanlar-mesleklerini-yasatyor.html.

[454] Keyder, "Capital City Resurgent," 177.

[455] Stokes, "Beloved Istanbul," 225.

[456] Ibid.

As early as in the 1940s and 50s, the Turkish Society for the Protection of Animals would strive to alert the public and authorities to the national implications of the treatment of animals in the country. Reporting the dismal conditions of a baby seal kept and displayed in a significantly undersized tank at a movie theater in İstanbul, for instance, the Society proclaimed:

> These days our city is becoming an important world center, is visited by foreign navies and air forces, and hosts international conferences. We cannot bear the display of such pathetic sights, which our own people finds extremely ugly, to others, and their use as propaganda against our country; and we request that this situation, which is as much against the law as it is contrary to the Turk's civilizational and moral character, be banned and that the unfortunate animals are set free in the sea and delivered from torture.[457]

In line with its continuous appeals to government officials concerning the eradication of camel fights, the Society would further claim in 1953 that "even if we set aside the torture and torment that the animals undergo, such fights are exploited to propagandize against our country."[458]

Figure 61. A pair of bear leaders among what appears to be a group of tourists, İstanbul, undated. (Author's collection)

[457] *Türkiye Hayvanları Koruma Cemiyeti 1947 Senesi Raporu*, 10.

[458] *Türkiye Hayvanları Koruma Cemiyeti 1953 Senesi Raporu*, 8.

Concerns were even more loudly voiced in the case of bear dancing and its perceived negative contribution to the image of the country. In 1954, the journalist Refi' Cevad Ulunay wrote: "Putting a nose ring on an unfortunate animal and forcing it, under the threat of a beating, to belly dance before a crowd is surely not something that would be tolerated in a civilized country."[459] A few years later, he would emphasize that "these gypsy butchers are torturing innocent animals in front of everyone and especially the 'tourists' who come to visit İstanbul."[460] The prevalence of bear dancing in the city was portrayed as an urban nuisance and more importantly, as a sign of "backwardness" by other journalists as well:

> Frankly, one takes it to heart that the highly developed nations consider us among those less developed. Fortunately they see this underdevelopment only in the domain of the economy, or at least that is what they are saying, just to humor us. But we know that such is not the reality. (...) What is truly difficult is to leave behind all the backwardness that lies outside the domain of the economy. (...) A gypsy, leading a bear before him, was walking down the street at dusk, singing at the top of his lungs. (...) The bear leader stopped for a moment, placed a stick between the bear's arms, and began to make him dance. When I raised my head and looked around, I saw that all the windows had filled up with curious faces. After dancing for quite a while with clumsy gestures, the bear followed his master, lead by a rope tied to his nose-ring, and disappeared. İstanbul prides itself for being a touristic city, but wherever you go, you will encounter a specimen of bears and bear leaders. While modern apartments rise toward the sky on the one hand, on the other, bears stroll about the avenues and squares, remnants of a bygone İstanbul of blackened old wooden houses and gnarled streets; this may be a tremendous contradiction, but it is also an example of our particular conception of tourism. After all, a tourist is a man who travels in order mostly to encounter the bizarre, things he has never seen, sights to which he is unaccustomed. A tourist might fancy watching a bear. And for that, he cannot be expected to travel far into virgin forests. When there is a city like İstanbul right under his nose, one whose streets have not yet outgrown their role as exhibition grounds for bears, then surely he will come to us.[461]

Moreover, no effort was made in these portrayals to conceal the primacy assigned to the reinvention of "the tourist gaze" or the wish to "purify"[462] the city's touristic panorama from bear leading. As "a performance that orders, shapes and classifies, rather than

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[459] [Refi' Cevad] Ulunay, "Bir Resimden İlhâm," *Milliyet*, October 28, 1954.

[460] Ulunay, "Bunun Sonu Gelmeyecek mi?"

[461] Hamdi Varoğlu, "İnsanlar ve Ayılar," *Cumhuriyet*, July 26, 1962.

[462] "The purification of social space involves rejection of difference and the securing of boundaries to maintain homogeneity," suggests David Sibley in "Purification of Space," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 6, 4 (1988): 409.

reflects the world, (...) [f]ocusing on the gaze brings out how the organising sense in tourism is visual."[463] The anonymously penned caption of a photograph depicting a bus full of tourists with a bear leader waiting for them to get off pleaded, for instance:

> What is the point of letting "bears" run rampant through the streets even before showing the tourist art, culture and civilization? Big words about İstanbul being the cradle of civilization, all the money spent overseas for publicity, and then the sight just described!.... We believe that there will be some who do not approve of this scene and we count on them.[464]

Figure 62. Foreign tourists gazing at a dancing bear, probably in İstanbul during the early 1970s. (Author's collection)

[463] John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London and Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011 [1990], 2, 18.

[464] "Umudumuz Bu Resmi Beğenmeyenlerde," *Milliyet*, June 28, 1974.

The official statement handed over to the bear leaders after the confiscation of the bears had listed disturbing the peace, setting a bad example for children, and threatening public health as reasons for the abolition of the practice. To be sure, the bears led by their Romani handlers would, once in a while, pose a threat to the public by breaking free of their chains and stirring commotion in the urban setting. In July 1964, for example, newspapers reported an incident that transpired in the Kasımpaşa neighborhood of İstanbul: "steamed up" by the maltreatment of its handler, a bear had gotten loose and attempted to attack a family passing by.[465] Another one in 1992 was sighted wandering untethered in Aksaray and was pursued by police forces and members of the municipality's animal destruction squad until it was caught in Karaköy, and most likely killed.[466] One of Mehmet's bears, a she-bear of 550 kilos by the name of Cemile, too, broke her chains on their visit back to Mehmet's hometown in Thrace. To his dismay, he had to call the local police to the rescue, and in the absence of animal tranquilizers, Cemile was shot to death in order to keep the townfolk safe: "Either you'll get it killed or you'll get yourself bitten. It's better to do away with it rather than harming kith and kin," he said.[467]

My formerly bear-leading interlocutors also hinted at some conflicts with the rest of society. Onlookers every so often interpreted their interactions with tourists unfavorably, on occasion not entirely without cause. These interactions must have been the threat implied by authorities and occasionally deplored in the dailies. A 1986 report read:

> Bears taken by gypsies as cubs, equipped with nose rings and trained, and led through the streets and made to dance in exchange for money may be amusing to children, but to tourists they do not constitute a pretty sight. Having made his bear dance before the Dolmabahçe Palace, a gypsy tapped tourist ladies on the arm with his stick and asked for "tips"; seeing this, municipal authorities have resolved to move the bears outside city limits.[468]

Others followed suit in subsequent years, including letters to the editor:

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[465] "Sahibine Kızan Ayı Bir Aileye Saldırdı," *Milliyet*, July 18, 1964; "Bir Ayı Kasımpaşada Bir Aileye Saldırdı," *Cumhuriyet*, July 18, 1964.

[466] "Kocaoğlan Yordu," *Milliyet*, March 10, 1992.

[467] "Ya öldürttürücen, ya kendini ısırttırıcan. Konu komşuya zarar verecekse yaşatma onu daha iyi."

[468] "Ayılar, Kent Dışına Çıkarılıyor."

> Every morning I go through Hürriyet Square [Beyazıt] on my way to work (...). Every day the same ugly sight confronts me. I have nothing against the elderly birdseed sellers. But there are also five or six gypsy children in their dirty colorful clothes, blocking people's way, grabbing their arms, and forcing them to buy birdseed and feed the pigeons. (...) If the person they are harassing is a European or Arab tourist, they figure he will not understand their curses and so they spit on him. Thus the tourists are [insulted] and we, passers-by on their way to work, are annoyed. Bear leaders who have their pictures taken with tourists and demand large sums of money in return bother foreigners just as much as the gypsies selling birdseeds. Bear leaders approach tourists trying to take pictures around the square or sitting on benches in order to rest, and whether the tourists want it or not, they raise up their bears with the aid of their sticks and then virtually extort money from them. And for whatever reason, the Municipal Police does not wish to confront the birdseed beggars and bear-leading gypsies in the very center of İstanbul. For the sake of public peace, as well as the comfort of tourists, let the İstanbul Municipal Police please address these two issues.[469]

It is noteworthy that complaints were often framed by salient references to "civilization":

> This is a true scandal for tourists. Bear leaders no longer make the bears dance before the tourists and pass the hat around, now they show the bear from a distance and practically rob the tourists. (...) An event such as this, one that wounds the human conscience to such a degree, should not be permitted in urban life. How can we freely exhibit, in the very center of the city, something that would never be encountered in the civilized world?[470]

The sometimes violent altercations between bear leaders and both the locals and tourists would indeed lead to increasing police scrutiny. Municipal police frequently hit them with fines and harassed them, chasing them out of tourist-laden squares into more secluded neighborhoods, taking them into custody and once in a while confining them in the beggar's prison in Okmeydanı. The legal basis for these fines and confinement, however, was not made clear to the bear leaders. As Hüseyin Amca put it, poignantly, "Did we appear ugly to them or what?"[471] From the mid-80s onwards, each pair of bear leaders was tailed by a policeman, ostensibly to protect the public from their bullying, but in fact to extract bribes which reportedly amounted to as much as half of their earnings. This interaction led to a close familiarity between law enforcement and bear leaders, but for their part, the bear leaders offered almost no resistance.

It was such a drive for "purification," as well as a tourism-oriented aspiration for urban reconstruction that guided the process of abolition. Veritably, the impetus behind

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[469] "Hürriyet Meydanı Ayıcı Çingenelerden Arınmalı," *Cumhuriyet*, January 15, 1987.

[470] Tamer Heper, "Dünyada Örneği Yok," *Milliyet*, March 13, 1992.

[471] "Ne bileyim artık, çirkin mi görüyordular artık."

the abolition of the practice was more than the some of its 'official' parts: aside from the fact that it took a leading position at every stage of the process, the Ministry of Tourism also articulated its concerns about the impression left on foreign eyes in the 1988 anti-bear leading ordinance: "Most probably foreign tourists watch this not with pleasure but rather with astonishment, and they secretly blame us for allowing this to take place."[472]

In the words of Victor Turner, "Tourism has some aspects of showbiz, some of international trade in commodities; it is part innocent fun, part a devastating modernizing force."[473] Moreover, tourism is almost always infused with ethnopolitical agendas as it involves a selective privileging of cultural heritage and "The issue of who is *qualified* to perform culture."[474] In the case of bear dancing, this particular facet of culture, deeply rooted in Romani history, was deemed an undesired relic of the past, disowned and disavowed within the broader "redefinition of the 'popular'"[475] and the reinvention of the city and its image abroad, accompanied by the desire to sever its touristic association with the country at large. In short, the bear-leading Roma was devoured by the 'devastatingly modernizing force' of tourism, and, in the last instance, once again subordinated to 'Turks.' The following letter by a Dr. Coşkun Tunca to the editor of the daily *Cumhuriyet*, published in 1988, provides a stark example of a Westernized citizen distancing himself from what he perceived to be an unwelcome, 'anachronistically exotic' element of an idealized 'Turkish culture' – one that ought to be left behind in the distant past:

> We came from Chicago to the French vacation resort in Kuşadası. We thought the food is good, the sea is clean, the sandy beach is beautiful... when the Turkish Day began. And we saw how the Capitulations are still kept alive by the French and by the French director of the village, J. Pierre, and how little they value us Turks. They force the Turkish and other staff in the resort to wear non-descript jodhpurs and baggy trousers, waiters wear fezes. Moreover two bear leaders staged performances with their bears. I immediately called for the resort director and told him that this has nothing to do with Turkish

[472] İşiten, "'Ayı' Genelgesi."

[473] Amanda Stronza, "Anthropology of Tourism: Forging New Ground for Ecotourism and Other Alternatives," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 261 citing Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974).

[474] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1998), 75. Emphasis added.

[475] Çağlar Keyder, "Whither the Project of Modernity? Turkey in the 1990s," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, eds. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 45.

> Night. The answer was that this is Turkish folklore. I told him that bears, bear leaders, and baggy trousers categorically have no relation to Turkish folklore. In the end, he said that from then on the event would be called Oriental Night instead of Turkish Night. Apparently it is necessary to remind the French frequently that the old days are long gone and that they are now in Turkey.[476]

The anticipated effects of the abolition on the country's image seems to have resonated even in the aftermath of the end of bear leading: two days after the overnight confiscation of the bears chained to the trees at the Maçka Gardens, the Dean of the Veterinary School of Uludağ University, where the bears were accommodated and rehabilitated until the completion of the bear sanctuary, declared that "The purpose of this project was to enhance the image of our country, and set forth an example by finding fundamental solutions to the problem through private and public institutions."[477] During the bears' confined and scrutinized stay on the premises of Uludağ University, international conferences were held, attracting many academicians and researchers, and resulting in a number of dissertations and scholarly articles. The Assistant Dean of the same school took pride in the fact that "We appeared on all the television channels across the world. The BBC alone featured our school for seven whole minutes."[478] Moreover, a Belgian Princess by the name Elisabeth de Croÿ (1921–2009), a champion of animal rights advocacy, claimed in 1994 that Turkey had lost a lot of tourists because of the plight of dancing bears, and lauded the recent efforts to protect the bears which, she said, brought the country some credit,[479] as if to validate the convictions of authorities.

7.3. Bears in, Bear Leaders out

As discussed in the previous chapter, the treatment of animals by subaltern groups is conveniently deployed as a marker of cultural, ethnic, and class differentiation, and mobilized as a motive for exclusion:

> [The practices of subaltern groups], interpreted as "out of place" by dominant groups, serve to position them at the very edge of humanity—to racialize and

[476] Coşkun Tunca, "Fransızların Türk Gecesi," *Cumhuriyet*, August 31, 1988.

[477] İsmet Acar, "Ayıların Keyfi Yerinde..." *Hürriyet*, October 8, 1993.

[478] Nazım Alpman, "Ayılara Seminer," *Milliyet*, January 14, 1994.

[479] Mehtap Çiloğlu, "Ayıcı Prenses," *Milliyet*, November 11, 1994.

> dehumanize them through a complicated set of associations that measure their distance from modernity and civilization.[480]

While disowning the practice of bear dancing, the Turkish state was, at the same time, immanently declaring bear leaders both temporally and spatially *out of place*, reducing them to "dirt"[481] that, in the view and vision of governing authorities, needed to be cleansed from the modernizing urban spaces of the country. In particular, as the country's principal showcase, İstanbul had to be purified of these elements for the tourist gaze, as voiced by policy-makers and 'concerned' citizens alike. Moreover, the practice of bear dancing had to be disassociated from the cultural heritage of Turkey within concerted efforts towards achieving a more modern outlook.

> The tourist gaze is structured by a repertoire of design codes which excludes supposedly surplus elements, and provides a soupçon of exotica and a few key images. Whilst these spaces represent *virtual* "others", dominant h[ier]archical systems of spatial classification also contruct marginal spaces which are imagined to contain *actual* "others."[482]

Though on the agenda for some years, it was ultimately the creation of a sense of urgency in terms of tourism and modernization that turned the practice of bear leading into a genuine liability, and rendered the initiation of international animal protection associations a most welcome opportunity in the eyes of the Turkish government. In *City of Walls*, Teresa Caldeira reasons that "Contestation is an inherent component of the modern city."[483] Moreover,

> It is only through situating the politics of heritage in specific locales with particular historical, political, and social trajectories that we can deal with questions of who gets to tell which story about the past, and to whom, and under which circumstances, and through what means; and which histories are invoked for what ends, and how these are contested and reworked.[484]

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[480] Elder, Wolch and Emel, "*Pratique Sauvage*," 74.

[481] Here I am referring to Mary Douglas' conceptualization of "dirt as matter out of place" in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995 [1966]), 36.

[482] Tim Edensor, "The Culture of Indian Street," in *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity and Control in Public Space*, ed. Nicholas R. Fyfe (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 216.

[483] Caldeira, *City of Walls*, 300.

[484] Ayfer Bartu Candan, "Remembering a Nine-Thousand-Year-Old Site: Presenting Çatalhöyük," in *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, ed. Esra Özyürek (Syracuse and New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 93–94.

In the modernizing city of İstanbul, bear leading had become a site of contestation with respect to a developing awareness of animal welfare and the ventures of international animal protection organizations, but even more so to the ethnicity of the bear leaders and their unchecked presence in urban areas frequented by tourists. For the authorities, bear dancing was evidently "mak[ing] the country ridiculous in the eyes of visiting foreigners," as the New York Times had related –or interpreted– back in 1925, at the time of what may have been the first Republican ban on the practice.[485] Within this contested realm, an animal liberation project, coupled with visions of urbanism and tourism that prioritized ethnic homogeneity, appear to have served as a disciplinary technology in the Foucauldian sense: a technology that helped further normalize the stigmatization of and discrimination against the Roma, and intensify their internalization of state apparatuses, not to mention dislocate them from urban public space and deprive them of their livelihood.

[485] "[Constantinople] Bans Dancing Bears."

8.

CONCLUSION

After many failed attempts, bear dancing was finally abolished in Turkey in 1993. Hailed as a great success for animal rights organizations, the human dimension of this prohibition has, to date, not been given adequate attention. In fact, the ethnicity of the bear leaders and the widespread prejudices of which it is the object has made it easy to overlook the misery that befell those whose livelihood had depended on this occupation.

As an early case preceding the wave of anti-bear-leading campaigns of the 2000s that virtually brought about the end of the practice on a global scale, the Turkish experience examplifies an implementation of animal protection that is infused with double standards as to what constitutes cruelty and humane behavior, concepts inextricably imbricated with class, race, and ethnicity. Even as bear leading was being suppressed, other similar uses of animals in entertainment –ranging from the 'traditional' camel wrestling festivals to the emergent and exclusive dolphin parks– were promoted and continue unabated to this day. Indeed, the continuation of camel fights has been officially sanctioned under the pretext of preserving the country's cultural heritage. In contrast to this practice, which was portrayed as a 'Turkish folk sport,' bear leading was, and was acknowledged as, a Romani profession: it therefore did not benefit from the same government support; on the contrary, it was subject to violent government intervention. The national leaders' aspiration to 'improve' the country's image abroad by carefully controlling the tourists' experience was also instrumental in the abolition of bear leading. Bear leading, thus, came under attack from several angles.

The government's heavy-handed actions against bear leading are both examplary and symbolic of the harsh treatment reserved for the Roma not only in Turkey but worldwide. A quick glance at the daily news will provide ample testimony to the continuing discrimination and persecutions suffered by the Roma: ongoing forced

evictions and expulsions of Romani families in France and Italy; the recent case of the "blonde angel" –a child considered too fair to be Romani and forcibly removed from her foster parents in Greece, resulting in an international wave of similar raids and child removal incidents;[486] explicitly anti-Roma political platforms in such European countries as Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania; lynchings and urban dislocations in various cities of Turkey.

* * *

This thesis attempted to walk a very thin line between the author's enthusiastic support for animal rights, and her acknowledgment that these rights sometimes come at the expense of vulnerable humans. Following a historical and ethnographic narrative, the present study has explored the deep-rooted past of the practice of bear leading as witnessed mainly in Europe and the Ottoman Empire, and traced the evolving nature of the profession in the Turkish Republic based on interviews with formerly bear-leading Roma. Finally, it has focused on the advances of international animal protection organizations, shifts in and interventions into urban public space, and the Turkish government's bent for reinventing the country's touristic panorama as the main pillars that culminated in the abolition of bear dancing.

Further research directions would include an analysis of the occupation in lands east of Turkey, particularly in India and Pakistan where it is known to have been widely practiced. Another topic to take on would be the gender dimension of the practice, or rather, the gendered nature of it. I was informed by my interlocutors that entire families used to be involved in the care of the bears, especially in rural setting; yet, the absence of women in the actual leading of the bears, save for the testimony of a handful of old photographs, is strikingly explicit. The immediate touristic endeavors planned and/or undertaken by the Turkish government at the historical moment of the abolition is another

[486] A case in point in which the time-honored 'child-snatching Gypsy' stereotype is mobilized, the girl turned out to be of Bulgarian Romani origin: "DNA tests confirm child removed from Greek Roma has Bulgarian Roma parents," accessed October 28, 2013, http://www.romea.cz/en/news/dna-tests-confirm-child-removed-from-greek-roma-has-bulgarian-roma-parents. For the reports on this case of the Human Rights Watch and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, see, respectively, Eva Cossé, "Europe: Time to Drop the Roma Myths," accessed November 11, 2013, http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/04/europe-time-drop-roma-myths; and Rita Izsák, "Roma in Europe: Guilty until Proven Innocent?" accessed October 30, 2013, http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13915&.

area of inquiry that would advance the findings of this study and further situate the disappearance of bear dancing in a wider perspective.

* * *

At one point during our conversation at his house, Murat sighed and said: "The good old days, long gone now..."[487] Indeed, they are long gone, and there is no prospect of restoring them. At a time when the scope of our ethical system is vigorously expanding beyond the domain of anthropocentrism and the so-called human-animal –and human-nature– divides, as the concept of rights is gradually extended to nonhuman animals with whom we share the environment, such a restoration is implausible, and in any case not something to be aspired to. Thus, the present study is not a nostalgic eulogy to a bygone era, but rather a 'memory exercise' of an ethical kind: as Martin Stokes has written, "In a society in which the state of being modern is cast so insistently in terms of forgetting, (...) remembering becomes both a problem and a matter of cultural elaboration."[488] Moreover, it is through such a process of remembering that a non-discriminating social praxis can be envisioned.

Figure 63. Photograph of a bear leader and his bear in İstanbul, possibly in the 1960s. (Cüneyd Orhon Photo Studio [est. 1954 in Kadıköy, İstanbul]. Author's collection)

[487] "Eski günler, geçti ya..."

[488] Stokes, "Beloved Istanbul," 240.

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