

RE-ARTICULATION OF THE SIGN OF TURKISH NATIONAL IDENTITY
THROUGH THE DISCURSIVE PERFORMANCES OF THE ARAB “OTHER”:
THE CASE OF ARABS IN BATMAN

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ABSTRACT

Re-Articulation of the Sign of Turkish National Identity through the Discursive Performances of the Arab “Other”: The Case of Arabs in Batman

by

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This thesis aims to provide an elaborated understanding of the concept of national identity through an exploration of the cultural identities of the Arab community in Batman and the consolidation of the Arab communal identity with the Turkish national identity.

Concepts of national identity which are proposed by the dominant theories of nation and nationalism, that is, ethno-symbolist and modernist theories of nation and nationalism are criticized in terms of the evidence provided by the ethnographic study of Arabs in Batman. In contrast to the ethno-symbolist and modernist understanding of the concept of national identity, a new conceptual framework which provides a complex analysis of national identity is established by the introduction of post-structuralist theories of discourse into the study of national identity.

Following this framework it is claimed that national identity is a process of signification or a sign which is unstable, shifting, hybrid and multiple. Although the modernist argument, that is, national identity is constructed is accepted, it is claimed against the modernist viewpoint that “nationals” are not only the objects of the imagination of nation but they are at the same time the subjects who imagine the nation. As they appropriate the national identity, “nationals” themselves tailor the imagination of nation and national identity in their own ways with respect to the cultural identities of

their communities. Hence national identity has the function of constructing the nation, while it is also being constructed by the “nationals” in different times and localities of the nation.

The study analyzes social imaginary of the Arab community in terms of the definitions of the Arab community by the members of the community and outlines the elements of the Arab communal identity. The unstable, hybrid and shifting nature of national identity is illustrated through the analyses of the renarrations of the Turkish national narratives by the Arabs with their inclusion of the Arab identity into the definition of Turkish national identity.

ÖZET

Bir İşaret Olarak Türk Milli Kimliğinin Arap “Öteki”nin Söylemsel Performansları
Yoluyla Yeniden Kurulması: Batmanlı Araplar Örneği

Süheyla Nil Moustafa

Bu tez Batman’da yaşayan Arapların kültürel kimliklerinin incelenmesi ve Arap toplumsal kimliğinin Türk milli kimliği ile birleşmesinin incelenmesi yoluyla milli kimlik kavramının daha detaylı bir açıklamasını sağlamayı hedeflemektedir.

Millet ve milliyetçilik konularında hakim teoriler olan modernist ve etno-sembolist teorilerinin sunduğu milli kimlik kavramı, Batmanlı Arapların etnoğrafik incelemesi sonucunda elde edilmiş olan yeni bilgiler ışığında eleştirilmektedir. Etno-sembolist ve modernistlerin milli kimlik düşüncelerinin aksine, milli kimlik çalışmasına yapısalcı sonrası söylem teorileri tanıtılarak milli kimliğin daha yetkin analizini sağlayacak yeni bir kavramsal çerçeve oluşturulmuştur.

Bu kavramsal çerçeve yoluyla milli kimliğin muğlak, değişken, melez ve çoklu olarak tanımlanabilecek bir anlamlandırma süreci ya da bir işaret olduğu öne sürülmüştür. Milli kimliğin inşa edilmiş olduğu yönündeki modernist düşünce kabul edilmesine rağmen, modernist bakış açısı karşısında şu iddia edilmiştir: “Yurttaşlar” sadece millet tahayyülünün nesnelere değil, aynı zamanda milleti tahayyül eden öznelerdir. “Yurttaşlar” milli kimliği edinirken millet tahayyülünü ve milli kimliği kendilerine özgü şekilde ve ait oldukları toplulukların kültürel kimlikleri çerçevesinde biçimlendirmektedirler. Böylelikle milli kimlik bir yandan milleti kurma görevini yerine

getirirken diđer yandan da milletin farklı zaman ve mekanlarında “yurттаşlarca” kurulmaktadır.

Bu çalıřma öncelikle Arap toplumunun sosyal tahayyülünü üyelerin toplumu tanımlamaları üzerinden incelemekte ve Arap toplumsal kimliđinin unsurlarını belirtmektedir. Milli kimliđin muđlak, melez ve deđiřken yapısı Arapların Türk milli anlatıları, kendi toplumsal kimliklerini Türk milli kimliđinin tanımına ekleyerek tekrar anlatmalarının incelenmesi yoluyla gösterilmektedir.

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stories which inspired my imagination and he will be the hero of my own stories with his intellect and infinite capabilities of understanding and sympathy. My mother Özgül Coşkun has always been there for me with her tender care. Without her endless love, encouragement and her invaluable labor on me I would never be able to be the person I am. It is utmost chance to have exceptional souls be my sister and brother, Derya Nil Budak and Alper Fırat Coşkun respectively. They have been my best friends, my twin-souls and source of joy.

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Ne İsa'ya ne de Musa'ya yaranabilmiş olan tüm Akho'lara...

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research study aims to provide an elaborated understanding of the concept of national identity. The concepts of national identity which are proposed by the dominant theories of nation and nationalism, that is, the ethno-symbolist and modernist theories of nation and nationalism are criticized in terms of the fresh data that is provided by the ethnographic study of Arabs in Batman. In contrast to the ethno-symbolist and modernist understanding of the concept of national identity, a new conceptual framework for the analysis of national identity is established by the introduction of post-structuralist theories of discourse into the study of national identity.

In my research I have conducted an ethnographic study of the Arabs, an ethno-cultural minority group living in the southeastern city of Batman, speaking Arabic, claiming to have a different ethnic origin than the shared notion of the Turkish national identity and affiliated with the “Şafi” sect of Islam different from the “Hanefi” sect of Islam which is mostly associated with Turkishness.

I have visited the city of Batman to conduct my field research in February 2005. I have stayed in a village called Hatetke for two weeks and also visited another village called Behmir in order to conduct interviews with the members of the Arab community and make observations of their living patterns. Since my father is a member of the Arab

community, I have been able to conduct the field research as an insider having no difficulty to contact with the community members. I have also visited several times the Arabs who have migrated from Batman to Zeytinburnu district of Istanbul and conducted several interviews with them and observed their lives in order to develop intimate knowledge about the Arabs before the fieldwork in Batman. I was also acquainted with the living patterns and cultural identities of the Arab community due to my personal knowledge of the Arabs provided by my father and his family in Istanbul.

By this personal experience I believed that the Arab community had its distinct cultural identities significantly different from the elements of Turkish national identity. However at the same time the members of the community strongly identified themselves with the Turkish national identity and some of them were working as voluntary village guards with a claim to be Turkish nationalists. This double identification of the Arabs both with their communal identity and Turkish national identity motivated me to question the nature of national identity and identification.

Modernist theories of nation and nationalism have formed the dominant school of thought in the analysis of nations and nationalism. Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm are the well-known theorists of the modernist approaches to nation and nationalism. Gellner's theory is based on his basic assumption that nations and nationalism are modern phenomena. For Gellner, "nations were not predestined, nor do human beings naturally require a nationality. It is modernity that requires nations and makes nationalities seem natural. It is modernity that inevitably comes in the shape of

‘nationalism’, and it is nationalism that creates nations: ‘Nationalism...invents nations where they do not exist.’¹

The presumption that nation and national identity are invented rather than being primordial is shared by all the modernist thinkers. However the ethno-symbolist thinkers such as John Armstrong, Anthony D. Smith and John Hutchinson propose a counter argument against the basic assumption of the modernist theories of nation and nationalism. According to the ethno-symbolist thinkers, nation and national identity have their roots in history.

Anthony Smith, the leading theorist of the ethno-symbolist approach, introduces the concept of *ethnie*, the French term used for ethnicity, in his analysis of nation and nationalism. He defines the concept as such “a named human community connected to a homeland, possessing common myths of ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of shared culture, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites”.² Smith maintains the basic argument of the ethno-symbolist position that the modern era and thus the modern nation are *no tabula rasa* by referring to the *ethnies* or ethnic cores of the nations. He declares that in contrast to the modernist understanding of nation, nation “emerges out of the complex social and ethnic formations of earlier epochs, and the different kinds of *ethnie*, which modern forces transform, but never obliterate.”³ Hence for Smith nation and national identity are not cultural artifacts or fabrications of identity which he calls “outright forgery” formed as a result of the modern processes. According to Smith people would not believe in such a fabricated imagination of the nation and

¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press 2001) , pp.66-67.

² *Ibid.*, p.13.

³ Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalisms in a Global Era*, (Polity Pres, 1995), pp.59-60.

national identity if there was no real correspondence between the identity of the *ethnie* (the ethnic core of the nation) and the national identity.

The ethnographic study of Arabs in Batman provides significant insight to challenge the ethno-symbolist understanding of the reconstructed nature of national identity. As I will illustrate in Chapter IV the members of the Arab community are constructed as the Turkish nationals despite the fact that there seems to be no correspondence between the cultural identities of the community and the Turkish national identity. The Arab community has cultural identities such as the authentic history of the community, memories, ancestry, myths of origin and homeland and also Arabic language which are significantly different from the national history, myths and Turkish language which are elements of Turkish national identity. Yet the Arabs believe in the national narratives of Turkish history and origins. In this respect I claim that we need to re-appreciate the modernist understanding of the nation and national identity which suggests that people are constructed as the nationals by believing in “outright forgery” or the fabricated notion of nation and national identity.

Second, the case of Arabs provide further information about the unstable, shifting and hybrid nature of national identity which is undermined by the modernist and ethno-symbolist theories of nation and nationalism. Both the modernist and ethno-symbolist theorists conceptualize national identity as a homogeneous and stable identity. However the post-structuralist theories of discourse invite us to think of identity as a sign or process of signification which is subject to constant transformation. Hence the post-structuralist theories and concepts of Laclau, Mouffe, Derrida, Hall and Bhabha are elaborated for conducting a complex analysis of the unstable, shifting and heterogeneous nature of national identity in general and of Turkish national identity in particular within

the study of our case. Following the post-structuralist viewpoint in conceptualizing identity and in relation to the data provided by the case of Arabs I argue that national identity is a process of signification or a sign which is unstable, shifting and multiple due to the different variations of its definition by the members of cultural communities who have different social imaginaries in various localities of the nation derived from the social antagonisms.

Following the conceptualization of society suggested by discourse theorists Laclau and Mouffe, I have developed the concept of social imaginary (that is adopted from Castoriadis) as the impossible ideal of totality that is expressed by the members of any community in their definitions of the community. Hence social imaginary of a community is composed of particular signifiers of identity which represent the absent totality of that community. It is presumed that the social imaginary of any community is never stable but always subject to constant re-constitution as an effect of the changing social antagonisms. This introduction of the concept of social imaginary further supports our argument that national identity is constantly transformed by the cultural identities of the local communities. It is assumed that as the social imaginary of a community, that is, identities and boundaries of that community changes in time, then the national identity is also transformed in time as to content in relation to the changes in the cultural identities of community. Thus national identity never ends up being a more hybrid, multiple and ambivalent identity.

Third, the case study of Arabs indicate that although various identities of the social imaginary of the Arab community are incompatible with the Turkish national identity, they can still co-exist in the social imaginary of the Arab community together with the Turkish national identity as the signifiers of Arab community. This illustrates

that national identity does not necessarily dominate the social imaginary of the cultural communities but it is included into the chain of significations of communal identity though as a contradictory element of identity but which nevertheless represents the absent totality of that collectivity. Hence the case shows that national identity as a sign always exists side by side with the cultural identities of the local communities in the social imaginaries of those communities due to the fact that national identity is just another sign incorporated into the cultural identities of the local communities.

Throughout the research I have encountered a number of methodological difficulties. In my investigation of the history of the Arab community living in Batman, I have faced with the difficulty of finding relevant historical data. Since religion was the basic social category of classification in the Ottoman Empire, it is very difficult to reach any data based on the categorization of the society with ethno-cultural terms.

From the mid-sixteenth century onward the Ottoman state supported the unity of all the Sunni Muslim population of the empire as a result of the representation of the caliphate by the Ottoman sultans. “Both the ulema and Ottoman officials stressed the unity of Sunni Kurds with Sunni Turks, Sunni Arabs and the other Sunni ethnic groups.”⁴ Therefore, any classification of the Sunni Muslim population with respect to their ethnic origins would be antithetical to the imperial ideology of the Ottoman Empire. As Yılmazçelik states in his book on the city of Diyarbakır in the first half of the 19th century, the Ottoman population is basically classified with respect to their religious affiliation in the Ottoman archives of the cities and districts. Although in the archives of cities some of the non-Muslim communities are distinguished in terms of

⁴ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: the Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, (London; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books 1992), p. 268.

their ethno-cultural alignment, the same does not hold for the Muslims in the Ottoman Empire.⁵ Göyünç also emphasizes the similar difficulty of classification of the population living in Mardin district (sancak) of Ottoman Empire in terms of their ethnic origins.⁶ As a result, it is a serious challenge to find any account of the Arabs of Batman in terms of their communal history in the Ottoman repositories of data because of their being part of the Sunni Muslim population of the Ottoman empire. Similar to the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish state also did not distinguish the society in terms of the ethnic categories.

Despite the fact that we can not reach any declaration of the Arab community in the historical sources, the existence of a large group of Arabic speaking people in the Southeastern cities of Turkey is acknowledged by the social scientists studying the region. Martin van Bruinessen states the existence of a significant number of Arab population settled mostly in the cities of Mardin and Siirt.⁷ Moreover, the voyagers who visited Mardin in 16th century declared that the predominant language spoken in the district was Arabic. For Göyünç, Arabic was still the dominant language in the city by 1970s.⁸

The lack of enough secondary sources about the Arab community is one reason that motivated me to conduct a field research to explore the social imaginary of the Arab community, the historical and socio-political context within which the Arab community is formed and the identification of Arabs with the Turkish national identity. The ethnographic study of the Arabs would provide me to gather first hand data with respect

5 Yrd. Doç. Dr. İbrahim Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır (1790-1840): Fiziki idari ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), p.45.

6 Nejat Göyünç, *XVI. yy'da Mardin Sancağı*, (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1969), p.75.

7 Martin Van Bruinessen, Kürtlük, Türklük, Alevilik. Etnik ve Dinsel Kimlik Mücadeleri, (İletişim Yayınları 2002), p.17

8 Göyünç, p.75.

to the Arab community, its social imaginary, cultural identities, living patterns and history by interacting with the Arabs and observing them in their own houses and locality. Hence after completing a literature survey I went to Batman.

I conducted 10 in-depth (2 hours in average) interviews and at least 15 informal interviews with the members of the Arab community. I tried to choose my interviewees from as diverse a grouping as possible. However, I can not claim that my group of interviewees represents the entire Arab community in Batman. I have mostly interviewed with the Arabs who identify themselves with the Turkish national identity but had one interview with a member of the community who identifies himself as a Kurd. Although the members of the Arab community are divided into two in terms of their differential identifications with the two identities, that is to say the Turkish and Kurdish identities, I have primarily inquired into the members of the Arab community who share a social imaginary of the Arab community and at the same time identify with the Turkish national identity. Since the scope of my research was limited to the study of the Turkish national identity and Arab communal identity, I was mostly concerned with talking with the Arabs with Turkish national identification. In order to capture the similar or different ways of thinking in terms of the Arab community and Turkish national identity I tried to talk to a range of people having differences with respect to age, gender, education, occupation and geography.

Although I was able to conduct only 10 in-depth interviews, I need to emphasize the significance of 15 informal interviews without a definite interview format for providing important data in my analysis of the case at hand. The informal interviews were rather like spontaneous conversations which included a few people other than the interviewer and the interviewee. They took place mostly during my visits to the houses

of the Arabs. The household mostly listened to the interviews and interrupted the interviews with their comments. Since the houses in villages were small with a few rooms and the households were crowded, most of my efforts to conduct in-depth interviews were challenged rather by incoming guests at that moment or by the enthusiastic members of the households. Indeed most of the informal interviews started as in-depth interviews but turned into informal talks as a result of the reasons outlined above. However I believe that the informal interviews enriched my knowledge and insights about the Arab community because throughout these talks I was able to catch the comments or information about the community that are mostly ignored or unmentioned in the in-depth interviews. I think the Arabs had more comfort in speaking loud some of their thoughts among their tribesmen within informal conversations. These informal talks provided them to manipulate the subject matter of the conversations and emphasize the disputes and antagonisms found in their locality as if they were speaking to each other in their daily lives.

Therefore, in giving information on the profile of interviewees I must include these people within my group. Among 25 interviewees 19 were male and 6 of them were female. Only one interviewee was 19 years old. 4 of them were between 20-29 years old. 6 of the interviewees were between 30-39 years old. 9 of them were between 40-49 years old and 4 of them were between 50-59 years old. Only one of them was between 60-69 years old. Only one interviewee was a university graduate and he was working as a lawyer. The others were either elementary school graduates or they studied three or four years at school. The interviewees did not differ much in terms of their occupations. Most of the male interviewees were farmers and all of the females were housewives. There were 3 businessmen and 2 construction workers among 19 male interviewees.

Since the Arab community was spread in different districts and villages of Batman, it was also important to talk to people from different geographic locations in the region. Hence I interviewed respondents from two villages and from the Batman city center. 4 respondents were living and working in Batman city center. 7 of the interviewees were from Behmir and 11 of them were from Hatetke. I have also interviewed with 3 members of the community living in Zeytinburnu district of Istanbul.

While quoting from interviewees, I did not use the names of the interviewees but assigned a sign to each person. This indicates their sex, occupation and location like M-Farmer-Male-Hatetke or K-Housewife-Female-Behmir. Hence I wanted to give a sense of the subjectivity of the person speaking.

The thesis is composed of five chapters. The second chapter is a theoretical discussion of various theories of nation and nationalism which provides an understanding of the concept of “national identity” presumed by the outlined theories. In this respect ethnicist, modernist and ethno-symbolist approaches to the study of nation and nationalism are discussed in detail. Acknowledging the criticisms of the ethno-symbolist thinkers against modernist theories, ethno-symbolist theories are also subjected to criticism in light of the evidence acquired in the ethnographic study of Arabs in Batman.

In Chapter III firstly the shortcomings of modernist and ethno-symbolist theories in terms of their understanding of national identity are discussed. Secondly, a new and alternative conceptual framework is proposed by the introduction of post-structuralist theories of discourse and their analyses of identity and society into the study of national identity. In sub-sections of this chapter, the elements of the conceptual framework are defined. First, it is suggested to think of nation and national identity as signs which are

never stable and homogeneous following the theories of Homi Bhabha and discourse theorists, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Second, Castoriadis' concept of social imaginary which is modified through the discourse theory's understanding of identity and society is offered as an analytical tool to analyze the cultural identities of Arab community.

In fourth chapter the cultural identities of the Arab community in Batman and the identification of Arabs with Turkish national identity are analyzed through the conceptual framework offered in Chapter III. Firstly, the social imaginary of the Arab community is analysed in terms of the definitions of the Arab community by the members of the community and hence the elements of the Arab communal identity are outlined in detail. Secondly, the conditions of the formation of the social imaginary of the Arab community are emphasized. In this respect the historical and socio-political context, in and through which the Arab community and its social imaginary is formed, are outlined. Afterwards the constructed nature of national identity is displayed by an analysis of the identification of the Arabs with the Turkish national identity despite the co-existence of incompatible elements of Arab communal identity with the Turkish national identity. Lastly, the unstable and shifting nature of national identity is illustrated through the analysis of the renarrations of the Turkish national narratives by the Arabs with the inclusion of the Arab identity.

CHAPTER II

THEORIES OF NATION AND NATIONALISM

This chapter aims to develop an understanding of the concepts of the nation and national identity which are provided by various theories of or approaches to the phenomena of nation and nationalism prevailing in the literature of nationalism. The theories which will be outlined in this section are basically the ethnicist approaches (primordialism and perennialism), modernism and ethno-symbolism. In addition to these approaches, Homi Bhabha's theory of nation and national identity is outlined in detail due to the fact that it provides us significant insights for establishing an elaborated understanding of the concepts of nation and national identity required for our research study.

Ethnicist Approaches

Primordialism

The primordialist paradigm is considered as the earliest approach to the study of nations and nationalisms. Primordialism is "an 'umbrella' term used to describe scholars who hold that nationality is a 'natural' part of human beings, as natural as speech, sight or

smell, and that nations have existed since time immemorial.”⁹ Based on Anthony Smith’s classification of the different versions of primordialism, Özkırımlı identifies three different versions of primordial approach, which are the ‘naturalist’, ‘sociobiological’ and ‘culturalist’ approaches.¹⁰

The Naturalist Approach

Anthony Smith thinks that the origins of primordialism in general and the naturalist approach in particular can be traced to Rousseau, “with his call to flee urban corruption, and return to ‘nature’ to recover a lost innocence.”¹¹ For Smith, “this ‘naturalistic’ spirit soon entered into the definition of nationhood” and “paved the way for the essentialist and organic forms of nationalism.”¹² Smith states that “in this version, just as nations have ‘natural frontiers’, so they have a specific origin and place in nature, as well as a peculiar character, mission and destiny.”¹³ “In other words, nations are ‘primordial’; they exist in the first order of time, and lie at the root of subsequent processes and developments.”¹⁴ Smith declares that “in this view, there is no distinction made between nations and *ethnies*. Both are seen as equally part of the natural order, and nationalism is a naturalistic attribute of humanity.”¹⁵ Smith associates the works of Hans Kohn with the naturalist approach.

⁹ Umut Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. (Hampshire: Palgrave 2000), p.64.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.66.

¹¹ Smith, *Nations and Nationalisms in a Global Era*, p.51.

¹² Ibid., p.51.

¹³ Ibid., p.32.

¹⁴ Smith, *Nationalism*, p.51.

¹⁵ Smith, *Nations and Nationalisms in a Global Era*, p.32.

The Sociobiological Approach

The sociobiological version “holds that nations, ethnic groups and races can be traced to the underlying genetic reproductive drives of individuals and their use of strategies of ‘nepotism’ and ‘inclusive fitness’ to maximize their gene pools.”¹⁶ In other words, “*ethnies* and nations are ‘natural’, because they are extensions of kin groups which are selected by genetic evolution for their inclusive fitness.”¹⁷ Smith states that “in this case, the cultural group is treated as a wider kin network, and cultural symbols (language, religion, colour, etc.) are used as markers of biological affinity.”¹⁸ Pierre van den Berghe is a representative of the socio-biological approach according to Smith.

The Culturalist Approach

The culturalist approach is mostly associated with the works of Clifford Geertz and Edward Shils. “This version of primordialism holds that ethnic groups and nations are formed on the basis of attachments to the ‘cultural givens’ of social existence.”¹⁹ “For Geertz primordial attachments rest on perceptions and beliefs, and that it is not the intrinsic nature of these attachments that makes them ‘given’ and powerful; rather, it is human beings who see these ties as givens, and attribute to them an overpowering coerciveness.”²⁰ According to Anthony Smith, “what Geertz is claiming, and what is so important about the primordialist contribution, is that we, as individuals and members of

¹⁶ Smith, *Nationalism*, p.52.

¹⁷ Smith, *Nations and Nationalisms in a Global Era*, p.32.

¹⁸ Smith, *Nationalism*, p.52.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.53.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.53-54.

collectivities, *feel and believe* in the primordality of our *ethnies* and nations – their naturalness, longevity and power – and that if we ignore these beliefs and feelings, we evade one of the central problems of explanation in the field of ethnicity and nationalism.”²¹

Criticisms Against Primordialism

One common denominator of the primordialists – with the exception of culturalists – is their belief in the ‘givenness’ of ethnic and national ties. If the strong attachments generated by language, religion, kinship and the like are given by nature, then they are also fixed, or static. They are transmitted from one generation to the next with their ‘essential’ characteristics unchanged.”²² The recent studies on ethnicity criticize the ‘givenness’ of the ethnic and national ties and “stress the role of individual choice in the construction of ethnic identities, claiming that ‘far from being self-perpetuating, they require creative effort and investment’. They are redefined and reconstructed in each generation as groups react to changing conditions. It follows that the content and boundaries of ethnic identities are fluid, not fixed.”²³

The ‘givenness’ of the ethnic and national ties has been the main target of criticisms against the primordialist approach. The scholars of the modernist paradigm have emphasized the constructed nature of the national community and identified the origins of the modern nations in the modern times.

²¹ Ibid., p.54.

²² Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.75.

²³ Ibid., p.75.

The criticisms against primordialism are generally made on the basis of facts, especially by the scholars of the modernist paradigm whose theories and criticisms will be explained in detail in the section on “modernism.” However, Anthony Smith who is an ethno-symbolist emphasizing the significance of *ethnies* and ethnic origins of the nations also criticize sharply the primordialists again on the basis of factual data.

First, Smith contends that “human beings live in a multiplicity of social groups, some of which are more significant and salient than others at various times. Hence the ethnic tie has no absolute priority.”²⁴ Second, he emphasizes the role of the economic, social and political forces which may change the *ethnies*. He says that these forces “have made it unlikely that more than a very small number of rather isolated *ethnies* ever possessed the cultural homogeneity and pure ‘essence’ posited by most primordialists.”

²⁵ Third, Smith also states that “it is not at all clear why the quest for individual reproductive success should move beyond the extended family to much wider cultural units like *ethnies* or how far a constant of this kind can help to explain the variable phenomenon of the modern nation.”²⁶

Perennialism

Anthony Smith suggests that there is another approach of nation and nationalism which he calls “perennialism”. The scholars like Joshua Fishman, Walker Connor and Donald Horowitz have endorsed perennialist approach in their analyses of nation and nationalism according to Smith. Although Smith tries to differentiate perennialism from

²⁴ Smith, *Nations and Nationalisms in a Global Era*, p.33.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

primordialism, he cannot be said to have succeeded and therefore, Özkırımlı states that “Smith introduces the term ‘perennialism’ to cover a less radical version of primordialism”.²⁷ I will state this approach for providing a detailed literature review on the theories of nations and nationalisms.

Smith contends that “before the Second World War, many scholars subscribed to the view that, even if nationalist ideology was recent, nations had always existed in every period of history, and that many nations existed from time immemorial – a perspective that can be called ‘perennialism’”.²⁸ Smith rejects the claim that perennialism is similar to primordialism in terms of its understanding of the nation as ‘natural’. For Smith, “it is possible to concede the antiquity of ethnic and national ties without holding that they are ‘natural’”.²⁹ Based on the works of two scholars from the perennialist camp, Josep R. Llobera and Adrian Hastings, Özkırımlı argues that “for perennialist writers the origins of both nations and nationalism stretch back to the medieval period – that is well beyond the modern ages.”³⁰

The third school of thought that Smith criticizes is ethno-symbolism, but since this school belongs under the wider set of ethnicist approaches to nation and nationalism, I am going to outline the ethno-symbolist school of thought after indicating the modernist approaches to nation and nationalism due to the fact that the ethno-symbolist theory emerged basically as a critique of the modernist approaches.

²⁷ Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.68.

²⁸ Smith *Nationalism*, p.49.

²⁹ Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.68.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.70.

Modernist Approaches

Modernist theories of nation and nationalism have formed the dominant school of thought in the analysis of nations and nationalism. The scholars of the modernist paradigm show differences in terms of their theories and do not compose a homogeneous body of thinkers. However since they share some basic assumptions in terms of their conceptualization of nations and nationalisms – which will be pointed out below – we will place them under the cluster of modernism.

“According to Smith, classical modernism achieved its canonical formulation in the 1960s, above all in the model of ‘nation-building’ which had a wide appeal in the social sciences in the wake of the movement of decolonization in Asia and Africa. This was followed by a variety of models and theories, all of which regarded nations as historically formed constructs.”³¹ There are common denominators shared by the modernist scholars of nations and nationalism which can be outlined as follows:

First, nations and nationalism are regarded as inherently modern – in the sense of recent – phenomena; that is, they emerged in the last two hundred years, in the wake of the French Revolution. Second, nations and nationalisms are treated as the products of the specifically modern conditions of capitalism, industrialism, bureaucracy, mass communications and secularism. Third, nations are essentially recent constructs, nationalisms are their modern cement, designed to meet the requirements of modernity. Finally, ethnic communities are neither natural nor given in human history, but are mainly resources or instruments of elites and leaders in their struggles for power. Underlying these views, of course, is the fundamental assumption that modernity constitutes a revolution in human history, perhaps *the* revolution, one whose effects are ubiquitous and universal, and that all pre-modern eras are at an end and with them all the structures and beliefs that flourished and upheld those earlier, long-gone epochs. The past is, indeed, ‘another country’.³²

³¹ Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.85.

³² Smith, *Nations and Nationalisms in a Global Era*, pp. 29-30.

Anthony Smith maintains that “Despite their differences, these varieties of the paradigm of modernity all share a belief in what one might call ‘structural modernism’. There is no ‘contingent modernism’, no simple observation of an historical correlation between nationalism and modernity, but a belief in the inherently national, and nationalist, nature of modernity. It could not have been otherwise. In this view, modernity necessarily took the form of nations and just as inevitably produced nationalist ideologies and movements.”³³

Similar to Smith, Özkırmılı also refrains from treating the modernist scholars as a ‘monolithic’ entity and divides them into three categories in terms of the key factors – economic, political and social/cultural – they have identified in their analyses of the concepts of nation and nationalism. As Özkırmılı maintains, none of these theorists rely on a single factor in their accounts of nationalism and most of the modernist theories emphasize one set of factors at the expense of others.³⁴ Following the type of classification offered by Özkırmılı, I will try to explain the modernist paradigm of nations and nationalism under the categories of “Economic Transformation”, “Political Transformation” and “Social/Cultural Transformation”.

³³ Smith, *Nationalism*, pp. 48-49.

³⁴ Özkırmılı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.86.

Three Versions of Modernism

Economic Transformation

This variant of modernism is identified with the neo-marxist scholars, especially Tom Nairn and Michael Hechter. “The orthodox Marxist position was beginning to be challenged with the emergence of anti-colonial nationalist movements in many parts of the world. The majority of left-wing intellectuals were sympathetic to these movements...It was increasingly avowed that the fight against ‘neo-imperialism’, ‘economic imperialism’ or ‘international capital’ was first a national one.”³⁵ Therefore, the neo-marxist scholars tried to reform classical Marxism with a theory of nationalism and emphasized economic factors in their hybrid theories of Marxism and nationalism.

“Nationalism and nations are derived, in this version, from such novel economic and social factors as industrial capitalism, regional inequality and class conflict. According to Tom Nairn and Michael Hechter, specifically national sentiments and ideals are aroused by relative deprivation between regions within modern states or classes across states, between the underdeveloped peripheral and the developed core regions or between core and peripheral elites backed by the newly mobilized ‘masses’ of the periphery.”³⁶

For both Smith and Özkırımlı, the most important statement of this position was Tom Nairn’s, *The Break-up of Britain (1977)* in which Nairn argued that the unevenness of development was the prime mover of nationalism, but it was an uneven wave of capitalism rather than industrialism.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., p.86.

³⁶ Smith, *Nationalism*, p 47.

³⁷ Ibid., p.66.

Political Transformation

This version of modernism has been elaborated by those scholars who focus on the transformations in the political sphere. John Breuilly, Eric Hobsbawm, Paul Brass, Michael Mann and Anthony Giddens are considered to be found in this category by Özkırımlı and Smith.

“Here, nations and nationalism are forged in and through the modern professionalized state, either directly or in opposition to specific (imperial/colonial) states. For theorists, John Breuilly, Anthony Giddens and Michael Mann, not only is the modern state the best predictor of nations and nationalism, its relationship with society forms the crucible for a reintegrative nationalism, which is the inevitable concomitant of state sovereignty.”³⁸

Breuilly states that his main concern is with nationalism as politics.³⁹ He considers nationalism as politics, that is to say, as a politics of opposition. According to Smith,

Nationalism, for Breuilly, is best seen as a modern and purely political movement; and politics in the modern world is about control of the state. Nationalism is an argument for seizing and retaining that control. Its importance lies in its ability to offer a common platform for various sub-elites through the mobilization, coordination and legitimation of their goals and interests. Nationalist movements aim either to unify the state or to renew it or, most commonly, to oppose an existing state.”⁴⁰

Instrumentalist account of nationalism which is provided by Paul Brass emphasizes the effect of elite competition in the constitution of ethnic and national identities. For Brass “the cultural forms, values and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites who are engaged in an endless struggle for power and/or economic advantage.

³⁸ Ibid., p.48.

³⁹ Gopal Balakrishnan, “The National Imagination” in G. Balakrishnan (ed.) , *Mapping the Nation*, (London: Verso 1996), p.149.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Nationalism*, p. 75.

Hence, the study of ethnicity and nationality should be the study of ‘politically-induced cultural change’.⁴¹

Social/Cultural Transformation

Ernest Gellner is one of the well-known theorists of the modernist approaches to nation and nationalism. Gellner’s theory, which is first elaborated in his book *Thought and Change* (1964) and later in *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), is considered to be one of the most important studies on nations and nationalism.

Gellner’s theory is based on his basic assumption that nations and nationalism are modern phenomena. For Gellner, “nations were not predestined, nor do human beings naturally require a nationality. It is modernity that requires nations and makes nationalities seem natural. It is modernity that inevitably comes in the shape of ‘nationalism’, and it is nationalism that creates nations: ‘Nationalism...invents nations where they do not exist.’⁴²

According to Gellner’s thesis, “nationalism is an essential component of modernization, of the transition from agrarian to industrial society; it is distinctive to industrial society, and intimately connected to its mode of production...In the industrial society, nationalism is an essential part of the cultural atmosphere – its ‘exo-socialization’, i.e., educating persons in a culture that mostly frees them from familial and corporate ties, is a *sine qua non* of social cohesion.”⁴³

⁴¹ Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.121

⁴² Smith, *Nationalism*, pp.66-7.

⁴³ Brendan O’Leary, “Ernest Gellner’s Diagnoses of Nationalism: A Critical Overview, or, What is Living and What is Dead in Ernest Gellner’s Philosophy of Nationalism?” in John A. Hall (ed.), *The State of the*

Smith contends that nationalism in Gellner's theory becomes a necessary cultural form, a 'high culture'. In his theory, Gellner "used the term 'high culture' to mean not an elite culture, but a literate and standardized public 'garden' culture, supported by specialists and a system of 'exo-socialization' or public education. This he contrasted with the many wild, uncultivated 'low' cultures, which are the characteristic of premodern societies, but which could not survive in modern conditions – either they had to be turned into high cultures, or they would perish."⁴⁴

Modernization, by which Gellner meant industrialization and its social and cultural concomitants, was transforming all societies... It was producing a new type of industrial society, requiring a mobile, literate and numerate workforce, able to engage in semantic work and context-free communication. Whereas in earlier, agrarian societies, literacy was confined to the few and human beings were bound together by the structure of roles and institutions, often based on kinship, in modern industrial societies 'culture replaced structure'. That is, 'language and culture' became the new cement for an atomized society, one based on uprooted, detraditionalized individuals who had to be integrated into the industrial machine and whose new and only acceptable identity was citizenship based upon literacy and culture. Modernization, therefore eroded tradition and traditional societies, and threw up language and culture as the sole basis for identity. Today, said Gellner, 'we are all clerks', and to be clerks and citizens, we must be taught in the new mass, compulsory, standardized, public education systems provided by the state.⁴⁵

Eric Hobsbawm is another well-known theorist of the modernist approach. In contrast to Özkırımlı who identifies Hobsbawm's work within the scope of the political category of modernism, Smith considers Hobsbawm as a constructionist thinker who basically emphasizes the socially constructed character of the nations and nationalism. Although I agree with both of them and find both of their classifications as comprehensive, I think it would be right to consider Hobsbawm's approach within the category of social/cultural

Nation : Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism, (New York : Cambridge University Press 1998), pp. 46-47.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Nationalism*, p.65.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.64.

transformation because of his strong emphasis on the role of “invented traditions” in the construction of nation and nationalism. However, it should be noted that the categories that are offered by Özkırmılı and Smith are not ‘mutually exclusive’ and thus, we can think of Hobsbawm’s works within the scope of both categories suggested by Smith and Özkırmılı.

In “Nations and Nationalisms” Hobsbawm maintains that “social engineering” is the basis of both nations and nationalism. “Hobsbawm regards the nation and its associated phenomena as products of ‘social engineering’, more specifically as traditions invented by ruling elites who felt threatened by the incursion of the masses into politics.”⁴⁶

“For Hobsbawm, nations and nationalism owe much to the literary and historicist inventions of national history, mythology and symbolism, which flourished in Europe from about 1830 onwards, and especially after 1870. The decades before 1914 saw a flood of such ‘invented traditions’ – national festivals, ceremonies for the fallen, flags and anthems, statuomania, sporting contests and the like. Unlike earlier traditions, which adapted to change, the ‘invented’ versions were deliberate and invariant creations of cultural engineers, who forged symbols, rituals, myths and histories to meet the needs of the modern masses, whom industry and democracy were mobilizing and politicizing. In other words, they were deliberate instruments of social control by ruling classes.”⁴⁷

For Smith, the new element in social-constructionism is the emphasis on social engineering and technical innovation, on the fashioning of a cultural artifact and text, on the use of skill and imagination to create novel forms. Smith adds that “this ‘strong’ form of social constructionism goes beyond Gellner, for it suggests that, as they were

⁴⁶ Özkırmılı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.121.

⁴⁷ Smith *Nationalism*, pp.80-81.

created, so nations may, like artifacts and texts, be dissolved, and their imagining and narration may cease.”⁴⁸

According to Anderson nations are formed “only when technological innovations established ‘print capitalism’, when reading spread from the elites into other classes and people started to read mass publications in their own languages rather than in classical religious languages, thus establishing linguistic national ‘imagined communities’.”⁴⁹

For Anderson, the terminological confusion surrounding the concept of nation is partly caused by the tendency to treat it as an ideological construct. Things would be easier if it is seen as belonging to the same family as ‘kinship’ or ‘religion’; hence his definition of the nation as ‘an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign’. It is imagined because ‘the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’. It is imagined as limited because each nation has finite boundaries beyond which lie other nations... Here, it is worth stressing that for Anderson, ‘imagining’ does not imply ‘falsity’. He makes this point quite forcefully when he accuses Gellner for assimilating ‘invention’ to ‘fabrication’ and ‘falsity’, rather than to ‘imagining’ and ‘creation’ with the intention of showing that nationalism masquerades under false pretensions. Such a view implies that there are ‘real’ communities which can be advantageously compared to nations. In fact, however, all communities larger than small villages of face-to-face contact (perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities, Anderson concludes, should not be distinguished by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.⁵⁰

Anderson summarizes his basic argument in his well-known work, *Imagined Communities* as such: “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp.78-79.

⁴⁹ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, (London; Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage Publications 1997), p.15.

⁵⁰ Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, pp.144-145.

⁵¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso 1983), p.95.

As Anderson puts it, there were three other factors which propelled the revolutionary vernacularizing thrust of capitalism and contributed directly to the rise of national consciousness. “The first, and ultimately the least important, was a change in the character of Latin itself.”⁵²

Thanks to the Humanists, the literary works of pre-Christian antiquity were discovered and spread to the market. This generated a new interest in the sophisticated writing style of the ancients which further removed Latin from ecclesiastical and everyday life. Second was the impact of the Reformation, which owed much of its success to print-capitalism. The coalition between Protestantism and print-capitalism quickly created large reading publics and mobilized them for political/religious purposes. Third was the adoption of some vernaculars as administrative languages. Together, these three factors led to the dethronement of Latin and created large reading publics in the vernaculars.⁵³

According to Anderson, print languages laid the bases for national consciousness in three distinct ways.

“First, and foremost, they created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars. These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally-imagined community. Second, print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation. Third, print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars. Certain dialects inevitably were ‘closer’ to each print-language and dominated their final forms.”⁵⁴

Anderson stresses the significance of a revolutionary process which has transformed the medieval Christian conception of time.

“According to such a conception, events are situated simultaneously in the present, past and future. The past prefigures the future, so that the latter ‘fulfils’ what is announced and promised in the former. The occurrences of the past and the future are linked neither temporally nor causally, but by Divine Providence which alone can devise such a plan of history. In such a

⁵² Ibid., p. 91.

⁵³ Özkırmılı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.148.

⁵⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp.94-95.

view of things, Anderson notes, ‘the word “meanwhile” cannot be of real significance’. This conception of ‘simultaneity-along-time’ was replaced by the idea of ‘homogeneous empty time’, a term Anderson borrows from Walter Benjamin. Simultaneity is now understood as being transverse, cross-time, marked by temporal coincidence and measured by clock and calendar. The new conception of time made it possible to ‘imagine’ the nation as a ‘sociological organism’ moving steadily down (or up) history.”⁵⁵

For Anderson, the new genres of the novel and newspaper –which can be called as the nationalist or national novel and newspaper - have been fundamentally influential on this transformation of the conception of time and hence, on the rise of national consciousness.

Ethnicist Approaches Re-Visited

Ethno-Symbolism as a Critical Theory Against Modernism

Modernist theories of nation and nationalism are challenged by a set of theorists holding a variety of emphases in their criticisms. The ethno-symbolist theory of nation and nationalism also emerged as a counter-theory against the modernist theories. The emphasis of this section will be devoted to the ethno-symbolist theory and criticisms against modernism due to the fact that this research study aims to elaborate the concepts of nation and national identity provided by the ethnicist and modernist approaches to nation and nationalism.

Although the scholars we identify as the ethno-symbolists (like John Armstrong, Anthony D. Smith and John Hutchinson) share a common viewpoint about nations and nationalism, they may differ in terms of their classification of each other. “For example

⁵⁵ Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.146.

Armstrong, considered by many as the pioneer of this approach, never mentions the term in his studies. For Smith, Armstrong is a ‘perennialist’, while for Hutchinson, both Smith and Armstrong are ‘ethnicists’.⁵⁶

Ethno-symbolist thinkers challenge the modernist theorists in terms of their disregard of the existence of nations before modernity. They basically criticize the modernist theories with the argument that the modern nations are no *tabula rasa*, that is to say, both nations and nationalism have pre-existent ethnic components. For Smith “it is true that nationalism, the ideology and the movement, is a fairly recent phenomenon, dating from the late eighteenth century, but it is also possible to trace the growth of national sentiments which transcend ethnic ties back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, if not earlier, in several states of Western Europe.”⁵⁷

The ethno-symbolist approach is offered as a third way between the primordialist/perennialist and modernist theories of nations and nationalism. While the ethno-symbolist scholars emphasize the role of pre-existing ethnic components in the formation of nations and nationalism, they also appreciate the impact of modernity in the transformation of the ethnic components into nations and nationalism. According to the ethno-symbolists, “the rise of nations needs to be contextualized within the larger phenomenon of ethnicity which shaped them. The differences between modern nations and the collective cultural units of earlier eras are of degree rather than kind. This suggests that ethnic identities change more slowly than is generally assumed. Once formed, they tend to be exceptionally durable under ‘normal’ vicissitudes of history

⁵⁶Ibid., p.168.

⁵⁷ Smith, *Nations and Nationalisms in a Global Era*, p.38.

(such as migrations, invasions, intermarriages) and to persist over many generations, even centuries.”⁵⁸

Anthony Smith, the leading theorist of the ethno-symbolist approach, introduces the concept of *ethnie*, the French term used for ethnicity, in his analysis of nation and nationalism. He defines the concept of *ethnie* as “a named human community connected to a homeland, possessing common myths of ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of shared culture, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites”.⁵⁹

Smith maintains the basic argument of the ethno-symbolist position that the modern era and thus the modern nation are *no tabula rasa* by referring to the *ethnies* or ethnic cores of the nations. He declares that in contrast to the modernist understanding of nation, nation “emerges out of the complex social and ethnic formations of earlier epochs, and the different kinds of *ethnie*, which modern forces transform, but never obliterate. The modern era in this respect resembles a palimpsest on which are recorded experiences and identities of different epochs and a variety of ethnic foundations, the earlier influencing and being modified by the later, to produce the composite type of collective cultural unit which we call ‘the nation’.”⁶⁰

Smith distinguishes two main types of *ethnies*, which are the ‘lateral’ or aristocratic, and the ‘vertical’ or demotic types. For him, ‘lateral’ *ethnies* are extensive and diffuse in character, but it is also a high-status group since their ethnic culture is confined to the upper classes. Whereas ‘vertical’ *ethnies* are territorially limited and their ethnic culture is shared by all the classes of the community, yet there are high barriers for entry of the outsiders. Smith regards these *ethnies* as frozen into a composite

⁵⁸ Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.169.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Nationalism*, p.13.

⁶⁰ Smith, *Nations and Nationalisms in a Global Era*, pp.59-60.

mosaic of status groups and thinks that these core groups of the cultural communities have provided varying degrees of ready-made or 'available' networks of interaction and sentiment, endowing population clusters with a sense of familial intimacy and separate ancestral identity, in contrast to the 'alien' ways and beliefs of the outsiders.⁶¹

Moreover, Smith views *ethnies* as sources of ethnic-revival, whose members can be mobilized any time by ethno-religious movements of renewal and by charismatic leaders. Therefore for Smith, *ethnies* are central for comprehensive analyses of the ethnic conflicts, ethnic fragmentation and separatist movements which still take place in the areas of advanced modernity and thus cannot only be explained by the processes of modernity.⁶²

For Smith, the ethno-symbolist approach differs from the modernist, perennialist and primordialist paradigms of ethnicity and nationalism in terms of its focus particularly on the subjective elements in the persistence of *ethnies*, the formation of nations and the impact of nationalism. Smith adds that "this does not mean that it takes 'objective' factors for granted or excludes them from the purview of its analysis; only that it gives more weight to subjective elements of memory, value, sentiment, myth and symbol, and that it thereby seeks to enter and understand the 'inner worlds' of ethnicity and nationalism."⁶³

The modernist theories, especially Gellner's theory are forcefully criticized by a set of theorists due to their functionalist approaches to the origins of nations and nationalism. According to these accounts of modernism, "Gellner's argument displays all the vices of functionalist reasoning – in which events and processes occur which are

⁶¹ Ibid., p.59.

⁶² Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, (London and New York: Routledge 1998).

⁶³ Smith, *Nationalism*, p.57.

implausibly treated as wholly beyond the understanding of human agents, in which consequences precede causes, and in which suspicions arise that supra-individual and holistic entities are being tacitly invoked to do explanatory work.”⁶⁴

Anthony Smith also challenges the stark functionalism of the modernist theories in general and Gellner’s theory in particular. As Smith puts it, for Gellner nationalism was “no accident or ‘invention’. Rather, it was an inevitable consequence of the transition to modernity in which all societies of the world had been involved since the eighteenth century. It followed that, though nationalism was logically contingent, it was sociologically necessary – in the modern world.” Furthermore, Smith criticizes Gellner’s materialist and determinist outlook and states that “nations and nationalism were now seen as necessary and functional for industrial modernity, just as the latter became necessarily nationalist. A particular kind of socioeconomic formation required a certain kind of culture and ideology, and vice-versa.”⁶⁵

The modernist theories are criticized basically due to their ‘top-down’ approach by the ethno-symbolists. For the ethno-symbolist theorists, the modernist theorists disregard the individual dimension but rather overemphasize the role of the purely external political and economic factors in their theories of nations and nationalism. Hence, the modernist theorists are instrumentalist in terms of their analyses of the national identity. They try to explain individuals’ identification with the nation by the dominant structures and processes which are generated by modernity. According to Smith, the individual dimension which is neglected by the modernist theories refers to the pre-existing ethnic components of an individual’s identity.

⁶⁴ Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.137.

⁶⁵ Smith, *Nationalism*, pp.63-66.

Smith asks the reasons of identification of the people with an invented high culture and of nationalistic sacrifices. Against Gellner who points at the modern systems of mass education as an answer, Smith underlines the effect of the pre-existing ethnic cultures of nations which resulted in the development of the modern nation and its culture and identification of the people with the national identity. As Smith puts it,

“the ardour of the early nationalists, those who create the nation in the first place, cannot be the product of a national mass education system which has not at that date come into being. It is not possible to establish a ‘national’ educational system without first determining who the ‘nation’ is. Who will receive the education? In which language? To explain the nationalism of those who propose answers to these questions, that is those who ‘construct’ the nation, by mass education is to fall, once again, into the trap of functionalism. According to Smith, the solution to this problem lies in pre-existing ethnic cultures, the elements of which (its myths, symbols and traditions) have been incorporated into the nascent national cultures.”⁶⁶

Moreover Smith challenges the modernist theorists especially Hobsbawm and Anderson who identify the nation as an invented category, a construct of social engineering and a recent cultural artifact.⁶⁷ For Smith the traditions, myths, history and symbols of the nation which are defined as the “invented traditions” by Hobsbawm have been found in the historical repository of the nations. To open up, the invented traditions are not fabrications which have no historical or cultural bases. Indeed according to Smith they are reconstructions of the already existing traditions, myths, symbols and history of nation by the nationalist elites or intelligentsia in their efforts of building the nation and nation-state.

Smith criticizes Anderson with similar arguments mentioned above. He basically challenges Anderson’s concept of imagined community by referring to Anderson’s

⁶⁶ Özkırmılı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, p.141.

⁶⁷ Anthony D. Smith, “The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed ?” *Millenium: Journal of International Studies* 20, no. 3 (2001) p.359.

disregard of the content required for the imagination of nation. According to Smith, the national intelligentsias have provided many of the initial narratives and imagery of nation, even if they have not invented them *de novo*.⁶⁸ Anderson suggests that nations are inventions of collective imagination but he does not question the basis of this imagination for Smith. Due to the fact that his theory is unable to provide the historical cases which illustrate the development of the myths, symbols and memories of *ethnie* into the collective imaginary of the nation, Anderson fails to appreciate the ethnic roots of the nations and considers nation as a fabricated idea of collectivity.

The idea of the collective cultural identity which is revealed by the concept of *ethnie* in the ethno-symbolist theory of Anthony Smith contributes much to the analysis of the concepts of nation and national identity. Smith offers a definition of national identity from a subjective standpoint and identifies it as a collective cultural identity. “From a subjective standpoint, there can be no collective cultural identity without shared memories or a sense of continuity on the part of those who feel they belong to that collectivity.”⁶⁹ According to Smith ‘ethno-history’ which is defined as the subjective perception and understanding of the communal past by each generation of a given cultural unit of population is a defining element in the concept of cultural identity, and hence of more specific national identities. For Smith symbols, myths and memories of the *ethnies* are other subjective elements which constitute the collective cultural identities of *ethnies* and therefore of nations. Hence the ethno-symbolist theory assigns primary role to the subjective elements of cultural identities of *ethnies* in defining the characteristics of national identities.

⁶⁸ Smith, “*The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed ?*” p.363.

⁶⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.228.

For Smith, “the ethnic community or *ethnie* resembles an extended family, or rather a ‘family of families’, one which extends over time and space to include many generations and many districts in a specific territory. This sense of extended kinship, of ‘kith or kin’, attached to a particular ‘homeland’, underlies the national identities and unity of so many modern nations and endows their members with a vivid sense of kin relatedness and immemorial continuity.”⁷⁰ Despite the fact that the ethno-symbolist theorists provide significant criticisms against the primordialist, perennialist and modernist theories of nation and nationalism, the understanding of nation as an ethnic community coming to itself provided by the ethno-symbolist theory falls short to account for the process of transition of the local communities into modern nations inspite of their different cultural identities.

Criticism of the Ethno-symbolist Approach

Abbas Vali criticizes the ethnicist approaches to nation and national identity due to their way of defining nation and national identity which runs the risk of conflating ethnic identity with national identity. “The works of Smith and Armstrong, two better-known studies of nation and nationalism in the Western academy, suffer from the same shortcoming: in their analyses of the origins of the nation, ethnic and national origins constantly overlap, undermining the basis for a conceptual distinction between ethnic and national identity.”⁷¹ As Vali puts it, “for once ethnicity is perceived as the origin of the nation both before and after its formation, it would be impossible to account for the

⁷⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, p.46.

⁷¹ Abbas Vali (ed.), *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*. (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, Inc. 2003), p.61.

process of transition – “the process of consolidation of “ethnic peoples” or tribal/rural societies into modern nations”.⁷²

Although Smith and ethno-symbolists acknowledge the continuity of collective cultural identity, they seem to ignore the persistence of the local communities within the nation with their collective cultural identities which have existed before the constitution of modern nation and also survived throughout the formation processes of the nation. The ethno-symbolists fail to provide a competent analysis of the consolidation of the distinct cultural identities with the national identity and of the transition of the local communities into the modern nation. If cultural identity is irreducible, that is, if the cultural identities of local communities are not fully assimilated within the nation-building processes by the inculcation of national identity– as in the case of Arabs which will be illustrated in the next chapters–, we need to further understand how the members of the local communities identify with the nation despite their cultural differences.

In this respect, Homi Bhabha who believes in the irreducible nature of cultural difference offers more competent conceptual tools for a complicated analysis of the consolidation of the cultural identities of local communities with national identity. Moreover he provides significant insight for an understanding of the hybrid quality of national identity in every state and hence of unstable and shifting nature of the concepts of nation and national identity which will be elaborated in the next section and also in our discussion of the case of Arabs in Chapter 4.⁷³

Moreover the case of Arabs suggests that we need to re-appreciate the modernist argument about the constructed nature of the nation which is forcefully rejected by the

⁷² Ibid., p.61

⁷³ Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, p.202.

ethno-symbolist theorists. As to be discussed later in Chapter 4 the case of Arabs provides us significant insight in terms of the constructed nature of the nation and national identity. The case shows that the local communities with their distinct cultural identities can still be constructed as the nationals and believe in the national narratives which propose a certain understanding of national history and identity different from the ethno-history and cultural identities of the local communities. In this respect the ethno-symbolist idea of the reconstructed nature of the nation or the understanding of nation as the reconstitution of the ethnic community within a larger spectrum of land and people fails to explain how various cultural communities other than the *ethnies* are constructed as parts of the nation. In this respect, poststructuralist theories of discourse provide a better framework within which to understand the dynamics of national identification.

CHAPTER III

RE-THINKING NATIONAL IDENTITY

In Chapter II the literature on nation and nationalism is reviewed and the criticisms against the modernist approach by the ethno-symbolist approach in general and by Anthony Smith in particular are outlined in detail. This chapter is an attempt to develop a conceptual framework which will provide a more competent analysis of the concept of national identity than the ones offered by the modernist and ethno-symbolist theories.

Shortcomings of the Modernist and Ethno-symbolist Approaches to National Identity

The modernist and ethno-symbolist theories of nation and nationalism hold contrary presumptions about the nature of the phenomena of nation and national identity. While the modernist theorists affirm the constructed nature of the nation and national identity, the ethno-symbolist theorists stress that nations and their identities are rather reconstructed on the basis of their pre-existing ethnic roots in history.

Anthony Smith, the well-known representative of the ethnicist approach to nation and nationalism defines the historical ethnic communities which form the bases of the modern nations as *ethnie*. Smith's argument of the continuity of the nations in history

challenges the modernist conceptualization of nation and national identity as the recent cultural artifacts or fabrications of modernity. According to Smith the imagination of nation and national identity in a specific way requires the pre-existing myths, symbols, ethno-histories and memories of the ethnic communities. Without the persisting cultural identities of the ethnic communities the national intelligentsia would be bereft of the cultural material to build an imagination of the nation.

The presumption of the continuity of collective cultural identity proposed by the ethno-symbolist thinkers is based on a subjective conceptualization of collective identity. "From a subjective standpoint, there can be no collective cultural identity without shared memories or a sense of continuity on the part of those who feel they belong to that collectivity."⁷⁴ According to Smith national identity is another form of collective cultural identity which is based on the subjective elements of cultural identities of the ethnies such as symbols, myths, memories and *ethno-histories* of the ethnies. Smith defines ethno-history of a collectivity as the subjective perception and understanding of the communal past by each generation of a given cultural unit of population.⁷⁵

Smith asserts that any fabrication of the national identity which does not depend on the cultural identities of the ethnies would not be able to sustain devotion of the people to the nation and national identity. To open up the people would not be deceived by such a fabricated or false notion of nation and national identity which has no historical and cultural basis. Hence for Smith people would not be able to identify themselves with notions of nation and national identity which are outright forgery. As Smith puts it,

⁷⁴ Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, p.228.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

“what is much more debateable, and less frequent, is the fabrication and single-handed initiation of the national traditions and national history as crucial components of nationhood. It is one thing to establish such traditions and ‘discover’ such history, it is quite another to ensure their lasting success and popular acceptance. Traditions, myths, history and symbols must all grow out of the existing, living memories and beliefs of the people who are to compose the nation. Their popular resonance will be greater the more continuous with the living past they are shown to be.”⁷⁶

Despite the fact that the ethno-symbolist theorists appreciate the persistence of cultural communities or in their words *ethnies* in the modern nation, they seem to ignore the existence of various other local communities within the modern nation with their collective cultural identities which have existed before the constitution of modern nation and also survived throughout the formation processes of the nation. In this respect the ethno-symbolists do not provide a competent analysis of the transition of these local communities into the modern nation and of the consolidation of the distinct cultural identities of these communities with the national identity.⁷⁷

According to Smith since cultural difference is irreducible or persists for long periods of time, the national identity which emphasizes the cultural identity of the *ethnie* over the other cultural identities would not be accepted by the members of local communities because of the fact that for these communities with divergent identities the national identity would be foreign to their cultural identities. For Smith, people would not believe in the outright forgery that is to say in the invented traditions such as national history and myths which are only fabrications not having relationship with their

⁷⁶ Smith, “The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed ?” p. 359.

⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion, see Vali, *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*.

pasts and identities. Hence the ethno-symbolist presumption of the reconstruction of the nation and national identity rejects the construction of the members of the local communities as the nationals.

In contrast to Smith who assumes that outright forgery meaning the fabricated notions of nation and national identity would fail to provide identification of the people with the nation and national identity, I claim that the people who have distinct cultural identities different from the proposed notion of national identity can still identify with the nation and believe in the “outright forgery” (the nation as a collectivity with the shared history and culture). The case of Arabs suggests that we need to re-appreciate the modernist argument about the constructed nature of the nation which is forcefully rejected by the ethno-symbolist theorists. As to be discussed later in Chapter 4 the case of Arabs provides us significant insight in terms of the constructed nature of the nation and national identity. The case shows that even the members of local communities with their distinct cultural identities (different from the historical and cultural identity of the ethnies or ethnic community of the nation) can still be constructed as the “nationals” and believe in the national narratives which propose a certain understanding of the national history and identity different from the ethno-history and cultural identities of the local communities. In this respect the ethno-symbolist premise of the reconstructed nature of the nation or the understanding of nation as the reconstitution of the ethnic community within a larger spectrum of land and people fails to explain how various cultural communities other than the ethnies are constructed as the nationals of the nation.

The case of Arabs also provides significant insight to challenge the modernist argument that the modern nation is turned into a homogeneous body of people endowed with a certain imagination of national identity. I presume that there are various local

communities who hold distinct cultural identities populated in various localities of the nation and argue that there are a variety of imaginations of the nation and national identity as an effect of the distinct identities of local communities. Following Bhabha I argue that due to their differences of identity the members of local communities never totally endorse the definitions of nation and national identity as they are given in the national narratives but they challenge these definitions and redefine them by inserting their cultural identities into them. Hence I further claim that the nation and national identity are never homogeneous and stable but unstable, shifting, hybrid and multiple because of the re-definitions of them by the members of local communities with distinct cultural identities. This means that as the national identity is endorsed by the members of a local community, it is tailored with respect to their cultural identities and appropriated in a new and authentic form.

The case of Arabs in Batman illustrates the need to re-conceptualize “national identity” with an appreciation of its unstable and shifting nature which is an effect of the differential definitions or imaginations of the national identity by the members of local communities in terms of their cultural identities. The case indicates that national identity is re-articulated in various ways by the members of cultural communities themselves with respect to the different cultural identities of their communities. The members of cultural communities differ and have always differed from other cultural communities in terms of their social imaginaries which refer to the boundaries and identities of the cultural communities and which are formed and transformed as an effect of the social antagonisms that come into existence contingently and historically in various localities of the nation.

Due to the fact that the modernist and ethnicist conceptualizations of national identity fall short of analyzing the differential definitions of the national identity by the members of cultural communities throughout their identification processes with the national identity, they are unable to appreciate the unstable, shifting and multiple nature of national identity. Hence the theoretical incapability of the modernist and ethnicist theories of nation and nationalism to analyze the re-definitions of the national identity by the members of cultural communities as in the case of Arabs necessitates another conceptual framework which offers competent conceptual tools for analysis of the variations in the imagination of national identity in various localities of the nation.

Post-structuralist theories of identity and society especially discourse theory contributes much to a competent analysis of the phenomenon of national identity with their emphases on the shifting and unstable nature of identity and society. Following these theories, I argue that national identity is a process of signification or a sign which is unstable, shifting and multiple due to the different variations of its definition by the members of cultural communities who have different social imaginaries in various localities of the nation derived from the social antagonisms.

Alternative Conceptual Framework

Nation and National Identity as Signs

In his post-structuralist account of nation and national identity, Homi Bhabha suggests us to think of nation and national identity as signs or processes of signification which are

open to contestation and re-definition by the members of local communities whose cultural identities are not represented by the signs of nation and national identity given by the pedagogical narratives of the discourse of nationalism. For Bhabha, the pedagogical narratives are the stories provided by the nationalist discourse about the national history, myths, memories and common ancestry which have the function of inculcating the national identity into the body of citizens. Bhabha argues that the pedagogical narratives of the nationalist discourse are repeated by the citizens as they try to identify with the national identity. However the citizens never repeat or narrate the pedagogical story exactly as its original. The repetitions of the pedagogical narratives are never exactly similar to the original story because of the fact that they are copies of the original stories but not the originals themselves. There is always a difference included in the copy. Bhabha calls the different renarrations of the pedagogical narratives by the citizens as “performative narratives” or “performance”.

In accordance with Derrida’s conceptualization of supplement Bhabha argues that as the citizens renarrate the pedagogical narrative through their discursive performances, they supplement the original story with their performances or own configurations of the stories. Hence these supplements to the pedagogical narratives result in the challenging the pedagogical narratives. Derrida states that supplement refers to two meanings: one is *add to* and the other is *add up*. The supplement has both the function of complementing a totality and at the same time displaying the lack inherent in that totality. Hence by revealing the lack in totality, the supplement destabilizes or challenges the totality. Moreover being a complement it introduces something missing in the totality. Thus by adding up to the totality the supplement re-articulates or establishes the totality in a new configuration. For Bhabha the discursive performances of the

pedagogical narratives by the members of a designated community always add up the differential cultural identities of that community into the pedagogical narratives. This results in the deconstruction and at the same time re-definition/modification of the signs of the national identity and nation which are provided in the pedagogical narratives of the nationalist discourse.

As I will show in the analysis of the case study of Arabs in Chapter 4, the sign of the Turkish national identity is constantly challenged and at the same time re-defined by the Arabs themselves as they add up their identities into the definition of the Turkish nation in their renarrations of the national narratives. I will analyse the re-definitions of the Turkish nation and national identity by the Arabs through Bhabha's concepts of the pedagogical and performative narratives. Such an analysis will contribute to illuminate the unstable, shifting and multiple nature of the concepts of national identity and nation.

The Concept of Social Imaginary Modified Through Post-structuralism

I adopted Castoriadis' concept of "social imaginary" in order to inquire into the nature of the cultural identities of the local communities and the place of national identity among these cultural identities. I have adopted Castoriadis' term, social imaginary with significant reservations and indeed introduced a different definition of the term by modifying it in terms of discourse theory's conceptualization of society and identity.

Castoriadis offers the concept of "social imaginary" as an analytical tool for the analysis of society as a totality whose members share a common understanding of the community and its identity. For Castoriadis, every society looks at reflexively onto itself and asks the question of "who are we?" The answer to this question is again provided by

the society through signification and the negation of the existing significations. Social imaginary significations “create thus a ‘representation’ of the world, including the society itself and its place in this world.”⁷⁸

Castoriadis conceptualizes social imaginary as a transparent or total representation of the society and its identity which is always already found within the society itself but just needed to be illustrated by representation. For Castoriadis, the foundational question of the society, “who are we?” whose answer reveals the identity of the society is answered by the society itself upon a reflexive thinking of its identity. However Castoriadis disregards the fact that each answer provides a different definition of the society and its identity as the reflexive thinking of the society over its identity changes in time with the changing socio-political context of the society. This means that Castoriadis fails to acknowledge the fact that there is no stable and unique definition of the society and its identity and social imaginary of the society shifts in time as to content together with the changing definitions of the society and its identity.

In contrast to Castoriadis’ conceptualization of society and its identity, post-structuralist thinkers and especially the discourse theorists assert that there is no definition of the society which reveals the essence of the society and its identity. Discourse theorists assert the discursive character of any identity and argue that there is no identity formed outside discourse. This basic assumption leads them to argue for the originary lack/gap that is inherent in the discursive representation and hence constitution of any identity such as that of society and subject. For them there is no essential meaning, identity nor definition of the subject and society before their discursive

⁷⁸ C. Castoriadis, “Radical Imagination and The Social Instituting Imaginary,” in Curtis (ed.) *The Castoriadis Reader*, (Blackwell 1997), p. 336.

representation. Hence no representation of the society is able to represent the society in full terms and any particular signifier of identity which tries to represent the society fully always leaves out various identities of the society as unrepresented. Hence full representation of the society as a totality in the discursive field is never possible due to the originary lack – in the representation and thus constitution – of the society.

Due to the failure in total representation of society, there is no closure of meaning in the definition of society. As any signifier of the society fails to represent the society in full terms, the failure in representation of the “unrepresented” identities of society triggers new signifiers/definitions of the society as a totality. Therefore the failure in the representation of the originary lack/gap of the society provides at the same time particular means/signifiers to represent the society as a totality. As Laclau puts it, the impossibility of the representation of the absent totality of the society becomes at the same time the condition of possibility of the representation of the society by various means/identities. Hence the originary gap or lack in the constitution or representation of society is constitutive of the society itself.

The discourse theorists invite us to consider any collectivity as an impossible ideal of closure and fullness which is required for the organization and constitution of that collectivity. As Laclau puts it, ‘although the fullness and universality of society is unachievable, its need does not disappear: it will always show itself through the presence of its absence. In other words, even if the full closure of the social is not realisable in any actual society, the idea of closure and fullness still functions as an

impossible) ideal. Societies are thus organised and centred on the basis of such (impossible) ideals.”⁷⁹

Following discourse theorists conceptualization of society, I conceptualize social imaginary as the impossible ideal of totality that is expressed by the members of any community in their definitions of the community. Hence social imaginary of the community is revealed in the analysis of the set of particular signifiers of identity through which the absent totality of the society is represented in the discursive performances of the members of that community.

Throughout their representations of the society, the members of that society need to make multiple definitions of society due to the originary lack of the society which precludes closure of meaning in the definition of society. Hence the social imaginary of the community consists of multiple and even contradictory signifiers referring to the totality of the community. Any signifier of the community always fails to represent the community as a totality because of the fact that the definition of the community in one way never provides an all-inclusive definition of the community meaning that the community always has excesses of identity endowed by its members which are not fully represented by that particular signifier of the community.

Though the definitions of the society through various signifiers may not be necessarily coherent among them and also cannot represent fully the society as a totality, they reveal the ideal of the members of the society to constitute the society as a totality.

An analysis of the social imaginary of the Arab community indicates that the members of the Arab community fail to identify the community with a single term or

⁷⁹David Howarth, Aletta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2000), p.8.

definition and they continuously move from one definition of their community to another whereby they try to define their community as a totality that is significantly different from other communities but homogeneous within itself. For the interviewees at one moment in the interview Arab community is formed of Turks, at another one it is a Muslim community or a community speaking Arabic. The multiple and sometimes contradictory signs of identity which are expressed by the interviewees illustrates the failure in the representation of the Arab community as a totality. However this does not indicate that the Arab community is less than a community. Similar to all other forms of collectivity, the idea of totality which is the basis of the constitution of the Arab community is derived from the identification of “what the community is not” or of the boundaries of the community. By the differentiation of the Arab community from the rest of the Arabs abroad and communities in Turkey, the Arab community is defined and constituted as a totality though with a variety of signs of identity. The particular means of representation of the Arab community are multiple due to the fact that there is no true essence of the community that can be outlined by reference to only one single term of identity. The Arab community is neither only a linguistic community nor Turks or a tribe; it is all of them and not one of them at the same time. All of these terms of identity represent the Arab community in one respect but as particular signifiers they fail to represent it totally. The absent totality of the community becomes visible in the multiple and often contradictory acts of signification of the Arab community as a totality throughout the remarks of the members of the community.

In this respect the concepts of identity and society of the discourse theorists contribute to develop our analysis of the national identity. The case of Arabs reveals the fact that the cultural identities of the local communities which seem to be totally

incompatible with the national identity can coexist with the national identity in the self-definitions of the members of the local communities. In the case of Arabs there are incompatible differences of identity between the communal identities of the Arabs and Turkish national identity. What is significant is that the elements of cultural identities of the Arab community such as tribal affiliation, Arabic language as the native language of the community members, the ethno-history and myths of the community which do not conform with the Turkish national identity can be left as unproblematic or at best ignored by the Arabs. Those signifiers of identity which do not overlap with the signifiers of Turkish national identity can still coexist with national identity in the self-definitions of the Arabs. This is derived from the fact that none of these identities meaning the cultural identities of the Arabs and the Turkish national identity are able to define the Arab community as a totality. All of them are the signs of identities of the Arab community including the Turkish national identity which try to represent the Arab community in full terms but fail to do so. Hence I claim that the sign of the national identity is always found side by side with the cultural identities of the local communities due to the fact that national identity is just another sign among the other cultural identities of the local communities which represent the absent totality of the local community.

Acknowledging the Instability Inherent in Cultural Community and Identity

The modification of the concept of social imaginary by introducing the post-structuralist understanding of identity and society provides us with an understanding of the shifting and unstable nature of a community that is to say the boundaries and identities of a

community. Hence this conceptualization of social imaginary of a community differs from the concept of collective cultural identity that is proposed by Anthony Smith. For Smith, collective cultural identities are based on the elements of identity such as shared memories, ethno-history, symbols, myths and ancestry of the community. Smith considers that these elements of identity represent the collective identity of the community which is not obliterated throughout history. However, I claim that, although these elements of identity represent the identity of a community in a specific time and context, they are always subject to change in time as to content. This means there is no stable content of community and its identity.

The concept of social imaginary allows us to think of cultural difference not as a set of frozen or stable elements of cultural identity of a collectivity but as the unstable and shifting signifiers of the identity of a community which try to represent the community as a totality. Following post-structuralist theories of identity I claim that social imaginary of any community is formed as an effect of the social antagonisms in and through which the communal boundaries and thus the particular definitions of the community are constituted. Post-structuralist theories of identity suggest that any identity is relational and is constituted in and through antagonistic relationships against other identities. In this respect it is argued that any reflexive question on the definition of the society requires the existence of the “others” of the community. The members of any community ask the question of “who are we?” when the community enters into an antagonistic relationship with another community and answers this foundational question with multiple answers due to the fact that no particular answer about the definition of the society is able to represent the community fully. The continuous discursive performances of the members of the community to define the society as a

totality are derived from the antagonistic relationship they have entered into against the “significant others” of the community.

Moreover as the social antagonisms transform contingently in time, the antagonistic relationships of that community against the other communities and their identities also change resulting in the transformation of the previous social imaginaries of the members of cultural communities that is to say the communal boundaries and definitions of communal identity.

Castoriadis finds the difference, contingency and new in the radical imaginary. For him, the place of radical imaginary is the individual psyche. *Radical imaginary* is personal. Though individuals are born into a society having a socially instituted imaginary, they can challenge and thus, change the existing social imaginary with their radical imaginary which brings new significations. However any argumentation of change in the social imaginary of the community would be shallow without consideration of the socio-political field in and through which the subject/individual comes into existence. Castoriadis’ conceptualization of the radical imaginary presumes an understanding of the subject that is in line with “the ‘Enlightenment’ or Cartesian conception of the subject” which “pictures a conscious and unified individual marked by inherently rational capacities that allow her/him to experience and make sense of the world according to the actual properties of that world.”⁸⁰ According to this way of thinking of the subject, “human beings are held to be fully centred and unified individuals with an inner core.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ Christopher Barker and Dariusz Galansinski, *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis: A Dialogue on Language and Identity*, (London: Sage 2001), p.40.

⁸¹ Christopher Barker and Dariusz Galansinski, *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis*, p.40.

Rather than thinking of difference and contingency in radical imaginary or the individual psyche, discourse theorists offer us to conceptualize the articulatory effect of the social antagonisms in the formation and transformation of the social boundaries and identities. Different from Castoriadis' understanding of social imaginary, this conceptualization of social imaginary provides us to acknowledge the shifting nature of social imaginary which is the effect of the social antagonisms that are historically and contingently formed and transformed. This is particular relevant in understanding how and why the Arab community in Batman situates itself in opposition to the Kurdish community living in the same region, as I will show in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE CASE OF ARABS IN BATMAN

This chapter aims to develop a more competent analysis of the concept of national identity through an exploration of the social imaginary of the Arab community in Batman and the consolidation of the Arab communal identity with the Turkish national identity. First of all the social imaginary of the Arab community is analysed in terms of the definitions of the Arab community by the members of the community and hence the elements of the Arab communal identity are outlined in detail. Secondly, the conditions of the formation of the social imaginary of the Arab community are also emphasized. Afterwards the constructed nature of national identity is displayed by an analysis of the identification of the Arabs with the Turkish national identity despite the co-existence of incompatible elements of Arab communal identity with the Turkish national identity. Lastly, the unstable and shifting nature of national identity is illustrated through the analysis of the renarrations of the Turkish national narratives by the Arabs with the inclusion of the Arab identity.

The identification of the members of the Arab community with the Turkish national identity despite the fact that various elements of the Arab communal identity do not conform to the Turkish national identity reveals the fact that national identity can

construct cultural communities as “nationals” although it seems to be totally foreign to the cultural identities of the community. In this respect the argument of the ethno-symbolists against the modernists that national identity needs to represent the collective cultural identity of the *ethnie* to be able to succeed in constructing the people as nationals is challenged. As the case of Arabs illustrates the members of local communities with their distinct cultural identities can believe in the national narratives which propose a certain understanding of the national history and identity that is completely different from the ethno-history and cultural identities of the local communities. Hence the modernist understanding of the nation and national identity which suggests that people are constructed as the nationals by believing in the fabricated notion of nation and national identity needs to be re-appreciated.

Moreover the ethnographic study of Arabs indicate that although various identities of the social imaginary of the Arab community are incompatible with the Turkish national identity, they can still co-exist in the social imaginary of the Arab community together with the Turkish national identity as the signifiers of Arab community. This illustrates that national identity does not necessarily dominate the social imaginary of the cultural communities but it is included into the chain of significations of communal identity though as a contradictory element of identity but which nevertheless represents the absent totality of that collectivity. Hence the case shows that national identity as a sign always exists side by side with the cultural identities of the local communities in the social imaginaries of those communities due to the fact that national identity is just another sign incorporated into the cultural identities of the local communities.

Finally the case of Arabs invites us to acknowledge the unstable, hybrid, multiple and shifting nature of national identity. The renarrations of the national narratives by the members of the Arab community indicate that Turkish national identity is challenged and modified by the inclusion of the Arab identity into the definition of the Turkish nation and national identity. Hence the case challenges both the modernist and ethno-symbolist definitions of national identity as such: In contrast to the modernist argument that nation and national identity are homogeneous imaginations shared by all the nationals, the case at stake shows that members of cultural communities expand the given imaginations of the nation by adding up their cultural identities. Hence in different localities and periods of the nation, a variety of imaginations of the nation and national identity does prevail.

The ethno-symbolist conceptualization of national identity as a shared collective cultural identity continuing in time is also challenged by this analysis. National identity never remains the same in time because of the modifications of it by the cultural communities. Moreover national identity is always subject to further change and re-modification in time as to its content due to the transformations in the social imaginaries of the cultural communities. As the social imaginaries of cultural communities are transformed in time with the shifting social antagonisms, the members of the cultural communities will make new modifications of the national identity. Thus national identity never ends up turning into a more hybrid and heterogeneous identity.

Social Imaginary as the Arab Community: “Who are the Arabs?”

Failure of Representation of the Arab Community as a Totality

Upon the questions about their community and communal identity, the members of the Arab community proposed a variety of answers all of which aimed at drawing the distinctions of the Arab community from the other cultural communities or Arab communities whether living in Turkey or abroad. The remarks of the interviewees in terms of their definitions of the Arab community indicate that they fail to identify the community with a single term or definition and they continuously move from one definition of their community to another whereby they try to define their community as a totality that is significantly different from other communities but homogeneous within itself.

Through the post-structuralist understanding of identity and society, we have analyzed in Chapter III that any definition of a community is subject to constant failure in picturing the reality of the community fully in the discursive realm due to the fact that being a representation, it is a representation of the community but not the community itself.

The expression of multiple signifiers of identity throughout the discursive performances of the interviewees illustrates the failure of representation of the Arab community as a totality. All the particular definitions or signs of identity which aspire to represent the Arab community as a totality fail to do so due to the fact that each sign of

identity of the Arab community leaves out something undescribed in terms of the identity of the members of the Arab community and thus the community itself.

Moreover, following the post-structuralist point of view of identity and society in conceptualizing social imaginary it is presumed that the social imaginary of any community is never stable but always subject to constant re-constitution as an effect of the changing social antagonisms. This section on the social imaginary of the Arab community aims at picturing the present cultural identities and boundaries of the Arab community which have not been necessarily the same in different periods of time and socio-political contexts that most probably involved different social antagonisms.

The social imaginary of the Arab community as a totality meaning its identities and boundaries is constituted in relation to the basic social antagonism against the Kurdish community in the region. The conditions of existence of this social antagonism and the effects of it in developing the social imaginary of the Arab community will be elaborated in section B in detail.

“We are an Arab tribe”

Throughout the in-depth interviews and also the conversations that took place during the informal visits to the houses of the members of the Arab community living in villages Hatetke and Behmir, the communal or in fact the tribal history of the Arabs and the traits of the Arab community were among the main themes that were enthusiastically and continuously mentioned by almost all of the interviewees and also of other attendants of the talks. Almost always the interviewees defined the Arab community as a tribe (*aşiret*)

or extended family with authentic characteristics of its members and with its unique history.

The members of the community living in the villages Hatetke and Behmir stress their strong feelings of attachment to the “tribe”. They think they descend from the three brothers named Musa, Saro (Süleyman) and Bello (Bilal) who migrated to the mountainous region of Batman from an Arab country approximately seven hundred years ago in the Ottoman times. They believe that they are the sons of these three brothers and thus today all the sons (*evlad*) descending from these three brothers compose the Arab tribe of 100.000 people living in the eastern cities of Turkey such as Batman, Siirt and Muş. This is how an interviewee relates his tribal affiliation:

“Kuran’ı Kerim’de de Allah aşiret vermiş, aşiret olun demiş. Her evden bir kişi konuşamaz, her aşiretten bir kişi vekil olur aşirete, her şeyi yapabilir bu kişi. Aşir olarak asıl olarak Arabız.” C (*Farmer, Male, Hatetke*)⁸²

The interviewees referred immediately to their tribal affiliation when they were asked questions with respect to their identity and belonging. The tribe is the predominant issue of the narratives of almost all of the interviewees. Almost all the interviewees mention their tribal history, ancestors and the significance of their ancestors in the tribal history with praise. Even the younger members of the community know very well the history of the tribe and narrate the stories of the ancestors in detail as if they experienced these stories themselves and knew in person those characters in the stories.

⁸² Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “Allah gives aşiret (tribe) in the Kur’an-ı Kerim, commands people to form aşiret (tribe). You cannot allow a person from each household to speak, only one person represents the tribe and this representative can do anything. We are Arabs by origin, by being a tribe.”

There is a strong oral tradition in the village. Most of the households in the two villages did not have TVs or even though they owned one, they did not watch it frequently. The villagers or the tribesmen indeed liked to go to visit each other and have long-lasting talks. During these visits the subject matter of the conversations mostly turned out to be the history of the tribe that is to say the personalities of the ancestors, their deeds, rivalries between the ancestors and the other tribes and so on.

Moreover the tribesmen were continuously making jokes or teasing each other because of each other's ancestors. For example, one man said that his wife was from a *kabile(clan)* which was known for the intelligence of their women. He said that he was lucky to have his wife and added "my wife is Tansu Çiller, my wife is (like) the president." Where as the other tribesmen also made fun of him saying that his ancestors were clumsy and added that the man acted wisely by marrying his wife who turned his house into a home (meaning that she brought affluence to the house by her intelligence and diligence which were the characteristics of her ancestors).

The significant predominance of the tribe in the remarks of the tribesmen is also followed by its institutional predominance in the organization of the lives and even the deaths of the tribesmen. Tribe and in fact its smaller branches of sub-tribes which are composed of several extended families stand as the basic unit of solidarity among the members of the Arab community. When I was in the field in Hatetke, an old lady died. Although there was an incredible snow in the city and it was really dangerous to travel by car even within the village, an enormous number of people that is to say the tribesmen from all over the city and from the villages in the mountaineous regions of Batman came to attend the funeral and console the family having the funeral. Moreover the tribe had been providing the significant function of protecting the rights, lives and

lands of the members of the Arab community from the rest of the communities for hundreds of years in the region. Even in the Republican period in 1950s the members of the Arab community were able to hold their place in the Kurdish village settled in the lowlands by the support of the tribesmen living in the highlands of Batman. The importance of family relations is evident in narratives:

“Akraban çok olmazsa haksızlık olur, akraban çok olursa konuşabilirsin. Şehirde öyle değil, burası aşiret memleketi. Orada ölen olsa belediye gömer, burada bir köy toplanır.” *H (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*⁸³

Tribal identity is mostly associated with kinship in the remarks of the interviewees. As Bruinessen proposes it is common to see in the Eastern Anatolia that tribal affiliation is mostly based on kinship relations.⁸⁴ In the case of Arabs, the tribe is generally composed of the kinsmen. As a matter of fact the Arab identity is considered to be ascribed by birth and thus it is mostly described as an essential identity by the interviewees. According to the interviewees the three cities of Muş, Batman and Siirt are all populated by the Arabs who are defined as their tribesmen that is to say their distant kinsmen. *Kabile* is a term is constantly used as a synonym for the tribe, *aşiret* throughout the remarks of the interviewees. However *kabile* is mostly described as the familial sub-tribe under the larger tribe whose members are composed of the close family members. Reportedly the Arab tribe consists of a large number of *kabiles*. In the case of the Arabs the members of several *kabiles* usually live together in a village or villages nearby. Each *kabile* seems to

⁸³ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “If you do not have many relatives, injustice is done. You can speak if you have many relatives. It is not like that in the city, this place is the tribe land. When there is a dead there (in city), the municipality buries the dead. Here a village (he means, all the people of a village) gathers (for burial).”

⁸⁴ For detailed information see Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*.

have a kinship relationship with the neighboring *kabiles* in the village due to the fact that marriages among tribesmen especially members of the neighboring *kabiles* are highly approved and motivated by the Arabs.

“Bu köyde bir çoban yabancıdır, hepsi bu üç sülaleden gelmedir, akrabadır, hepsi de Araptır.” *S (Farmer, Male, Behmir)* ⁸⁵

“Kürt yoktur...Biz şimdi hepimiz dağlıyızdır. Hepsi bir iki kabileyiz. İçimizde yabancı yoktur.” *Y (Housewife, Female, Behmir)* ⁸⁶

“Muş, Kozluk, Sason hep Araptır.” *S (Farmer, Male, Behmir)* ⁸⁷

“Tahminime göre 300 köy var Arap olan. Kozluk’tan Muş’a kadar.” *J (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)* ⁸⁸

The interviewees indicate that the districts of Batman such as Sason, Kozluk and the city of Muş are populated by the Arabs that is to say by the Arabs belonging to the tribe. Arab connotes here all the distant kinsmen or tribesmen.

The fact that the two terms, *aşiret* and *kabile* are interchangeably used by the interviewees for the definition of the Arab community reveals the will of the interviewees to describe the Arab community as a totality based on kinship relations. This means that the Arab community is imagined as an extended family by its members but this does not necessarily correspond to reality.

Despite the fact that most of the interviewees define the tribe in terms of kinship relations, the Arab tribe is not necessarily an organization based on real kinship

⁸⁵ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*In this village just the shepherd is a stranger. All the villagers descend from the three families, they are all kinsmen, all of them are Arabs.*”

⁸⁶ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*There is no Kurd among us...We are all from the mountain. All of us compose one or two clans. There is no foreigner among us*”.

⁸⁷ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*Muş, Kozluk, Sason are all Arab.*”

⁸⁸ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*As I guess there are 300 villages being Arab, from Kozluk to Muş.*”

relations. Bruinessen defines tribe as a political organization that unites a group of people against other groups. Similar to the other tribes mostly populated in the Eastern regions of Turkey, the tribe in the case of Arabs is also a political organization that does not necessarily require real kinship relations among its members for solidarity. There are two examples which illustrate the fact that the Arab tribe is not a homogenous totality based on kinship relations.

The first example is the issue of “lost kinsmen” which has been emphasized a few times throughout the interviews. The interviewees have expressed their feelings of attachment to a group of people living in Mardin who are considered to be the “lost kinsmen” although there is no real kinship relation among themselves and those tribesmen in Mardin. The “lost kinsmen” are considered to descend from the wife of their tribal ancestor who has migrated to Mardin. Since in Mardin the ancestor’s wife married another man who is totally foreign to the tribe and she also personally did not have any blood tie with the tribe, her children born in Mardin from her second huC (Farmer, Male, Hatetke) and did not have any kinship relation with the Arab families in Batman either. Yet the villagers in Mardin are still considered as their relatives and the descendants of the Arab tribe by the interviewees.

“-Mardin Kızıltepe’de akrabalarımızdan bir köy var 15-20 hane. Kız istemeye geldiler, vermediler. Hiç Arapça bilmiyorlar, hep Kürtçe. *A (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*
- Akho’nun kardeşinin çocukları bunlar, kaybolan akrabalar...
I (Housewife, Female, Hatetke)”⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “- *In Mardin there is a village composed of our relatives with 15-20 households. They have come to take a girl as bride, our villagers rejected. They (the kinsmen from Mardin) do not know any Arabic, they always speak Kurdish. -These are the children of Akho’s brother, the lost kinsmen...*”

The second example illustrating the political basis of the tribal organization in the case of Arabs is that the Arab tribe has included a group of Armenians into their tribal organization by 1915. According to the interviewees, there have been Armenians living in the lands of the tribe as their neighbors and craftsmen. The interviewees hold that when the Armenian communities were enforced by the Ottoman state to exile in 1915, various Kurdish tribes and even several sub-tribes belonging to the Arab tribe started to attack the Armenians living in Batman in order to appropriate their lands and wealth. The *kabile* of the interviewees which was originally composed of and organized around three brothers and their families decided to protect “their Armenians” both from the exile and the attacks of the other tribes. Therefore, the *kabile* declared to the other tribes and *kabiles* in the region that the Armenians were included into the Arab *kabile* as the fourth brother and family of the *kabile*. Any attack against “their newly acquired tribesmen” would be considered as an attack against the Arab tribe which would lead to the start of a feud between the parties involved, that is to say the *kabile* of the Arab tribe and the attackers. Moreover the three families shared their lands with the newly acquired family that is to say the Armenians since it is the right of any family to own the lands of the tribe.

Although the Arab community is defined as a totality by the concept of tribe which is defined as the constellation of extended families in the remarks of the interviewees, this definition of the community fails to represent the Arab community as a totality and leaves out those members of the community who have no kinship relationship with the tribal families, such as the “lost kinsmen in Mardin” and the “Armenian brothers” of the *kabile*. Hence this failure of representation of the Arab

community as the extended family discloses the gap in the representation of the Arab community as a totality. Though the Arab tribe based on kinship relations serves as a significant sign of identity of the Arab community, it is nevertheless an inadequate representation of the Arab community which fails to illustrate the diversity of identities among the members of the community. There is no coherence of identity among the members of the tribe as it is designated in the definition of the Arab community as a homogeneous totality of the kinsmen. Similar to other signifiers of identity, tribe is a term that serves the function of representing the Arab community as a homogeneous totality which is the impossible ideal found in the social imaginary of the members of the community.

“We speak Arabic”

Language is another significant dimension of the Arab communal identity that is continuously emphasized by the members of the Arab community. The interviewees distinguish the Arab community from the rest of the communities living in their locality and in Turkey by underlining the linguistic difference of the Arab community. They assert that their mother tongue is Arabic and on the basis of this linguistic difference they identify the Arab community as a totality.

However the existence of the tribesmen who speak predominantly Kurdish destabilizes the definition of the Arab community as a linguistic totality. There is a serious on-going debate in the region in terms of the language spoken by the Arabs. The debate is derived from the fact that the tribesmen are divided into two in terms of the spoken language: While various sub-tribes speak predominantly Kurdish whether as

their native language or learnt, others speak Arabic as their native language. The fact that a part of the tribe speaks Kurdish resulted in the rise of an argument that the Arabs are indeed Kurds who were degenerated as a result of their enforced migration to the Arab countries in the reign of the Ottomans. The argument has found many proponents among the Kurdish-speaking Arabs in the period of the rise of the Kurdish nationalism in the region. By the use of this argument many of the Kurdish-speaking tribesmen have been able to reject the Arab identity and identify themselves with the Kurdish identity. This kind of an argumentation may have provided the Kurdish-speaking Arabs (whose elders were/are still speaking Arabic) an easier identification with the Kurdish national identity due to the fact that Kurdish nationalism has been mostly based on an essentialist understanding of the Kurdish national identity in its beginning.

However against this argument the Arabs who speak Arabic in their daily lives and identify themselves with the Arab identity state forcefully that the Arabic-speaking people are not converts from the Kurdish identity and that if the Arabs had been converts from another identity, they would have been the native-speakers of other languages. According to them, the Arab community is a community composed of native-speakers of the Arabic language and those Kurdish-speaking Arabs are Arabs degenerated into Kurdish identity because of Kurdish nationalism.

“Bizim bazı Araplar korkularından demiyorlar Arap olduklarını, halbuki Arap yoksa bu Arapçayı nerden biliyorduk? Sason dağında arapçadan başka kimse başka dil bilmiyordu. Ne Ermenice, ne Kürtçe biliyorlardı, ki Ermeni vardı aramızda Ermenice konuşuyorlardı, Arapça da biliyordu kendi dillerini de. Biz eğer orada dönme olsaydık, biz de ermenice yahut bir başka dil biliyor olurduk.”⁹⁰ C (*Farmer, Male, Hatetke*)

⁹⁰ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “Some of our Arabs do not say that they are Arabs because of fear. If there was no Arab, how did we learn this Arabic? In the mountain Sason

“Diyelim biz buradan Irak’a gittik, Kürtçemiz kaybolur muydu? Bak Anadolu’ya gittik geldik gene Arapçamızı kaybetmedik. Kürt olsaydık, dilimiz imkanı yok kaybolmazdı. Hiçbir insanımız ne Türkçe ne Kürtçe bilmiyor. Çünkü Araptır. Kürt olsaydık, Kürtçe bilirdik. Ermeniden dönseydik, Ermenice bilirdik.”⁹¹ *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*

On the one hand the interviewees emphasize that speaking Arabic is a significant indicator of the Arab identity and on the other hand in contrast to their emphases the interviewees indicate that those members of the tribe who do not speak Arabic are also Arabs due to the fact that they are the descendants of the tribal families.

“Arapça hiç bilmesede çoğu insanlar da Araptır.”⁹² *U (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*

“Değil bu köy, var 50 köy, Kürtçe konuşuyorlar ama aslen Araptırlar.”⁹³ *R (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*

The emphasis of the Arabness of the Arabs who do not speak Arabic illustrates the failure in the representation of the Arab community as a totality based on the linguistic similarity among its members. Hence the definition of the Arab community as a linguistic community differing from its neighbors and other communities in Turkey fails to represent the internal differences among the members of the Arab community in terms

nobody knew any language different from Arabic. They neither knew Armenian nor did know Kurdish. Indeed there were Armenians among us and they were speaking Armenian. They knew both Arabic and their own language. If we were converts there (in Sason), we would also know Armenian or another language.”

⁹¹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “Let’s say that we went to Iraq, would our Kurdish disappear? You see, we went to and came from Anatolia but did not lose our Arabic. If we were Kurds, our language would never disappear. Non of our people knows either Turkish or Kurdish (he means in the past they did not know). Because they are Arabs. If we were Kurds, we would know Kurdish. If we were Armenian converts, we would know Armenian.”

⁹² Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “Though they do not know Arabic, many people are Arabs.”

⁹³ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “Not only this village, there are 50 villages (where) they (the villagers) speak Kurdish but they are originally Arabs”.

of the spoken language. Hence the gap that is found in the representation and constitution of the Arab community as a totality is disclosed by the existence of the members of the Arab community who predominantly speak Kurdish. However this failure in the representation of the Arab community as a linguistic totality triggers new definitions of the community. The interviewees try to suture the gap in the representation of the community by suggesting various other definitions of the community as soon as they recognize the representative inability of the previous definition (that is to say, the Arab community as the Arabic-speaking community) they have expressed. Hence the interviewees express that although some of the members of the tribe cannot speak Arabic but indeed speak predominantly Kurdish and associate themselves with the Kurdish national identity, they are still Arabs due to their tribal affiliation that is to say the kinship relationship. Hence when the interviewees regard that the representation of the Arab community as a linguistic community fails to include the members of the community speaking Kurdish, they need to propose another definition of the community to represent the community as a totality and thus they define the Arab community as a tribe, or extended family rather than a linguistic totality. Hence the failure of representation of the community as a linguistic totality triggers the signification of the Arab community in terms of the tribal identity.

Other Arabs Abroad and in Turkey

The remarks of the interviewees in terms of the “other” Arabs in Turkey and abroad consist of their continuous discursive performances to define the Arab community as a totality. As the interviewees refer to various other Arab communities abroad and in

Turkey, they constantly assert the differential identities of their Arab community and emphasize that the Arab community is a totality different from the other Arab communities based on those asserted differences.

The interviewees mention that there are Arabs in other parts of the world such as in the Arab countries and also in different parts of Turkey especially in Hatay and Mardin. Although they identify all of these communities as Arabs, they differentiate their community from those Arab communities located abroad mostly in the Arab countries on the basis of their Islamic belief. They argue that the Arabs are not necessarily Muslims and that there are also Jewish and Christian Muslims. Moreover although they express that there are various communities of Arabs speaking Arabic, they emphasize the linguistic difference between those other Arab communities and their community. When they are asked about the Muslim Arabs both in Turkey and abroad, they emphasize that their community is a Sunni Muslim community. For example, they distinguish themselves from the Arabs living in Hatay on the basis of their Islamic sect by saying that they are Sunni Muslims whereas Arabs in Hatay are Alevites. However when they talk about the Sunni Muslim Arabs such as those Arab communities populated in Southeastern Anatolia especially in the city of Mardin, they distinguish themselves by referring to their different tribal affiliation. In addition, one of the interviewees identifies the Arabs living in Mardin as “converts by sword”. For him the Arab community is different from the Arabs in Mardin who also have Sunni Muslim denomination on the basis of the prophetic origins of the tribe of the Arab community. Hence he tries to distinguish the Arab community from other Sunni Arabs due to Muslim identity of the Arab community which is essentialized through the reference of

the prophetic origins of the Arab tribe. Moreover the interviewees also distinguish themselves from the Sunni Arabs on the basis of their different accents of Arabic.

“Fellah değiliz biz. Fellahlar Alevi oluyor, biz Sünniyiz.”⁹⁴ *R (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*

The interviewee distinguishes the Arab community from the Arabs living in the city of Hatay on the basis of the Islamic sect. He calls the Arabs in Hatay as *fellah* and says that *fellahs* are Alevites while his Arab community has Sunni Muslim denomination. Hence he draws the communal boundary by reference to the Islamic sect.

“Üç dört çeşit Arap var. Bizimki hakiki, Bağdat.”⁹⁵ *S (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*

The conversation with the above-mentioned interviewee was about the Arabs living in Turkey and abroad. The interviewee states that there are various kinds of Arabs in Turkey then distinguishes his community from the other Arab communities in terms of the tribal origins by saying that his tribe has come from Baghdad. The term Baghdad refers to the prophetic origins of the tribe for the interviewee. He means that his tribe is the descendant of the prophet’s family, Abbasiad family who has been located in Baghdad according to him.

“Hepsi de Bağdat’tan gelmemiş, onların değişikidir. Suriye, Ürdün’den gelmiş. Akrabalığımız yok onlarla.” *T (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*We are not fellah. Fellahs are Alevites, we are Sunni.*”

⁹⁵ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*There are three four kinds of Arabs. Our (Arabness, Arab origin) is true, from Baghdad*”.

He distinguishes his community from the Arabs living in the Southeastern Anatolia by referring to the tribal affiliation which is synonymous to the kinship relations for him.

“-Mardinli ya da başka illerdeki Araplar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

(Interviewer)

-Onlar da hakiki Arap. *F (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*

-Mardin Arapları kılıçtan dönmedir. *G (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*

-Ama sahabeler çok, onlar hep müslümandı. *F*

-Arap Müslüman da var, yahudi de var. *G*

-Biz kesinlikle Abbasiyiz... *F*”⁹⁷

F first answers the question about the “other” Arabs such as those in Mardin by saying that they are also true Arabs. G rejects by saying that the Arabs of Mardin are not true Muslims and distinguishes the Arab community from the Arabs of Mardin. F claims that there were descendants of the first believers of Islam who brought the Islamic belief to Anatolia among the Arabs of Mardin. His remark shows that faith in Islam is not a competent sign of identity differentiating the two communities. Then, G also realizes that and says that there are also Muslim Arabs. At the end of the conversation F distinguishes the Arab community on the basis of its tribal origins and associates his tribe with the prophet’s family. Hence by reference to the prophetic origins of his tribe F sets a boundary between the Arab community and rest of the other Muslim Arabs. The

⁹⁶ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*They (the Arabs in Turkey) did not all come from Baghdad, their (origin, homeland) is different. They have come from Syria, Ürdün. We have no kinship relation with them.*”

⁹⁷ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*-How do you consider the Arabs living in Mardin and other cities of Turkey?*

-They are also real Arabs.

-Arabs of Mardin are converts by sword.

-But there are many sahabe (first believers of Islam) who were all Muslims.

-There are Muslim Arabs and also Jewish Arabs.

-We are definitely the Abbasiads.”

Arab community is defined as a Muslim community but with a significant difference from the other Muslim Arabs, it is described as the descendants of the prophet's tribe. Muslim identity which defines the Arab community is thus described as an essential trait of the tribesmen ascribed by birth distinguishing the tribesmen from the other Muslim Arabs.

All in all, the act of drawing the boundaries of the Arab community is an unending act of signification of the Arab community as a totality which is bereft of any single representation of the community. While in one of its definitions the Arab community is described in terms of its Sunni Muslim belief, in another one the community is defined in terms of its tribal origins or linguistic difference. The multiple and sometimes contradictory signs of identity which are expressed by the interviewees illustrates the failure in the representation of the Arab community as a totality. However this does not indicate that the Arab community is less than a community. Similar to all other forms of collectivity, the idea of totality which is the basis of the constitution of the Arab community is derived from the identification of "what the community is not" or of the boundaries of the community. By the differentiation of the Arab community from the rest of the Arabs abroad and in Turkey, the Arab community is defined and constituted as a totality though with a variety of signs of identity.

The particular means of representation of the Arab community are multiple due to the fact that there is no true essence of the community that can be outlined by reference to only one single term of identity. The Arab community is neither only a linguistic community nor a Sunni Muslim collectivity or a tribe; it is all of them and not one of them at the same time. All of these terms of identity represent the Arab community in one respect but as particular signifiers they fail to represent it totally. The

absent totality of the community becomes visible in the multiple and often contradictory acts of signification of the Arab community as a totality throughout the remarks of the members of the community.

“We are Muslims, Arabs are the true Muslims”

All the interviewees emphasize their strong allegiance to their religion, Islam. For them, as being Arabs they are the true followers of Islam. Throughout their remarks in terms of their identification with the Muslim identity the interviewees constantly emphasize their being the descendants of the Abbasiad family, the holy family of the prophet Muhammed. Their consideration of themselves as the true followers of Islam is mostly based on an appreciation of their prophetic origins rather than their being faithful Muslims.

The fact that the Arabs define the Arab community in terms of its prophetic origins is an effect of their inability to define the Arab community solely in terms of its Muslim identity. As they fail to identify the Arab community with the Muslim identity due to the fact that Muslim identity is a signifier of identity that is common to all other Muslim communities such as Turks and Kurds, the interviewees propose another definition of the Arab community with a reference to their tribal identity. Hence it turns out that the interviewees need other signs of identity in order to differentiate their community from the other Muslim communities and to define their community as a totality. Here the sign of identity, that is to say the prophet’s tribe serves the function of differentiation and homogeneization at the same time. As it is a sign of difference, it serves the function of distinguishing the community from the rest of the other Muslim

communities. Where as, by being a sign of identity it provides the representation of the community as a homogeneous totality.

“Biz Suudi Arabistan, Taif’ten geldik. Peygamber efendimizin dayıları orada yaşardı, aslen oralıyız, demek ki biz hakiki arabız. Belki kureyş kabilesindeniz, belli değil aslımız.” *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*⁹⁸

“Biz kesinlikle Abbasiyiz...” *F (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*⁹⁹

“İslamın sahipleri gene Araplardır.” *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹⁰⁰

“Biz Abbasiyiz. Peygamber efendimizin amcası sayılırız, bize Abbasi derler. peygamberimiz de araptır, biz onun amcası sayılırız.” *S (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*¹⁰¹

Derrida has shown how an identity’s constitution is always based on excluding something and establishing a violent hierarchy between the two resultant poles – man/woman, etc.¹⁰² One of the interviewees identifies other Muslim communities that is to say Turks and Kurds as converts and by differentiating them as such he puts the Arab community and the other Muslim communities in a hierarchical relationship. As an effect of this definition of the Kurds and Turks as converts, he identifies the Arab community as a totality as the “true Muslims”.

This is revealed in the following comments by an interviewee who narrates the quarrel he has entered into with a Kurd in the barber shop. The Kurdish man who was

⁹⁸ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*We have come from Taif, Saudi Arabia. The uncles of our prophet lived there, we are originally from there. That’s for we are real Arabs. We may be descendants of Kureyş tribe (the tribe of the prophet), our origin is not definite.*”

⁹⁹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*We are definitely the Abbasiads.*”

¹⁰⁰ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*The owners of Islam are again the Arabs.*”

¹⁰¹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*We are Abbasi. As his kinsmen we are almost our prophet’s uncle, we are called Abbasi. Our prophet is also an Arab, we are almost his uncle.*”

¹⁰² Stuart Hall, ‘Introduction: Who Needs Cultural Identity?’ in S. Hall and P. Du Gay (eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity*, (London: Sage 1996), pp.4-5.

reportedly a Kurdish nationalist insulted him by saying that the Arabs betrayed the Kurds by allying with the Turkish state as their being village-guards. This is what the interviewee said to him:

“Baban sülalen Araplara galip gelemedi. Seni de kim yaptı insan? Gene Arap yaptı insan, Ermeniydi Müslüman ettik. Kıyamete kadar bizim elimizin altındasınız, siz de Türk de.” *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)* ¹⁰³

Later the same interviewee said that there were Kurds and Turks everywhere nowadays claiming that they were *seyids*. He derogates those *seyids* by making an emphasis on their Kurdish and Turkish origins. For him *seyid* can only be an Arab because of the fact that *seyids* are the descendants of the prophet’s family.

“Seyid ne Türkten olur ne Kürtten. Çünkü peygamber sülalesinden geliyor.” *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)* ¹⁰⁴

By disparaging those Turkish and Kurdish *seyids* the interviewee differentiates the Arab community from the Turks and Kurds on the basis of its prophetic and tribal origins.

“Non-Muslims are our enemies”

The interviewees mostly and overtly identify the non-muslims as their enemies and associate all the evil characteristics with the non-muslims. In a sporadic manner the

¹⁰³ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*Your father, your family could not overcome the Arabs. Who turned you into a human? Again the Arab turned you into human. He was an Armenian, we turned him into a Muslim. You are under our hand (service, order) till the Doomsday, both you and the Turk.*”

¹⁰⁴ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*Seyid (the descendants of the prophet) can be neither from the Turk nor from the Kurd. Because he descends from the Prophet’s family.*”

interviewees talk about the non-muslims, basically about Yezidis and Armenians who had been the major non-muslim communities populated in Batman. Since their ancestors have encountered life experience with these non-muslim communities, they have a memory of and some knowledge about the lives and traditions of the non-muslim communities of their locality. As they start narrating the daily lives and beliefs of the non-muslim people they use less negative even positive attributions. Indeed when they talk mainly about non-muslims without establishing relations with the Kurdish identity, they define them in very good terms. This shows that they do not regard the non-muslims necessarily as evil but as they identify the Kurds as non-muslims they attribute negative connotation to the non-muslim identity. Hence the negation of the non-muslim identity with pejorative terms can be considered as a signficatory act of positioning of the Arab identity vis-à-vis the Kurdish identity.

“Allah bizi Kürt yazmasın. Çünkü bu Kürtler sonunda dinlerini terke edecekler. Irak'ta bir Kürt devleti kurulursa bir Israil devleti olur o. Demek ki bütün müslümana düşman olur. Amerika'yla o ermeniler hep bir. Ermeni, Alevi, Yezidi hep aynıdır, insandır. Bu PKKcılar böyle diyor. Allah dedi yahudi, hristiyan müslümanın kardeşi değildir, güvenmeyin. PKK onlar birbirlerine kardeş değil, arkadaş (havarız) diyor. Ermeni yahudi hristiyan bize düşmandır.” C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)¹⁰⁵

“Yezidilerin Allah belasını versin, zaten önceden bunların (Kürtlerin) hepsi yezidiydi, sonradan müslüman oldular. Yezidiler ilk önce Müslümandı, hala müslüman ahlakları var. Seccadeleri, ibrikleri vardır, müslüman gelse herşeyi hazırdır namaz için. Hayvanları da müslümanlara kestirirler ki bir müslüman gelirse yiyemez diye. Bunların bir şıhları vardı, hacca gitmiş. O gidince şıhın kılığında şeytan geliyor. Namazı kaldırıyorlar, orucu 3 güne

¹⁰⁵ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*Hope Allah (God) does not make us like Kurds. Because these Kurds will abandon their their belief (in Islam). If a Kurdish state is established in Iraq, be sure that it will be a Jewish state indeed. Hence it will be the enemy of whole Muslim community. The USA and those Armenians are all together. Armenian, Alevite and Yezidi are all the same (kind). These supporters of PKK say that. Allah said “Jews, Christians are not the brothers of Muslims, do not trust them.” PKK says that they are not brothers but friends (with non-muslims). (I say) Armenian, Jew, Christian are enemies to us.*”

indirmiş. Onları saptırıyor...Gelince hacdan gerçek şih, ona inanmıyorlar...Kolaya alışınca gayri değiştirmediler.” *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹⁰⁶

Although the interviewee first associates the Kurds with the Yezidi identity and curses them in the beginning of his remarks, he then starts talking solely about the Yezidi people and does not associate them with the Kurds. The Yezidis are described as degenerated Muslims who still hold some of the conducts required for Islamic faith and thus they are appreciated for their Islamic conducts. What is significant is that the Yezidi identity which is considered to be a non-Muslim identity is put into an oppositional relationship against the Muslim identity and described as evil when it is associated with the Kurdish identity. Hence this illustrates the fact that Yezidi identity is not found in an antithetical relationship with the Arab identity by itself. It is negated by the interviewee as it is associated with the Kurdish identity which is the significant other of the Arab identity.

“Ermeni de o kadar temizdi namusu konusunda, Kürtler pisti. Ermeniler de kaçtı gitti. Şimdi Yezidilere de aynısını yaptı Kürtler, topraklarına namuslarına göz diktiler. Yezidiler de Almanya’ya kaçtılar.” *G (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “(He curses Yezidis) In the past they (Kurds) were all Yezidis, they converted to Islam later on. Yezidis were Muslims before, they still have Muslim traits (they behave like Muslims). They kill the animals as Muslims do, they know their Muslim guests cannot eat the meat if they do not cut the animal with Muslim traditions. (He narrates a story about Yezidis) They had şih (shaikh) and he went to pilgrimage (to Mecca). When şih leaves, the devil comes with an appearance of şih. (Then) they abolish namaz (daily prayers of Muslims) and decreases (thirty days of) fasting to three days. The devil make them deviate (from their religious faith)...When the real şih returns from the pilgrimage, the Yezidis do not believe him...As they are accustomed to comfort, they do not change (their false beliefs).”

¹⁰⁷ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “Armenian was so virtuous (honourable), Kurds were dishonorable. Armenians ran ways and went off (because of Kurds). Recently Kurds have done the same to Yezidis, they have tried to appropriate the lands and women of Yezidis. Hence Yezidis escaped to Germany.”

An argument similar to that is put forward above about the Yezidi identity can be proposed for the Armenian identity. Armenians are considered to be honorable people in contrast to the Kurds by the interviewee. The Armenians are associated with negative terms throughout the interviews when the Kurdish identity is described as a non-muslim identity which is basically identified as the Armenian identity. However as the Armenians are not associated with the Kurds and the fact that the Armenian and Kurdish communities are two different groups of people with different characteristics is acknowledged by the interviewee, then the Armenian community is appreciated as a good community and the Armenian identity is not necessarily found in an antithetical relationship with the Arab identity.

The negative remarks of the interviewees about the non-Muslims and their positive remarks about themselves as the Muslims reveal that the Muslim identity functions as one of the signifiers of the Arab identity. However although the signifier of the Muslim identity is described as a differentiating feature of the Arabs from the non-Muslims, the non-Muslims are also described with the features or conducts of the Muslims by the interviewees. Hence the signifier of Muslim identity fails to be a defining characteristic of the Arab identity but even the non-Muslims are associated by the interviewees with the characteristics of the Muslims such as being clean, honorable and performing the Islamic duties like Muslims. Therefore as a signifier the Muslim identity fails to represent the Arab community as a Muslim totality that is significantly different from the non-Muslims.

All in all the particular signifiers of identity which aspire to define the Arab community as a totality such as Muslimhood, tribal affiliation, Arabic-speaking community and so on all serve the function of differentiating the Arab community from

the other communities and representing it as a homogeneous totality. However none of these signs of identity is able to provide a full representation of the Arab community. In this respect the social imaginary of the Arab community consists of all of these particular means of identity which are articulated as an effect of the multiple acts of signification of the members of the community.

Social Antagonisms Engendering the Social Imaginary of the Arab Community against the Kurdish Identity

The antithetical relationship between the Arab and Kurdish communities going on for decades has been the major social antagonism in and through which the social imaginary of the Arabs is constituted. Historical enmity (tribal enmity derived as a result of the Arab revolts in early Republican period) and the struggle for the appropriation of land after the Arabs' return from exile to the lowlands of Batman have constituted the basic dimensions of the oppositional relationship of the Arab community against the Kurdish community in the region.

Moreover the different social antagonisms experienced by different sub-tribes or *kabiles* engendered differential political subjectivities of the Arabs that motivated them to identify with two different national identities offered by the Kurdish and Turkish nationalist discourses struggling in the region for hegemonizing the political field since 1990s. While the Arab community which is the main subject in this case study has experienced antithetical relationships with the Kurdish communities in the region, the supposedly "Kurdish-speaking Arabs" have been in relatively peaceful relationships

with them. Hence the different social antagonisms and relationships experienced by these two groups generated the constitution of different social imaginaries and political subjectivities which resulted in the identification of the two groups with two different national identities that is to say the Turkish and Kurdish national identities.

The social antagonisms and political subjectivities of the “Arabs with Kurdish identity” will be analysed in a further section which will provide us a general understanding of the historical and social conditions of the identification of these Arabs with the Kurdish identity. Due to the fact that the scope of this research is limited to an analysis of the Arabs who identify themselves with the Turkish national identity, the Arabs with the Kurdish identity are not studied and analysed in detail as the Arabs who are the main objects of this ethnographic study. In the following two sections the two basic dimensions of the social antagonisms, that is, the historical enmity of the Arab community against the Kurds and the controversy over land between the Arab community and Kurds which have shaped the social imaginary of the Arab community and which have resulted in the formation of the Arab identity against the Kurdish identity are outlined in detail.

Historical Enmity of the Arabs against the Kurds: Arab Revolts in the Republican Period

The Arabs in Batman (which was a village of Siirt then) rebelled twice in the 1930s against the newly established Turkish state. There are still many speculations on the possible causes of the outbreaks among the Arab community today. There are reasons to believe that most of the revolts of the first decades of the Republican period, the Arab

revolts were also triggered by the modernization and centralization measures of the newly established Turkish state. A complex analysis of the Arabs' revolts requires an understanding of the historical and political context within which the revolts occurred. Therefore Shaikh Said's revolt which was one of the most significant political phenomena shaping the socio-politics of the Eastern provinces in the early decades of the Republic of Turkey needs to be examined.

In his account of the Shaikh Said's revolt Bruinessen states that "in February and March 1925 the young Republic of Turkey was shaken by a revolt of Kurdish peasants that rapidly spread over a vast part of its Eastern provinces."¹⁰⁸ For Bruinessen, "the way the revolt broke out and immediately spread suggests that a strong anti-Turkish or anti-government feeling motivated the masses, at least in the central area of the rebellion. The participants' zeal received additional fuel from the religious justification given to their action."¹⁰⁹

"Bands of primitively armed peasants, led by religious and tribal chiefs, invaded one by one the towns, establishing their own rudimentary administration and chasing away all military and civilian officials that remained loyal to the central government. The rebels' movements were coordinated by a popular leader of a dervish order, Shaikh Said, while other shaikhs of the same order similarly took leading positions in the revolt. The ostensible aim of the revolt was to halt the secularising reforms initiated by the Turkish government. Afterwards, however, the leaders were accused of having attempted to establish an independent Kurdish state. It cost the government over two months' time and the deployment of the air force beside 35,000 land troops to put down the revolt with much bloodshed."¹¹⁰

Although Shaikh Said's revolt was successfully suppressed by the government, the tension and instability it caused lasted for many years in the Eastern provinces. "After

¹⁰⁸ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: the Role of Religion in Kurdish Society: collected articles*, (Istanbul: Isis Press 2000), p.143.

¹⁰⁹ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp.298-299.

¹¹⁰ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics*, p.143.

Shaikh Said and other leading shaikhs had either been killed or captured or had escaped, nothing of the messianistic appearance of the movement remained.”¹¹¹ Bruinessen argues that the following revolts after the Shaikh Said’s revolt were mostly nationalist but “this nationalism was based on quite ‘traditional’ motivations, and took the form of ‘traditional’ rebellion against state authority.”¹¹² For Bruinessen, the guerrilla bands followed the tradition of social banditry which was a phenomenon endemic in Kurdistan.

In his account of the Shaikh Said’s revolt, Bruinessen indicates a map of the region of the revolt.¹¹³ We can see that the hometown of the Arabs, Kozluk and Sason are found within the boundaries of the area affected by Shaikh Said’s revolt. Although the Arabs did not actually support the Shaikh Said’s revolt, the Arabs’ revolts seem to carry the characteristics of the revolts following the Shaikh Said’s revolt meaning that the revolts took place in the area affected by the Shaikh Said’s revolt, they took the form of social banditry and of ‘traditional’ rebellion against the state authority. However in contrast to the other subsequent rebellions the first revolt of the Arabs was motivated by a religious cause rather than a nationalist fervour. I believe that this characteristic of the revolt is similar to the Shaikh Said’s revolt which was mostly based on religious motivations.

The interviewees do not know the exact date of the outbreak of the first revolt but it is believed that the revolt started after the Hat and Dress Revolution of Atatürk by 1925. The Shaikh of Kozluk who had organized a meeting against the revolution was arrested in Kozluk by the gendarmerie. As he was being taken to Sason on foot by the gendarmerie, the gendarmerie stopped in the village of the Arabs in Kozluk at noon. The

¹¹¹ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.299.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.287.

Arabs asked the captain of the gendarmerie to let the Shaikh to do his prayer in the village and told him that they wanted to serve lunch for the soldiers. When the captain accepted their offer and released the Shaikh to do his prayer under the surveillance of the villagers, the Arabs helped the Shaikh to run away. After several months upon the escape of the Shaikh, the Turkish army corps surrounded Kozluk. 35 villages belonging to the two main tribes of the Arab community (the tribes composed of the descendants of Bello and Musa, which I call Bello tribe and Musa tribe) united against the Turkish army. The Saro tribe stayed neutral in this fight. However, a family belonging to the Musa tribe united with the state against the Arabs. After the fight which lasted for a week in Kozluk, the Arabs escaped to the mountains because the fight would not end until the seizure of the tribal leaders by the army. The revolt or rather the fight continued for about six months and ended when the tribal leaders were caught by the army and executed. After the executions, the state declared an amnesty for the rest of the Arab rebels and the Arabs returned to their villages from the mountains.

According to the unofficial sources that is to say the narratives of the Arabs in this case study, by 1929 another revolt started and this one lasted for about seven years. The long-lasting second Arab rebellion enlarged with the incorporation of almost all of the Arab sub-tribes. The Şerro sub-tribe living mostly in Sason and belonging to the Musa tribe stayed neutral in this fight and acted as the mediator between the Arabs and the state.

For most of the Arabs, the revolt was not political but it was a matter of honor. As they put it, the revolt started because of the gendarmerie captain who harrassed a bride when he came to the village with the tax collecting committee of the state. The tax

collector, *müfti*, *lieutenant colonel* and the gendarmerie came to the village in Kozluk in order to collect the taxes. As the tax collector, mufti and lieutenant colonel were hosted in the house of the tribal leader and were being served meal, the bride who was harassed by the captain of the gendarmerie told this to his husband. Thereupon, the villagers armed and fought against the gendarmerie and killed the lieutenant colonel despite the fact that the tribal leader struggled to ease the conflict and advised the villagers to leave their weapons. According to the interviewees, there is a possibility that the bride was not harassed by the captain but she misunderstood him due to the fact that she did not speak Turkish. In this version of the story, the captain just asked the bride a question or asked for some water but she misunderstood him. Hence, the Arabs stress that the revolt was not against the regime and emphasize the non-political nature of the revolt considering it as a matter of honor or as a result of misunderstanding.¹¹⁴

The revolt ended by 1936-37 as a result of the reconciliation of the Şerro tribe. The rebels surrendered to their tribesmen of Şerro tribe living in Sason and then they were arrested by the gendarmerie. The Arab population of Batman was forced to migrate to various cities such as Kayseri, Kütahya, Afyon, Isparta, Antalya, Konya and Balıkesir

¹¹⁴ The narratives of the interviewees about the causes of the revolts can be analysed as the retrospective interpretation of the rebellious history of the tribe which is desired to be veiled by the contemporary members of the Arab tribe. The fact that these members of the Arab community try to emphasize the non-political reasons of the outbreaks should be analysed in terms of the political subjectivities of the narrators. Due to the fact that the interviewees do identify with the Turkish national identity today and most of the members of their tribe still work as the village-guards, any antithetical narrative of the revolts meaning that any narrative which includes accusations against the Turkish state such as the tax collection policies or the evil treatment of the state officials that would lead to the rise of the Arabs should not be expected to be expressed by the Arabs. Moreover one of the interviewees who identifies himself and the Arab tribe with the Kurdish national identity does not suggest such a narrative. Although he does not make an explanation of the revolts, it would not be surprising if he reiterated the Kurdish nationalist discourse over the revolts and argued that the revolts were the outbreaks of the Kurds against the harsh policies of the Turkish state which were similar to the rest of the other Kurdish revolts that took place in the early decades of the Turkish Republic.

with regard to the Resettlement Law issued by the government in 1934.¹¹⁵ The state provided land and house to the migrants during the exile. After the abolishment of this law in 1947, most of the Arabs returned to their hometowns in Kozluk.

The Arabs of this case study consider the Kurds as their historical enemies mostly due to the Kurdish alliance with the Turkish state during the Arab rebellion against the state in 1930s. During the revolts of the Arabs, most of the Kurdish tribes had allied with the state, fought against the Arab rebels and spied on them. The interviewees continuously mention the Kurdish alliance with the state against their tribe with hateful remarks about the Kurds. They argue that the Kurdish tribes had tried to appropriate their lands, women and everything by struggling against the Arab tribe. Hence it seems that this historical enmity against the Kurds constitutes one major aspect of the social antagonism between the Arab and Kurdish community which led to the formation of the social imaginary of the Arab community.

Norval states that any society forges an image of its unity in order to institute itself as a society through the establishment of political frontiers: “An important part of the formation of any identity is that it is opposed to something else, to ‘an other’. Thus,

¹¹⁵ The fact that the Arabs are forced to migration as a result of the Resettlement Law in 1934 is reported by the Arabs themselves. It is not based on an official source of data due to the difficulties in reaching the official documents of the Turkish state revealing information about the revolts and their outcomes especially in the first decades of the Republic. It is necessary to state that most of the historical data indicated in this research is based on the narratives of the interviewees who have a fresh memory of the contemporary history of the tribe. Though it can be argued that in this case study the interviewees’ knowledge of the history of the tribe is subjective and thus subverted, it is also known that historical data whether official or not is always subject to degeneration or manipulation due to the retrospective and ideological interpretations of its authors. Therefore although the historical data given by the interviewees is not bereft of the false interpretations of its narrators, it is still valuable for providing an understanding of the historical past of the Arabs of this case study who have never been the main subject or at best a subject of historical observation in any study in Turkey until this research study.

frontier formation is a *sine qua non* of identity formation.”¹¹⁶ In the case of Arabs the boundary of the Arab community is basically drawn vis-à-vis the Kurdish community and the communal identity of the Arabs is defined primarily as a negation of the Kurdish identity because of the historical enmity of the Arabs against the Kurds. The interviewees address the Kurdish community with the pejorative signifiers of identity which are the negatives of those adjectives defining the Arab community such as non-Muslim, dirty, dishonest, evil and so on. Where as Arabs are described as true Muslims, clean, honest, generous, beneficent and so on. The Kurdish community can be identified as the significant others of the Arab community against which the Arabs define their community as a totality.

Controversy over the ownership of land in the village located in lowlands of Batman

Most of the Arabs who had been exiled to the Western cities of Turkey returned their hometown Batman after about ten years of exile. After their return, some of the Arabs settled in the lowlands of the city rather than their former villages in the highlands of Batman because of the fact that they had increased in number throughout the last decade and therefore the former lands were not sufficient to provide a living to the crowded families returned from the West.

However when they moved to the villages in the Batman plain, the Arabs encountered the resentments of the Kurdish people who had been living there before the Arabs. The Arab-Kurdish relationship in the lowland villages deteriorated due to the

¹¹⁶ David Howarth, Aletta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis*, p.222.

conflicts over the land issue. Therefore, the tension and the previous hatred between the communities dating back to the Arab revolts did not ease till today. Both communities disapproved and even prevented having any kind of social relations between the members of the two groups such as marriages, business relationships, friendship and neighborhood. The houses of the Arabs and Kurds are allocated in different locations of the village. It seems that the village is segregated into two parts in terms of the communal belonging of the villagers and a small river which runs through the village is still considered to constitute the boundary between the two communal settings.

The interviewees report that the tension relatively eased with respect to past fifty years with the rise of Kurdish nationalism in late 1980s since the Kurdish nationalists wanted to incorporate the Arab community into their struggle against the Turkish state. However, most of the Arabs still considered the Kurds as their historical enemies and a threat to their communal wellbeing. By the end of 1980s some of the Arabs both living in the lowland villages and in highlands of Batman, especially those in Kozluk district decided to be voluntary village-guards (*korucu*) and allied with the state against the PKK.

The interviewees I have talked to in the two lowland villages of Batman which are called Hatetke¹¹⁷ and Behmir owned lands approximately about 90 *dönüm*¹¹⁸ which were distributed to them by the Turkish state as an effect of the populist agenda it holds since its establishment.

¹¹⁷ Hatetke is the original name of the village and the villagers still call the village as Hatetke. However the official name of the village has been changed by the Turkish state as Doğankavak.

¹¹⁸ *Dönüm* is a land measure approximately about 920 (or 1000) squaremeters.

As Bruinessen puts it, the newly established Turkish state endorsed *populism* as another cornerstone of its regime. “Populism became the ideological justification for a policy of nation-building that denied the existence of a separate Kurdish (or Laz, Circassian, etc.) culture. Under the guise of the struggle against ‘feudalism’, a law was passed giving the government authority to expropriate large landholdings in the eastern provinces – a weapon against aghas and shaikhs.”¹¹⁹

The Arab community living in Hatetke settled in the village after the arrival of one of their members to the village. One of the Arab families settled in the village as the tenants of the Kurdish agha of that village. Later on, the other families followed the leading family to settle there and in time they increased in number in the village of Hatetke which was previously populated by the Kurdish peasants. It is also reported that the village was an Armenian village before it was populated by the Kurds.

By the end of 1950s, the Turkish state issued a law for giving land to the landless peasants and sent a commission to the village to distribute the lands of the Kurdish agha to the villagers. However, the distribution did not satisfy the Arab community because only a few of the Arab families were given land. Therefore, the Arab families decided to resent this decision of the commission and together with another Kurdish villager who was dissatisfied with the decision they applied to the Siirt governor and later on to the Ministry of Public Works and Settlement (*Bayındırlık ve İskan Bakanlığı*). As a result, the state charged another commission for the re-distribution of lands, the previous distribution was changed and according to the new decision the lands of the Kurdish agha were distributed to all the peasants living in the village.

¹¹⁹ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.274.

The Kurdish villagers in Hatetke were tenants on the lands of the Kurdish agha before the land distribution of the state and they managed to own land as a result of the Arabs' refusal to the first decision of distribution. According to the interviewees the Kurdish villagers of Hatetke believed that the distribution of the lands to the Arabs was not legitimate and the lands of the village originally belonged to the Kurdish villagers. The land issue continued to be a controversial issue between the Kurdish and Arab villagers of Hatetke till today. The interviewees indicate that the controversy between the two communities in the village even existed between the children of the two communities. The children of the two communities rejected to sit together in the classroom of the village's primary school and they divided into two groups in the classroom. Moreover one of the interviewees who has attended the primary school in the village in 1990s reports that each school day ended with a fight between the two groups of children. In addition, the fierce fights between the two communities were considered to be usual phenomena of the village. Though the fights mostly took place between the men of the two communities, the attendance of women and children into the fights was also regular.

Moreover the interviewees state that the Kurds in the village have been designing a re-distribution project of the lands and houses of the Arabs especially during the period of the rise of the PKK in 1990s. For the Arabs, if the PKK were able to succeed in their struggle against the Turkish state the Kurds would be able to appropriate the lands of the Arabs. In this respect the Turkish state is considered to be the greatest supporter of the Arabs' survival and existence in the village by the Arabs. The interviewees continuously mention that without the Turkish state the Arab community would not be able to live in their lands. While they see the Kurds and the Kurdish nationalists as the greatest

enemies of their community, the Arabs think that the Turkish state is the major support to the existence of their community. Hence some of the villagers started to be employed as voluntary village guards

The Arab community living in the village of Behmir migrated to the village about fifty years ago. According to the interviewees, the lands in Behmir were owned by the Armenians who were also exiled to West after the Arab revolts of 1930s. After their return from the exile by 1945, the state gave the lands in Behmir to the Armenians. The interviewees indicate that the present Arab villagers of Behmir were motivated by their former Armenian neighbors (living in Kozluk before the exile) to settle in the village of Behmir. It is reported by the interviewees that Behmir was originally an Armenian village but one third of the village was also populated by the Kurds belonging to the Kurdish tribe of Rişkotan.

By 1960s, the Armenian villagers of Behmir were forced by the Kurdish villagers to sell their lands to them but the Armenians refused that and sold most of their lands to the Arabs with whom they established good relations of friendship and neighborhood in Kozluk. After then between the years 1965-67, the Armenians migrated to big cities and deserted the village leaving behind the Arabs and Kurds with serious conflicts over the lands. The Arab and the Kurdish villagers from Rişkotan tribe struggled over the appropriation of lands for about six years (as a result of which several deaths occurred) until the distribution of land by the state to the landless peasants. By 1950s in accordance with the law of distribution of land to the landless peasants, the state distributed the lands to the Kurdish and Arab villagers of Behmir more or less equally. However the controversy over the land seemingly continues to exist between

the two communities. According to the interviewees the Kurds would appropriate their lands if they had any opportunity.

Most of the interviewees in Behmir have been working as voluntary village-guards for about 10-15 years. According to the interviewees the Kurds in their village still embodies a threat against the existence of the Arab community in Behmir. The interviewees state that they have decided to become village guards in order to protect themselves from the attacks of PKK but also to protect their lands and houses from possible attacks of the Kurds in the village. Similar to the interviewees in Hatetke, they believe that the Kurds especially the Kurdish nationalists are the basic enemies of the Arab community.

Comments on the Iraqi war As a Demonstration of the Social Antagonism between the Arabs and the Kurds

As an effect of the social antagonisms between the Arab and the Kurdish communities which are outlined in detail in the previous section (that is basically derived from the historical enmity of the Arabs against the Kurds and the controversy between the two communities over the appropriation of land in the lowland villages) the social imaginary of the Arab community has been articulated primarily against the Kurdish identity. The remarks of the interviewees in terms of the war in Iraq demonstrate the significance of the social antagonisms between the Arab and Kurdish communities in shaping the Arab communal identity vis-à-vis the Kurdish identity.

Throughout the responses, the interviewees emphasize their pejorative feelings for the Kurds and approve Saddam Hussein's evil treatment to Kurds in Iraq. Almost all

of the interviewees strongly support Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis against USA. At first it seems that the interviewees have strong feelings of attachment to the Arabs in Iraq. They descend their tribal origins from Iraq and some of them even indicate a kinship relation with Saddam Hussein.

“Akraba olduğumuz için destekliyoruz.” *S (Farmer, Male, Behmir)* ¹²⁰

“Doğrusu biz Arabız. Bağdat’tan geldik, Saddam Hüseyin’in milletindeydik. Bizim orada Arap olarak birbirlerine fitne düşmüş, cinayet olmuş, demişler biz burada kalırsak aramızda huzursuzluk kalır, onun için geldik.” *F (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)* ¹²¹

“Saddam Hüseyin’in içinde hep Arap var, peşmergeler hep Araptı. Türkiye’de onun gibi adam yoktu. Hakiki Araptı, herşeyi biliyordu, haksızlığı herşeyi biliyordu. Bakma dünya onun üzerine düştü. Esas akrabamız odur yani, bizim sülalemiz oradan gelme. O Tikrit’lidir, biz Basralıyız. O da Araptır. Hakiki Araptır. Araplarda da öyle cesaretli bulunmaz yani, 1000’de 1. Eşi benzeri yok öyle bir adamın.” *S (Farmer, Male, Behmir)* ¹²²

The interviewees note that the Kurds in Batman support USA in the Iraqi war because of their hatred against Saddam. They claim that while the Kurds’ hatred against Saddam is derived from their racist fervour, the Arabs support Saddam Hussein because of their allegiance to the Arab race that is to say because of Saddam’s being an Arab leader.

¹²⁰ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*We support because we are relatives/kinsmen.*”

¹²¹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*In fact we are Arabs. We have come from Bagdad. We were the nation, people of Saddam Hussein. In our place (in Iraq he means) we got into a fight among us, a murder happened, then they (our ancestors) thought that there would be trouble in the community if we stayed there.*”

¹²² Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*There are all Arabs in Saddam Hussein’s (army), the peshmergas were all Arabs. There was no man like him in Turkey. He was a true Arab, he knew everything, he knew all the injustices and anything. But the world fell on top of him. He is our relative indeed, our family (tribe) comes from there. He is from Tikrit, we are from Basra. He is true Arab. In fact there is not a brave person among the Arabs, may be one in a thousand (people). There is not one like that man.*”

“Ama Kürtler Amerika’yı daha fazla destekliyor Saddam’dan. Çünkü Halepçe’de 7000 insan öldürülmüş, ona bir hakaret yapılmış. Yani ırktan dolayı, biz de ondan dolayı onun tarafını tutuyoruz.” *U (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*¹²³

The interviewees also assert that their support for Saddam Hussein is not just caused by the racist or tribal affiliation. They constantly emphasize that Saddam’s being a Muslim leader is the most important reason for their support for Saddam. They consider the US act as a non-Muslim attack against the Muslim brothers.

“Müslüman kardeşimizdi esas, ikincisi de Arap. Bizim meyilimiz Arapların üzerinedir.” *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹²⁴

“Bence Müslüman olan herkes de üzülür ona. Çünkü Saddam Hüseyin diktatör de olsa ne de olsa bir Müslümandır en sonunda. Ne yapmışsa da Müslümandır.” *S (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*¹²⁵

“Saddam sana ne yapmış Amerika? Zarar verdiyse gene bize, kardeşine zarar vermiş, kafire zarar vermemiş.” *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹²⁶

The enthusiastic support of the Arabs in Batman to Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi Arabs is not based on their historical, tribal or ethnic origins. This type of an analysis would be flawed because of its being an essentialist explanation of identification which does not take into consideration the social antagonisms shaping the boundaries of the communal identity of the Arabs in Batman. The strong support of the interviewees for Saddam and

¹²³ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*But Kurds support USA more than Saddam. Because 7000 people died in Halepçe, an insult done to him (the Kurds). Because of race (the Kurds do not support Saddam). We support him due to the race in the same way.*”

¹²⁴ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*He (Saddam) was our Muslim brother in the first place, and the second he is an Arab. Our tendency (liking, support) is towards the Arabs.*”

¹²⁵ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*I think every person being a Muslim feels sorry for him (Saddam). Because even he is a dictator, neither the less in the end he is a Muslim. Whatever he did he is a Muslim.*”

¹²⁶ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*What did Saddam do to you America? If he did any harm, he harmed us, his brother (Arabs) not the infidel.*”

their nationalistic zeal for the Arab nation in Iraq are basically derived from the antagonistic positioning of the Arab identity vis-à-vis the Kurdish identity in the case of Arabs which is an effect of the historical enmity of the Arabs against the Kurds and the controversial issue of land between the two communities.

The responses to the questions on the issue of the Iraqi war should be analysed in relation to the social imaginary of the Arab community which is constituted as a result of the social antagonisms of the Arab community against the Kurdish community. Due to the fact that the communal identity of the Arabs in this case is defined as opposed to the Kurdish identity, the issue of Iraqi war has formed the majority of the answers of the interviewees to the questions about their feelings of attachment to the Arabs in other parts of the world.

Despite the fact that the interviewees were asked about their feelings of attachment to and their thoughts about the Arabs in other parts of the world, most of the interviewees preferred to talk about the Arabs in Iraq and the on-going war in Iraq. The fact that almost all of the interviewees deliberately chose to talk about the Iraqi war is an indicator of the controversial positioning of the Arab and Kurdish identities in the social imaginary of the Arab community. The interviewees continuously refer to their support of the Arabs in the Iraqi war vis-à-vis the Kurds in Iraq and argue that the Arab and Kurdish communities in their locality support oppositional sides. It seems that the interviewees associate their antithetical situation against the Kurds in their locality with the Iraqi war where the Kurds and Arabs of Iraq fight against each other. Hence as the interviewees report, the controversy in Iraq between the Arabs and Kurds has been a matter of debate between the members of the two communities. The interviewees identify themselves and their community with the Arabs in Iraq and identify the Kurdish

community with the Kurds in Iraq when they refer to the controversy between the Arab and Kurdish communities in Iraq.

“Biz Kürt olsaydık Kürtleri kayırırdık. Şimdi ben orada bir Kürt kalmasın istiyorum. Çünkü o kadar zulüm ettiler. Müslüman kardeşimizdi esas, ikincisi de Arap. Bizim meylimiz Arapların üzerinedir.” C (*Farmer, Male, Hatetke*)¹²⁷

“Hiçbir Kürt onu savunmuyor. Sevmezler.” U (*Farmer, Male, Behmir*)¹²⁸

“Kürtler sevmiyor Arapları, mesela bu Barzaniler ne yaptılar Araplara.” C (*Farmer, Male, Hatetke*)¹²⁹

All in all, the responses of the interviewees about the issue of the Iraqi war illustrate the differential positioning of the Arab and Kurdish identities in the social imaginary of the Arab community. The remarks of the interviewees in terms of the issue of the Iraqi war also reveal the fact that the Kurdish identity is the significant other of the Arab identity which is required for the constitution of the Arab community as a totality.

Identification of the Arabs with the Turkish National Identity

Despite the fact that the social imaginary of the Arab community is composed of a set of cultural identities which are incompatible the Turkish national identity, the members of

¹²⁷ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*If we were Kurds we would support the Kurds. Now I do not want any Kurds to be there. Because they did such torture to us. He was our Muslim brother at first, and the second he is an Arab. Our tendency (liking, support) is towards the Arabs*”.

¹²⁸ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*No Kurd defends him. They do not like him.*”

¹²⁹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*Kurds do not like Arabs, for instance what did the Barzanis do to Arabs ?(how badly Barzanis treated the Arabs)*”

the Arab community stress their strong identification with the Turkish national identity. This reveals the fact that national identity can construct cultural communities as “nationals” although national identity seems to be totally foreign to the cultural identities of the community. As it is analyzed in detail in the section on the social imaginary of the Arab community the ethno-history, memories, myths, language, ancestry and tribal identity of the community members are mostly incompatible with those elements of Turkish national identity such as Turkish national history, national myths about the nation’s origins and ancestry and Turkish language. However the Arabs can still believe in the national narratives which are based on a certain understanding of the national history and identity that is significantly different from the cultural identities of the Arab community.

Therefore the case of Arabs stands as a counter example against the argument of the ethno-symbolist theorists that national identity needs to be based on the collective cultural identity of the *ethnie* in order to sustain the identification of the people with the national identity. For the ethno-symbolists and especially for Anthony Smith, the imagination of nation as a fabricated notion would never be able to succeed in constructing the people as the nationals. The case of Arabs illustrates that even the members of local communities with their distinct cultural identities can believe in an “outright forgery”, that is, the nation as a collectivity with shared history and culture. Hence the modernist understanding of the nation and national identity which suggests that people are constructed as the nationals by believing in the fabricated notion of nation and national identity needs to be re-appreciated.

Moreover the ethnographic study of Arabs indicate that although various identities of the social imaginary of the Arab community are incompatible with the

Turkish national identity, they can still co-exist in the social imaginary of the Arab community together with the Turkish national identity as the signifiers of Arab community. This illustrates that national identity does not necessarily dominate the social imaginary of the cultural communities but it is included into the chain of significations of communal identity though as a contradictory element of identity but which nevertheless represents the absent totality of that collectivity. Hence the case shows that national identity as a sign can exist side by side with the cultural identities of the local communities in the social imaginaries of those communities.

Furthermore the case of Arabs also illustrates that national identity as a sign is never homogeneous but hybrid, unstable, multiple and shifting. The case shows that the sign of the Turkish national identity is constantly challenged and modified by the Arabs as they try to identify with it. Hence Turkish national identity is articulated with the Arab communal identity throughout the discursive performances of Arabs and its definition is expanded, transformed and multiplied by the inclusion of the Arab identity. Throughout their identification with the national identity the interviewees reiterate the pedagogical narratives of the Turkish nationalist discourse especially about the common history of the Turkish nation and try to insert their community and communal identity into these national narratives. In this respect the case further displays the fact that as national identity constructs “nationals” as its objects, “nationals” also construct the national identity by adding up the cultural identities of their communities. Thus rather than being the mere objects of national imagination, “nationals” are also the subjects of national imagination who tailor national identity in their own ways and appropriate it as such.

In this section, the identification of the Arabs as Turkish nationals through the consolidation of their compatible and incompatible identities with Turkish national identity is analyzed. Through an analysis of the co-existence of the Arab communal identities and Turkish national identity, the ambivalent nature of national identity is displayed. Moreover the constructed nature of national identity is disclosed by showing that the Arabs have endorsed the imagination of the Turkish nation with a common history and identity. Finally the appropriation of national identity by nationals is explained through the analyses of the renarrations of Turkish national narratives by the Arabs.

Identification through Common Identities of Citizenship and Muslimhood

Citizenship is one of the significant dimensions of the Turkish national identity that is continuously exerted in the nationalist discourse of the Turkish state. The Arabs do identify themselves as the Turkish nationals upon the description of the Turkish nation as the Turkish citizens who live in the Turkey, pay taxes and are endowed with citizenship rights and duties. As Turkish citizenship does not stand as incompatible with Arab communal identity, the Arabs easily indicate their Turkishness by expressing their being Turkish citizens.

“Aslım Araptır, sonra da T.C.’nin vatandaşı olduğum için de Türküm.”*B*
(*Construction worker, Male, Hatetke*)¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*My origin is Arab, after that I am Turk since I am a citizen of Turkish Republic.*”

“Biz Arabız, Türk vatandaşız bizim tüm Araplar.” C(Farmer, Male, Hatetke)¹³¹

“-Dünyada başka Arap devletleri ve Araplar var. Kendinizi o devletlere Araplara yakın hissediyor musunuz? (Interviewer)

-Şu anda öyle bir şey yok. Biz kendimizi Türk olarak biliyoruz, T.C. altında yaşadığımız için kendimizi Türk olarak görüyoruz. Türk olarak doğduk, Türk olarak öleceğiz. Z (Farmer, Male, Behmir)

-Önemli olan burada yaşamak mı? (Interviewer)

-Tabii, hangi devlete gidersen orada yaşadığın zaman. Biz T.C. olarak doğduk, öyle öleceğiz. Bizde bir fark yok, askerliğimizi, her şeyimizi dört dörtlük yapıyoruz.” Z (Farmer, Male, Behmir)¹³²

The interviewees appreciate that they have all the rights like rest of the Turkish nationals because of the fact that they are the Turkish citizens and disapprove the Kurds who cannot appreciate the equal rights of the citizens that are provided by the Turkish state. They assert that there are no economic, political or legal boundaries that are exerted by the state vis-à-vis the Arabs because of their being a minority group. Hence they report that they do not feel marginalized as the Turkish citizens and thus they are able to identify themselves as the Turkish nationals upon citizenship bonds.

“-Türkiye’deki gibi rahatlık hiçbir dünya ülkesinde yok. Mesela Suriye’de yaşayan Kürtler de var, buradaki seviyede yaşayamazlar orada Türkiye’ye nazaran. U (Farmer, Male, Behmir)

-İşkencededir onlar orada. R (Farmer, Male, Behmir)

-İran öyle, Irak öyle. Ortadoğu’yu düşünsen, Türkiye kadar güzel, düzenli yaşayan ülke yok. U

¹³¹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*We are Arabs, we are Turkish citizens all of our Arabs.*”

¹³² Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*-There are various Arab states and Arabs in the world. Do you have any feelings of attachment to the Arab states and Arabs ?*

-There is nothing like that now. We know ourselves as Turks. We consider that we are Turks because we live under the Turkish Republic (authority, administration). We are born as Turks, we will die as Turks.

-Is living here (in the country) important (for feeling of attachment to Turkish state)?

-Sure, whatever country you go, when you live there (it is the same). We are born as Turkish citizens, we will die as such. There is no difference in us, we have fulfilled our (citizenship duties such as) military service and anything.”

- Eşitlik Türkiye’de var. *R*
- Şimdi Kürtler diyor bizim hakkımız, gidin bir bakın bakalım ne hakları var onların. *U*
- (Suriye’de) Arap olana herşey ucuz, Kürt olana herşey pahalı . *R*
- Senin Suriye’de yüz dönüm arazin var, ekiyorsun biçiyorsun, devlet geliyor, o yüz dönümün buğdayını alıp, sadece sana yaptığın masrafı, istihakını veriyor. Burada öyle bir şey yok. *S (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*
- Sadece o değil. Burada sen taa Cumhurbaşkanı olabiliyorsun. Orada mümkün değil. Hiçbir şey olamazsın orada. *R ”*¹³³

Muslimhood is the common identity shared by the Arab communal identity and Turkish national identity. The Arabs identify themselves as Turks by stressing the Muslim identity.

“Nasıl Türk değiliz? Türküz. Bu bayrak altında yaşıyoruz, Türküz. Türkler de Müslümandır, farketmez ki.” *G (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹³⁴

In defining himself as a Turkish national, the interviewee emphasizes two identities which allow him to identify with the Turkish national identity, one is citizenship and the other is Muslimhood. This is significant in displaying the element of Arab communal identity which is compatible with the Turkish national identity. Only Muslim identity of

¹³³ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “-There is no comfort in any country as there is in Turkey. For instance there are Kurds living in Syria, but they cannot live there as they live in Turkey.

-They are under torture there.

-Iran and Iraq are the same (like Syria). When you think of Middle East, there is no country living in peace and order like Turkey.

-There is equality in Turkey.

-Now Kurds (in Turkey) ask for their rights. Go and see what right they (Kurds) have (in Syria or other Middle Eastern countries).

-In Syria, everything is cheap for the Arab, but expensive for the Kurd.

-When you have 100 dönüm lands in Syria, the state takes the crop of that land and pays you back only the expenses you have done. There is nothing like that here.

-More than that. Here (in Turkey) you can even become President. There (in Middle Eastern countries especially in Syria) it is impossible. You cannot be anything there. ”

¹³⁴ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “How are we not Turks? We are. We live under this flag, we are Turks. Turks are also Muslims, it does not matter (there is no difference between Turks and us).”

the Arab communal identity is shared with the Turkish national identity and provides the necessary bond for claiming that the Arabs are the Turkish nationals.

“Esas ırk inançla olur, inancı bir olanın ırkı da bir olur.” *F (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)* ¹³⁵

The interviewee makes this remark for emphasizing the significance of the Muslim identity as the common element of identity between the Arabs and the Turks.

“-Türkleri nasıl buluyorsunuz ? *Interviewer*
-Türkleri bir kardeş olarak biliyoruz... *Z (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*
-Araplara benziyor mu, mesela dini açıdan? *Interviewer*
-Tabii onlarla da aynı çatı altında yaşadığımız için onlara da sonsuz güveniyoruz. Onlar da aynı. Aynı otorite altında yaşıyoruz. Din ile ilgili de aynen. Daha çok benziyor, fikirleri daha çok aynı, diyalog aynı, müslümanlık aynı.” *Z* ¹³⁶

“Biz Arabız ama Türk vatandaşlarıyız, Türk’e bağlıyız. Aslen Arabız, İslamımız, hamdolsun Müslümanız. Kim Müslümanrsa, Türk Fars hepimiz kardeşiz.” *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)* ¹³⁷

The accordance of the Arab identity with the Turkish national identity is suggested by the interviewees as they are both defined as Muslim identities in the remarks of the

¹³⁵ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*Real race is based on faith, if the faith of people is same, then their race is the same.*”

¹³⁶ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “-*What do you think of Turks?*
- *We know them as our brothers.*
-*Do you think they resemble Arabs in terms of religious faith?*
-*Sure, as we live with them under the same roof (in same country) we also have infinite trust in them. They are similar (to us). We live under the same authority. It is also same in terms of religion. They look more like us (in terms of religion), their thoughts are more same, dialogue is same, muslimhood is same*”.

¹³⁷ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*We are Arabs but Turkish citizens, loyal to Turks. We are Arabs as origin, we are Islam, thanks to God we are Muslims. Whoever is Muslim, whether being Turk or Persian, all of us are brothers.*”

interviewees. Hence the Muslim identity provides compatibility of the Arab communal identity with the Turkish national identity. However the interviewees define the Kurdish community, another Muslim community as the former non-Muslims such as Armenians, Jews or Yezidis who are converted to Islam. Therefore Turkish and Arab identities are equated through the Muslim identity against the Kurdish identity which is associated with the non-Muslim identity.

“Kürtlerin de zaten nereden geldikleri bellidir, çoğu ermeniden dönmedir.”
A (Farmer, Male, Hatetke) ¹³⁸

“Ateşperestler bunlar (Kürtler). 21 Mart'ta ateş yakıyorlar, ateş islam şeyi değil. Hangi tarihe baksan, ateş küfürdür.” *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)* ¹³⁹

“-Kürtler Zerdüşten gelme. *G (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*

-Onu karıştırma. *F (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*

-Kimse kimseyi lekelemesin. Herkes kökünü bilsin. Onlar kılıçtan dönmedir. (kızdı)...Müslümanlar İran'la savaştılar, bu Kürtler oradan gelmeler. Bir arkadaşşa sordum, dedi onların şeceresi bundan ibarettir. Burada yerleşince müslüman oldular. Bu PKK meselesi Ermeni ve Yezidi meselesidir. Diyorlar ki biz hakiki Kürdüz, İran hakiki Kürt. Onlar(Kürtler) şimdi diyorlarki biz kendi ırkımızı savunuyoruz, ırkı da ne? Ermeni...Biz de müslümanız. *G*” ¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*The origin of Kurds is obvious, they are Armenian who converted (to Islam).*”

¹³⁹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*They (Kurds) are fire-worshippers. They light fire on 21 st of March, fire is not Muslim thing (tradition). In any historical time, fire is blasphemy.*”

¹⁴⁰ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*-Kurds are descended from Zarathustras (fire-worshippers).*

-Do not mention it.

-No one should slander anyone. Everyone should know his origin. They are converts by sword (he got angry)...Muslims fought against Iran, these Kurds come from there. I asked a friend, he said their pedigree is just like that. They became Muslims when they settled here. This PKK issue is the Armenian and Yezidi issue. They (Armenians and Yezidis) say that they are real Kurds, Iran is real Kurd. They (Kurds) now say that we protect our own race and his race is what? Armenian...We are Muslims.”

“Allah bizi Kürt yazmasın. Çünkü bu Kürtler sonunda dinlerini terkedecekler. Irak’ta bir Kürt devleti kurulursa bir Israil devleti olur o. Demek ki bütün müslümana düşman olur.” *C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹⁴¹

“Köyün çoğu dönmedir. (Köydeki Kürtlerin) Ataları Ermeniydi, 1919’da ermeni fermanı kalktıktan sonra, burada kalanlar müslüman oldular.” *A (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹⁴²

The interviewees also indicate most of the time that the Kurdish community is also a Muslim community and that there are faithful Muslims among the Kurds. However as soon as they start establishing relationships with the Turkish and Arab identities, they associate the Kurdish identity with the non-Muslim identity. This is an act of signification which provides establishing an equivalential relationship between the Arab and Turkish identities upon the definition of them as Muslim identities and the negation of the Kurdish identity as a non-Muslim identity that is antithetical to the Arab and Turkish identities.

- “-Arapların dine yaklaşımı nasıldır? Araplar dindar mıdır? *Interviewer*
-Zaten bizim Arapların hepsi dindardır, tüm dünyadaki Araplar gibi. *Z (Farmer, Male, Behmir)*
-Kürtlerle bu açıdan fark var mı peki? *Interviewer*
-Tabii var. Kürtler fazla dinine sadık değildir, bazıları namaz da kılmaz. Dediğim aşiretlerin % 99’u öyle. Ama çok fark var Arap ile Kürt arasında din bakımından. *Z*
-Türkleri nasıl buluyorsunuz? *Interviewer*
-Türkleri bir kardeş olarak biliyoruz. Aramızda bir sorun yok yani. *Z*
-Araplara benziyor mu, mesela dini açıdan? *Interviewer*
-Tabii onlarla da aynı çatı altında yaşadığımız için onlara da sonsuz güveniyoruz. Onlar da aynı. Aynı otorite altında yaşıyoruz. Din ile ilgili de

¹⁴¹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*Hope Allah (God) does not make us like Kurds. Because these Kurds will abandon their their belief (in Islam). If a Kurdish state is established in Iraq, be sure that it will be a Jewish state indeed. Hence it will be the enemy of whole Muslim community.*”

¹⁴² Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*Most of the villagers are converts. Ancestors (of Kurds in village) were Armenians, when the Armenian decree is announced, the ones who stayed here converted to Muslimhood.*”

aynen. Daha çok benziyor, fikirleri daha çok aynı, diyalog aynı, müslümanlık aynı. Z’¹⁴³

The interviewee differentiates the Arabs and the Kurds in terms of their religiosity and describes the Arabs as faithful Muslims. In addition, he defines the Turks as faithful Muslims similar to the Arabs where as for him the Kurds are not faithful believers of Islam. The antithetical relationship between the Kurdish and Arab identities is established in terms of the religious faith. In contrast to this differential positioning of the Kurdish and Arab identities, the Turkish and Arab identities are found in an equivalential position by the definition of both as Muslim identities.

“Mesela Türklerden Refahçılar halis Müslüman. Türkler Refahçı olunca onlar sadıktır, hakiki Müslüman. Kürtler Refahçı olsa farketmez. (Gülüyor)”
C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)¹⁴⁴

According to the interviewee being a supporter of the Welfare Party illustrates and enhances the religiosity or religious faith of a person. He indicates that the Turks who are the supporters of the Welfare Party are faithful Muslims. However he does not make

¹⁴³ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “-How do you evaluate Arabs in terms of religious devotion? Are Arabs faithful Muslims?”

-In any case our Arabs are all faithful similar to all the Arabs around the world.

-Is there any difference between Kurds and Arabs in this respect?

-Sure there is. Kurds are not much devoted to their faith, some of them do not do the daily prayer (namaz). 99 % of the tribes I have mentioned are like that. But there is so much difference between Kurds and Arabs with respect to religiosity.

-What do you consider about Turks?

- We know them as our brothers.

-Do you think they resemble Arabs in terms of religious faith?

-Sure, as we live with them under the same roof (in same country) we also have infinite trust in them. They are similar (to us). We live under the same authority. It is also same in terms of religion. They look more like us (in terms of religion), their thoughts are more same, dialogue is same, muslimhood is same”.

¹⁴⁴ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “For example the supporters of Welfare Party are true Muslims. If Turks are pro-Welfare, they are devoted, real Muslims. It does not make a difference whether Kurds are pro-Welfare or not.(laughs)”

any comment about the religiosity of the rest of the Turks who are not related to the Welfare Party. Yet for him all of the Kurds whether they are pro or against Welfare Party are degenerated Muslims. He associates the Kurds with the non-Muslim identity irrespective of their identification with the Muslim identity and the political party which is known for its ideology of political Islam. This association of the Kurds with the non-muslim identity and the Turks with the muslim identity serves the function of establishing an equivalential relationship between the Arab and Turkish identities as both being the Muslim identities against the Kurdish identity which is defined as the non-Muslim identity.

Co-existence of the Elements of the Arab communal identity and Turkish National Identity : Ethno-history, myths, ancestry, language

The case study of Arabs illustrate that various identities of the social imaginary of the Arab community which seem to be totally incompatible with the Turkish national identity can still co-exist in the social imaginary of the Arab community together with the Turkish national identity as the signifiers of Arab community. Although the Arab community has its authentic ethno-history, memories, myths, ancestry and language which are different from the respective elements of Turkish national identity, the distinct cultural identities of the Arabs are expressed together with the Turkish national identity in the narratives of the interviewees. Hence as a sign of identity Turkish national identity has become one of the signifiers of identity of the Arab community although it contradicts various identities of the community.

Language is one of the most significant differences of identity between the Arab communal identity and Turkish national identity. The fact that the interviewees continuously mention that they are Turks but they speak Arabic reveals the fact that they are aware of this distinction and feel the need to emphasize their Turkishness despite their linguistic difference.

“-Zaten biz Türküz, hepimiz Türküz ama... *J (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*
-Ama aslımız Arap. *X (Construction worker, Male, Hatetke)*
-Ama ana dilimiz Araptır.” *J*¹⁴⁵

“E Türk’ün Türkiye’de kim olduğu belli midir? Her memleketin dili ayrı, Trakya’nın da Karadeniz’in de.” *A (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹⁴⁶

In terms of our dialogue with the interviewee about the linguistic difference of the Arabs from the rest of the Turkish nationals, the interviewee stated the remarks above. For him, the difference with respect to the language does exist in other parts of the country and thus there are various other communities speaking languages different from the Turkish language. However what is significant is that the interviewee associates the linguistic difference between Arabic and Turkish with the differences among Turkish dialects. Here although he acknowledges the linguistic difference of the community from Turkish, he reduces the linguistic difference to a difference of dialect whereby the

¹⁴⁵ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “-Anyway we are Turks, we are all Turks but...

-But our origins is Arab.

-But our native language is Arabic.”

¹⁴⁶ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “Is it obvious who the Turk is in Turkey? Language of each country (district, region) is different, like that of Trakya and Karadeniz.”

interviewee decreases the contradiction between the Turkish national identity and Arab communal identity in terms of language.

In addition to linguistic difference ethno-history, memories and myths of origin and ancestry of the Arab community differ distinctly from the Turkish national history and myths of origin and ancestry. In contrast to the historical narratives of the Turkish nation which point at Central Asia as the homeland of the Turkish nation, the city of Basra in Iraq is mostly the homeland of the Arabs in the ethno-history of the Arab community. Moreover the ancestry of the Arabs is clearly differentiated by the interviewees from the Turks as they emphasize that their ancestors are Arabs who have migrated from Basra.

Although throughout the interviews, the Arabs have always emphasized their tribal or communal origins in Iraq or other Arab countries with praise, when they started talking about the national narrative of the Turkish migration from Central Asia they added that the ancestral origins of the Arab community also descended back to Central Asia.

“(Aşiretin önde gelenlerinden biri) Orta Asya’dan geldik diyor. Ben de diyorum ki o zaman demek ki biz Irak’a başvurduk. Arapçayı muhakkak Irak’a uğradığımız için aldık. Eğer Orta Asya’dan geldiysek muhakkak oradan Irak’a (geldik), oradan da buraya taşındık dilimizi. Arapça’yı Irak’tan aldık.” C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke) ¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “(One of the leading figures in the tribe) He says that we (Arabs) have come from Central Asia. And I say that we have appealed to Iraq then (we have been in Iraq). We have learnt Arabic definitely because we have stopped by in Iraq. If we have come from Central Asia, definitely we have come from there to Iraq, carried our language from Iraq to here. We took Arabic from Iraq.”

The ethno-history of the Arab community which seems to be completely foreign to the national history of Turkish nation co-exists with the national history in the above-mentioned remark of the interviewee. The communal history which dates back to seven or eight hundreds years is descended to back in time in accordance with the Turkish national history. Hence the interviewee acknowledges both the ethno-history of the community and the national history at the same time. In this way he neither refuses the ancestral origins and homeland in the ethno-history of the Arab community nor he rejects the national origins and homeland.

The acknowledgement of the national history together with the ethno-history illustrates the constructed nature of the nation as argued by the modernist theorists of nation and nationalism. It also provides evidence against Smith and the ethno-symbolist thinkers who think that people would not be deceived by a fabricated notion of national identity if the cultural identities of the nation were significantly different from their persisting identities. The Arabs show that people can believe in the “outright forgery” that they share the national history and identity with the rest of the nation.

Moreover what is also significant is that the cultural identities of the communities different from national identity continue to exist despite the identification of the people with national identity. As it is illustrated in the above example the members of cultural communities tailor the national history in terms of their ethno-history. As the national history and identity construct the members of cultural communities as nationals, they are also subject to the modifications of the cultural communities. The example above shows that national history is tailored and appropriated by the interviewee in terms of the ethno-history of the Arab community.

This appropriation of national identity through modification is further elaborated in our discussion of the hybrid, unstable and shifting nature of national identity through the analysis of the renarrations of Turkish national narratives by the Arabs.

“(Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında) Ermeniler Rusya’ya destek verdiler Atatürk zamanında...Tetere Badiki (aşiret liderlerinden biri) kendi aşiretini, milletini, kavmini Rusun önüne sürmüş, savaşmış onlarla. Delikli taş kadar Rus’u sürmüş (yani kendi toprağının bitişine kadar). ‘Delikli taş’a kadar benim toprağım’ demiş, ‘delikli taşın ötesine karışmam’ demiş.” *G (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹⁴⁸

The narrative of National Struggle is a significant narrative of the Turkish nationalist discourse. In this narrative the Turkish nation is defined as the people who saved their lands from the enemies. The interviewee places the Arab tribe and tribal leader, Tetere Badiki in his renarration of the National Struggle. For him, Tetere and his tribesmen defended the lands of the tribe against the Russians. The tribal myth which praises the victory of Tetere Badiki against the Russians is different from the myths of Turkish National Struggle. In the narrative of National Struggle it is only the Turkish commanders of the Turkish army who are praised for their achievements against the enemies. Although some other characters with minor emphases do take place in this national narrative such as Nene Hatun or various soldiers of the Turkish army, their efforts are considered in terms of the Turkish military success. However the interviewee

¹⁴⁸ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “(In the First World War) Armenians supported Russia in time of Atatürk...Tetere Badiki (a tribal leader) launched his tribe, nation (people), clan against Russians, fought against them. He expelled them outside of the “stone with hole” (outside of his territorial boundary). ‘It is my land as far as the stone with hole’ he said, ‘I do not interfere the lands beyond the stone with hole’ he said.”

inserts the myth of the Arab community into the narrative of the National Struggle.

Hence by acknowledging the narrative of National Struggle the Arabs are constructed as the nationals and identified as the Turkish nationals who saved the Turkish country.

However this identification involves tailoring the narrative of National Struggle with the incorporation of the communal myth and tribal identity.

All in all the case illustrates that national identity does not necessarily dominate the social imaginary of the cultural communities but it is integrated with the signifiers of communal identity though as a contradictory element of identity but which nevertheless represents that collectivity. Hence the case shows that national identity as a sign always exists side by side with the cultural identities of the local communities in the social imaginaries of those communities due to the fact that national identity is just another sign incorporated into the cultural identities of the local communities.

Modification of the Turkish National Identity through the Supplementation of the Arab Identity

In line with the post-structuralist theoretical framework we have earlier argued in Chapter III that national identity as a sign is never homogeneous but hybrid, unstable, multiple and shifting. As another sign of identity, the definition of the Turkish national identity is never closed upon its previous definitions. The definition of it is performed in different kinds by the members of cultural communities because of the fact that into the definition of the national identity they add up their distinct cultural identities which are different from the elements of national identity.

In the case of Arabs Turkish national identity is articulated with the Arab communal identity throughout the discursive performances of Arabs whereby they make a definition of themselves as Turks. The sign of the Turkish national identity is constantly challenged and modified by the interviewees as they try to identify with the national identity. Throughout their identification with the national identity the interviewees reiterate the pedagogical narratives of the Turkish nationalist discourse especially about the common history of the Turkish nation and try to insert their community and communal identity into these national narratives.

The interviewees always challenge and modify the pedagogical narratives throughout their reiterations because of the fact that they have a social imaginary of their community (based on the impossible ideal of the totality of the Arab community with a distinct identity and history) which is different from the imaginary of the Turkish nation that is provided by the Turkish nationalist discourse in its pedagogical narratives of Turkish history. The interviewees fail to identify as Arabs with the sign of the Turkish nation and national identity because of the fact that these discursive totalities leave out “the difference” that is to say the Arab identity in our case unrepresented. However this failure of identification with the signs of Turkish nation and national identity does not prevent the interviewees to continue their trials of identification with these signs. The Arabs reiterate the stories in their own way whereby they add up their social imaginary of the Arab community into the pedagogical narratives of Turkish nationalism. As an effect of adding up their identity and history into the pedagogical narratives of Turkish nationalism, they challenge and re-configure at the same time the discursive totalities of the Turkish nation and national identity. Hence the definitions of nation and national identity are transformed as it is hybridized and expanded with the incorporation of the

Arab identity into the sign of Turkish national identity as a result of the reiterations of the pedagogical narratives of Turkish nationalist discourse by the Arabs.

“We have also come from Central Asia, but we have first passed through Iraq in our route to Anatolia”

The migration of the Turks from Central Asia to Anatolia is one of the well-known themes of the pedagogical narratives of the Turkish nationalist discourse. However the interviewees have proposed a very different story about the historical origins of the Arab community throughout the interviews and almost all of them emphasize that the Arab community is composed of the descendants of an Arab tribe whose ancestors moved from Basra, Iraq (sometimes the hometown of the tribe is identified with various other Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia or Egypt, but Iraq is the mostly emphasized country by the interviewees).

The interviewees indicate that the leaders of the Arab and Kurdish communities were collected together by the commander of their locality a few years ago and there they were asked to express their “origins”, that is to say their hometown by the commander. Reportedly one of the Arab leaders who was the leader of the village guards in Kozluk district answered the commander by saying that the Arabs have come from Central Asia because of poverty. The commander approved the man. When another Arab answered the question of the commander by emphasizing that the hometown of the Arabs is Basra, the commander corrected him and told him that the Arabs have migrated from Central Asia with the Ottomans because of the famine in Central Asia. He added

that although the Ottomans moved to the Caucasus, the Arabs settled down the highlands of Toros where they now live.

Although throughout the interviews, the interviewees have always talked about their tribal or communal origins in Iraq or other Arab countries, when they reiterate the pedagogical narrative of Turkish migration from Central Asia they shift their claims about their ancestral origins by saying that they have also come from Central Asia with the Turks. This is derived from the fact that the identification of the Arabs with the Turkish national identity requires the repetition of the pedagogical narratives of Turkish history. In order to be endowed with the subject position or identity of Turkish nationals, the Arabs have to associate themselves with the characters in the historical plot that is provided by the Turkish nationalist discourse to its nationals. However this narrative of the Turkish history does not encompass the Arab community with its identity and history that is assumed to be different by the Arabs themselves. Therefore the Arabs fail to identify with the Turkish national identity which does not represent the Arab identity. Hence this failure of identification makes them to reiterate this pedagogical narrative in a different way by incorporating the social imaginary of the Arab community with its distinct story of the origins of the Arab community.

“Yüz başı ‘Nerden geldiniz?’ diye sormuş. Hacı (önemli bir aşiret lideri) ‘Orta Asya’dan geldik’ dedi. Kendini düşük etti, fakirlikten geldik. Yüz başı dedi ki ‘siz göçebe bir aşir olarak geldiniz belki kıtlıktan, aslınız böyledir.’
*C (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹⁴⁹

“Hacı Orta Asya’dan geldik diyor. Ben de diyorumki o zaman demek ki biz Irak’a başvurduk, Arapçayı muhakkak Irak’a uğradığımız için aldık. Eğer

¹⁴⁹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*Captain asked ‘where did you come from?’ Hadji(a prominent tribal leader) answered ‘we have come from Central Asia.’ Hadji disparaged himself, said we have come because of poverty. Captain said ‘you have come as a nomadic tribe maybe because of famine, your origin is like that.’*”

Orta Asya'dan geldiysek muhakkak oradan Irak'a oradan da buraya taşıdık dilimizi. Arapça'yı Irak'tan aldık." C (*Farmer, Male, Hatetke*)¹⁵⁰

The interviewee tries to identify himself with the Turkish national identity by identifying the origins of his community as Central Asia. However as he repeats the pedagogical narrative of the Turkish nationalist discourse about the origins of the Turks, he notices that he and his community does not fit in the plot that is suggested by the Turkish nationalist pedagogy. The communal history of the Arabs that is shared by the members of the community does not match with the Turkish history that is suggested in the pedagogical narrative. Moreover he regards the fact that the Arabs speak Arabic which also does not fit the pedagogical narrative where Arab identity is not represented. Hence in order to identify with the Turkish national identity which leaves out the Arab identity, the interviewee destabilizes the pedagogical narrative by adding up the history of the Arab community and the Arab identity which he associates here with the Arabic language. He introduces another plot which adds up the Arab history and identity as he narrates the pedagogical narrative that the Turkish national have come from Central Asia. For him, the Arabs should have passed through Iraq in their way to Anatolia although their ancestral origins similar to the other Turkish nationals goes back to Central Asia. If not, it would be impossible for the Arabs who are the Turkish nationals to speak the Arabic language.

By renarrating the pedagogical narrative of the Turkish nationalist discourse, the interviewee proposes another definition of the Turkish national identity which does not

¹⁵⁰ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, "*Hadji says that we have come from Central Asia. And I say that we have appealed to Iraq then (we have been in Iraq). We have learnt Arabic definitely because we have stopped by in Iraq. If we have come from Central Asia, definitely we have come from there to Iraq, carried our language from Iraq to here. We took Arabic from Iraq.*"

leave outside the Arab identity. Although the totality of the signs of the Turkish nation and national identity which does not represent ethnic or communal differences of identity is subverted or challenged, the signs of the Turkish nation and national identity are redefined by the incorporation of the Arab identity.

“Sason’da alay komutanı Arapların ve Kürtlerin liderlerini toplamışlar, sicillerini, kökenlerini sordu. Bir lider dediki Basra’dan geldi. ‘Ama tam olarak bilmiyoruz’ dedi. Sonra alay komutanı demişki ‘kıtlık zamanı Orta Asya’dan Osmanlılarla beraber geldiniz, Osmanlılar ta Kafkaslara kadar gittiler, Araplar da bu dağlara yerleştiler, Toros dağlarına’...Zaten Osmanlı atalarımız sayılıyor. Dedi siz ‘Orta Asya’dan Osmanlılarla beraber kıtlıktan dolayı geldiniz’...Ama şimdi bizimkiler diyor ki Irak, Basra’dan geldik. Halbuki Orta Asya’dan geldik. Orta Asya’da Araplar işte, Suudi Arabistan, Mısır taraflarından işte.” *A (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹⁵¹

The interviewee first narrates the pedagogical narrative of Turkish nationalism that the Turks have come from Central Asia and approves that the Arabs have come from Central Asia. Then he remembers that the hometown of the community is Basra, Iraq according to the members of the Arab community and tries to associate that story with the Turkish pedagogy. The interviewee asserts that Saudi Arabia or Egypt which are the homeland of Arabs are located in Central Asia and by this association of the homeland of the Arabs with the homeland of the Turks he tries to identify himself as a Turkish national whose origin is Central Asia as it is said in the story of the common history of

¹⁵¹ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*In Sason troop commander collected the leaders of Arabs and Kurds, asked their origins. A leader said that they have come from Basra. And said that ‘we do not know it for sure.’ Then troop commander said that ‘in time of famine you have come from Central Asia with the Ottomans, Ottomans went far away to the Caucasus, Arabs settled in these mountains, the mountains of Toros.’ ...Anyway Otomansa are supposed to be our ancestors. He said ‘you have come from Central Asia due to famine’ ...Whereas now our people say that we have come from Iraq, Basra. However we have come from Central Asia. Arabs are in Central Asia you see, Saudi Arabia, Egypt you see.*”

the Turks. The uneasy identification of the interviewee with the Turkish national identity through the differential reiteration of the Turkish pedagogical narrative results in the re-articulation of the signs of the Turkish nation and national identity as the interviewee adds up the Arabs into the definition of the Turkish nation and the Arab identity into the articulation of the Turkish national identity.

“We have conquered/defended these lands of Anatolia with the Turks”

Another theme of the pedagogical narrative of Turkish nationalist discourse is that the Turks saved Turkey from the enemies which have intruded the Turkish country. The interviewees renarrate this story about the Turkish victory against the enemies and say that the Turks were not alone in their fight against the enemies.

“Türklerle (yan yana/beraber) savaştık, batıyı doğuyu her yeri aldık. Kürt Arap, Türk beraber savaştılar.” *G (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)* ¹⁵²

“Biz de savaştık, bu doğuyu batıyı aldık. Atatürk’le savaştılar (Araplar, Kürtler) Türkiye’yi kurtardılar.” *G (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)* ¹⁵³

The interviewee argues that the Turks, Arabs and Kurds all together worked hard to save the country. The interviewee challenges the pedagogical narrative of the Turkish nationalist discourse about the National Struggle by adding up the Arab and Kurdish people into the definition of the Turkish nationals who are defined in the pedagogical

¹⁵² Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*We have battled together (side by side) with Turks, conquered everywhere either in the West or in the East. Kurd, Arab, Turk fought all together.*”

¹⁵³ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*We have also fought, we conquered this East. (Arabs, Kurds) fought together with Atatürk and saved Turkey.*”

narrative as the people who saved the country. Thus the sign of the identity of the Turkish nation is redefined by the integration of the Arab and Kurdish identities into its definition.

“Bence o zamanlarda (Milli Mücadele sırasında düşmanlar) sadece Türklerin katılımıyla yenilmemiş. Gene bu Urfa, Antep, Mardin, Batman, Adıyaman (‘ın insanları) da vardı (savaşta), sadece Türk insanı yoktu. Urfa’ya Şanlıurfa demişler, buranın insanı gene kendini korumasını bildi.” *B (Construction worker, Male, Hatetke)* ¹⁵⁴

The interviewee considers that the successes of the other communities are not reflected in the school books or in the lessons of Turkish history. He states that the people of the Eastern Anatolia, that is to say the Arabs and Kurds were able to defend their lands against the enemy in the period of National Struggle. Hence he adds that the Arab identity into the definition of the Turkish nationals as the totality of people who saved the country.

“(Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında) Bak Rusya bütün Kürtleri aldı bizi, Sason’u alamadı. Araplar geçit vermedi.” *R (Farmer, Male, Behmir)* ¹⁵⁵

“(Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında) Türkiye baktı Rusya’yla baş edemiyor, o zaman aşiretler vardı burada. Arap Kürt aşiretleri komple Rusya’ya karşı gitti.” *S (Farmer, Male, Behmir)* ¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*I think in those times (during National Struggle the enemies) are not defeated only by the participation of Turks. There were also (the people of) Urfa, Antep, Mardin, Batman, Adıyaman (in the battle), there was not only Turkish people. They called Urfa as Şanlıurfa (Urfa the Glorious), the people of this region nevertheless were able to protect themselves.*”

¹⁵⁵ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*(In First World War) You know Russia captured (defeated) all the Kurds but not us and Sason (our lands). Arabs did not let them pass.*”

¹⁵⁶ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “*(In First World War) Turkey saw that it could not defeat Russia, there were tribes here then. All the Arab (and) Kurdish tribes went to struggle against Russia.*”

The interviewee expresses that the National Struggle is performed by the Arab and Kurdish tribes rather than the National Army in the East of Anatolia. Hence he subverts the pedagogical narrative that the Turkish army composed of Turkish nationals won the victory against the enemies. By adding up the Arab and Kurdish tribes as the significant actors of the National Struggle, he challenges the pedagogy and narrates a different version of the story of National Struggle which introduces the Arab and Kurdish identities into the definition of the Turkish national identity. Hence the totality of the Turkish national identity and nation are destabilized and re-articulated by the introduction of the Arabs and Kurds into the definition of the Turkish nation.

“Kürtler zaten önceden garimüslim. Araplarla gayrimüslim arasında bir savaş çıkmıştı, Türkler hariç. Türk karşılık vermemiş dedelerimizin anlattıklarına göre. Bizim İslam olarak mektup yollamış, ‘sizin dininiz batıldır, İslama gelin’ demiş. ‘Eğer gelmezseniz de bizim tarafımıza hareket yapmayın, yaparsanız savaşırız’ (demiş). Türkler kesinlikle onu düşündüler, dediler ki ‘bunların söyledikleri doğrudur, dinleri de doğrudur’. Artık Türk olarak Arapların karşısında savaşmadılar (Müslüman oldular). Savaşmayınca bizimle beraber geldiler tabii Siirt’e, (çünkü) müslüman müslümanın kardeşidir. Ama tabii gayrimüslim vardı ortadaki millette, (Türk ve Araplar) onlarla savaştilar taa İstanbul’a kadar. Fethedene kadar da Fatih Sultan Mehmet’le de beraberdiler Arapla Türk.” *F (Farmer, Male, Hatetke)*¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Interview by author, tape recording, Batman, February, 2005, “Kurds were non-Muslims in the past. There was a war between Arabs and non-Muslims then, except for Turks. Turk did not fight against (Muslims, Arabs) as to the narratives of our grandfathers. We sent a letter (to non-Muslims), said that ‘your religion not true, become Muslims’. ‘If you do not accept that, do not fight against us, but if you move against us we will fight’ (they said). Turks definitely considered that (offer) and said that ‘what they say is right, their religion is also right’. Hence they did not fight against Arabs as Turks (they became Muslims). As they did not fight, they came together with us to Siirt, (because) Muslims are brothers. But there were non-Muslims among the people living in the middle (of West and East of Anatolia), they (Turks and Arabs) battled against them till Istanbul. Until the conquest of Istanbul Arabs and Turks were all together with Fatih Sultan Mehmet.”

The pedagogical narrative of the Turkish nationalist discourse about the conquest of Anatolia is subject to the reiteration and thus transformation of it by the interviewee in terms of the social imaginary of the Arab community. The interviewee renarrates the pedagogical narrative of the conquest of Anatolia with a different plot and states that the conquest of Anatolia is the common achievement of the Turks and Arabs. Hence he challenges the pedagogical narrative of Turkish nationalism about the conquest of Anatolia which is defined as the result of the conquests of the Turkish tribes who have migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia and established Turkish principalities in Anatolia. However the interviewee adds up the Arabs into the conquest of Anatolia and even suggests that Turks have followed the leadership of the Arabs in their conquest of Anatolia by coming to Siirt and uniting with the Arabs there for deploying the conquest.

All in all the definition of Turkish national identity in the national narratives is hybridized, transformed and expanded by the inclusion of the Arab identity throughout the identification of the Arabs with national identity. In this respect the case is significant for displaying the unstable, shifting and hybrid nature of national identity which is acknowledged neither by the ethno-symbolist nor by the modernist theories of nation and nationalism.

Last but not the least the case also stands as an example of the appropriation of national identity by “nationals”. As it is displayed by the analyses of the renarrations of national narratives, Arabs are constructed as “nationals” by Turkish national identity whereas they also construct Turkish nation and national identity in various ways by adding up their cultural identity as they try to identify with them. Hence the case is

significant in illustrating that “nationals” are also the subjects of national imagination rather than being mere objects of it.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The ethnographic study of the Arab community in Batman contributes much to develop an elaborated analysis of the concept of national identity. The case study stands as a criticism against the ethno-symbolist and modernist theories of nation and nationalism with respect to their conceptualizations of national identity.

First of all the case study of Arabs displays the constructed nature of national identity which is strongly argued by the modernist theorists of nationalism such as Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm. In this respect the case challenges the ethno-symbolist theories which emphasize the reconstructed nature of the nation and national identity. Against the ethno-symbolist point of view, the case shows that people are turned into “nationals” despite the fact that the cultural identities of their communities are not compatible with the elements of national identity. As it is illustrated in Chapter IV the Arabs do identify themselves with Turkish national identity although the cultural identities of the Arab community such as the specific history of the community, memories, ancestry, myths of origin and homeland and Arabic language significantly differ from the respective elements of Turkish national identity, that is, national history, myths of origin and Turkish language. Hence by illustrating the Arabs’ approval of the Turkish national narratives the case shows that the local communities with their distinct

identities can believe in the national narratives which are based on a certain imagination of the nation as a totality with a shared notion of identity and history.

Second, the analysis of the case verifies the argument that has been put forward about the nature of national identity. Following a post-structuralist point of view in the analysis of the concept of national identity, it has been claimed that national identity as a sign is always contested and shifted by those “nationals” who have communal identities different from national identity. As it is elaborated in the analyses of the renarrations of the Turkish national narratives performed by the Arabs, the Arabs challenge the totality of Turkish national identity in national narratives by adding up the Arab identity into the definition of national identity. Thus national identity is never a homogeneous and stable definition of the nation prevailing the imaginations of all “nationals” as it is suggested by the modernist and ethno-symbolist theories but it is an unstable, shifting, multiple and hybrid sign that is subject to constant transformations by the inclusion of the cultural identities of local communities.

Third, the analysis of the social imaginary of the Arab community through a post-structuralist viewpoint on identity and society reveals that the cultural identities of the Arab community are never able to represent the community in full terms. Moreover it is analyzed that Turkish national identity is included into the social imaginary of the community similar to other signifiers of identity which are not able to represent the community but aspires to do so. This illustrates that national identity does not necessarily dominate the imagination of the “nationals” but national identity as a sign always exists side by side with the cultural identities of the local communities in the social imaginaries of those communities.

I need to acknowledge that throughout the analyses of the case there have been various points which are left unexplained or unproblematized. One subject matter which is neglected in my analyses of the Arab community is the issue of supposedly “Kurdish-speaking Arabs” or “Kurdish Arabs”. The respondents of the interviewees in my case were mostly composed of the Arabs who identify themselves with the Turkish national identity whereas the Arabs who associate themselves with Kurdish identity are underrepresented. I was able to conduct only one interview with a member of the community who identifies himself as a Kurd about his thoughts on the Arab community and Kurdish identity. Due to the limited scope of this research study I was mostly concerned with talking with the Arabs about the social imaginary of the Arab community and identification of the community members with Turkish national identity. Moreover in the period of ethnographic study there was a strong snow fall in Batman which prevented me from visiting the villages of the “supposedly Kurdish speaking” Arabs in the highlands of Batman city.

I believe that an analysis of the social imaginary of the “Kurdish Arabs” and the social antagonisms which are experienced by them would support my arguments on social imaginary and social antagonisms. As it is previously argued social imaginary of a community is formed and transformed in and through social antagonisms lived by that community. Hence it is presumed that different social antagonisms would lead to the constitution of distinct social imaginaries of communities. As a result of the interview with a Kurdish Arab and the information given by the interviewees about the Kurdish Arabs I believe that Kurdish Arabs share a social imaginary of their community different from that of Arabs in my case study. Following my theoretical framework I assume that through the exploration of the historical and contingent social antagonisms lived by the

Kurdish Arabs, it would be possible to understand the effect of social antagonisms in the formation or transformation of the social imaginary of a community. However I acknowledge that I was not able to conduct research about the social antagonisms of Kurdish Arabs such as on the issues of appropriation of land and tribal enmities.

Moreover interviews with Kurdish Arabs would provide significant insight for further developing my analysis of the concept of national identity. By exploring the social imaginary of Kurdish Arabs we would be able to find out how the Kurdish Arabs identify themselves with Arab identity, Kurdish identity and Turkish national identity and whether Kurdish Arabs also challenge and modify Kurdish and Turkish identities similar to the interviewees.

Furthermore the historical transformation of the Arab identity in time as to its content is among the issues left understudied in the case study of Arabs. In Chapter III it was stated that the social imaginary of a community that is to say the communal identities and boundaries are transformed as an effect of the changing social antagonisms experienced by that community. However due to the fact that almost all the members of the Arab community who have witnessed the contemporary history of the Arab community have passed away, I could not gather any data that would provide knowledge about the social imaginary of the Arab community in the first three decades of the 20th century. For example we do not know whether the members of the community who were exiled to West also defined themselves as Arabs in the same way the present members of the community do. It is possible that the Arabs who rebelled against the Turkish state and were sent to exile to West were primarily defining themselves and their community with tribal affiliation, Muslimhood and also as people loyal to the Ottoman caliph and emperor. Hence they may have challenged the Turkish

national identity through different renarrations of the national narratives or they may have completely rejected these narratives because of their different social imaginary of their community.

The case study of Arabs also brings into mind further questions which may lead to the study of different cases in future researches. There are various religious, cultural, linguistic and immigrant communities living in Turkey who identify themselves with Turkish national identity such as immigrants from the Balkans or Western Trace, Circassians, Laz, Alevites and so on. The social imaginaries of these people, the way the members of these cultural communities identify with Turkish national identity can be subject matter of future research. Hence as a result of future research as such we would be able to make a comparative analysis of different cases and find out whether all minority groups or cultural communities living in Turkey appropriate Turkish national identity by tailoring it in terms of their distinct communal identities. Moreover future research can entail an exploration of the identification of a Turkish nationalist with the Turkish national identity. It would be interesting to find out that even a devoted Turkish nationalist can renarrate national narratives and tailor Turkish national identity in his/her way.

All in all the case study of Arabs in Batman is a significant case for providing us an understanding of the unstable, shifting, multiple and hybrid nature of national identity which is disregarded by the ethno-symbolist and modernist theories of nation and nationalism. Moreover the case illustrates that the “nationals” are not only the objects of the imagination of nation but they are at the same time the subjects who imagine the nation. As they appropriate the national identity, the “nationals” themselves tailor the imagination of nation and national identity in their own ways with respect to their

cultural identities. Hence national identity has the function of constructing the nation, while it is also being constructed in each locality and different times of the nation.

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