Heterogeneous Encounters: Tolerance, Secularism and Religious Difference at Turkey’s Border with Syria

by

Mahiye Seçil Dağtaş

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Department of Anthropology
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This dissertation is an ethnographic investigation into the politics of religious difference in Turkey. Drawing on fieldwork in Antakya, a city near Turkey’s Syrian border populated by Arabs and Turks of Sunni, Alawi, Jewish, and Orthodox Christian backgrounds, it explores the mundane, political, and aesthetic representations of religious difference and demonstrates how such difference is constructed, lived, and configured in everyday realms of sociality. Four such realms are focused on: a multi-religious choral ensemble, Antakya’s historical marketplace, domestic and communal sitings of guesthood (misafirlik), and places and discourses of common worship.

Official representations of Antakya’s religious diversity imply a pluralist and “tolerant” form of national citizenship as compared to Turkey’s Republican secularist model. I argue, however, that daily practices, artistic expressions, and networks of exchange between different denominations of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish residents of the city inhabit a more heterogeneous field characterized by interpersonal relations of negotiation, hospitality, intimacy, and hostility. These interrelations are further informed and delimited by structures of power embedded in local, national, and transnational regimes of diversity management and implicated in the minoritization
of non-Sunni and non-Turkish communal identities. Nevertheless, they also rework and transcend such regimes of governance.

In illustrating what it means to cohabit an interreligious milieu near a national border, this dissertation is positioned among other anthropological explorations of religious diversity and the growing literature on secularism, as well as anthropological studies of borders and marginality. It shows that religious difference is produced at the intersection of multiple discourses, practices, and boundaries, and as such it evades both pluralist (multi-community) and dualist (i.e. religion vs. secular) models of religious co-existence.
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1 Introduction

1.1 A Scene, a Tale, a Contested History

“This is where the decapitated head of Habibi Neccar (pron. Nejjar) stopped after tumbling off the mountain,” says Jozef, as I am covering my head in the courtyard of the Habibi Neccar Mosque in preparation to enter the shrine of Yahya (Yuhanna) and Yunus (Pavlus). It is May 2011, and we are in Antakya (Antioch), a town in southern Turkey at the centre of Hatay Province, which borders the Mediterranean and Syria.¹

Jozef is pointing at the door to the right of the shrine, next to the entrance of the mosque. On the doorplate is written, “Habibi Neccar Ziyaretgahi” (Place of Pilgrimage). In front of the doorplate is a group of twenty covered women, mostly in sleeved shirts and ankle length skirts. Some are chatting, but most are sitting in silence on a carpet on the floor, with their feet bare, lips murmuring unidentifiable prayers, and eyes watching their children running around the courtyard. I notice three women amongst them, also covered, but wearing short-sleeved tops. As one speaks to the other, I recognize their Alawi accent.²

As I think about what makes these two shrines bring Alawi and Sunni women together in their common courtyard, I notice the sign placed at the entrance, which reads as follows:

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¹ The province changed name three times during the 20th century in the making of the Turkish-Syrian border. Unlike other provinces of Turkey, where the province takes the same name as its main city (or “centre,” after the Turkish, “merkez”), the inhabitants of this region do not use “Hatay” interchangeably with “Antakya” and instead employ it strategically when they need to address the province as a whole. See Solak (2010) for the reaction of a prominent local journal to the procedural change in 2008 that replaces “Antakya” with “Centre” in birth records and identity cards, and the significance of the distinction between the two names for the inhabitants of the city.

² Alawis (also known as “Nusayris” or “Ansaris”) compose a religious community based in Syria and in smaller numbers in southern Turkey that developed out of Shi’a Islam. They are ethnically Arab, follow the Twelver school of Shi’a Islam, and revere the Fourth Caliph of Islam, Ali, who was also the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad.
“According to the religion of Islam, it is strictly forbidden to 1) offer votive to, 2) sacrifice animals to, 3) light candles in, 4) tie rags to, 5) attach stones or coins to, 6) enter in a posture of supplication, 7) toss coins towards, 8) leave food in, 9) rub face or hand on, 10) expect healing from, 11) circumambulate, 12) sleep or to engage in any similar superstitious or heretical activity in shrines or tombs.” The Directorate of Religious Affairs.

During the course of my stay in Antakya, I performed most of these acts while accompanying my Alawi friends to the numerous shrines of Muslim and Christian saints. Only if you are an Alawi in Antakya, or close to one, can you identify that this official attempt to purify Islam and differentiate between orthodoxy and heresy targets particularly the Alawi practices of shrine visitation.

Jozef’s comment about the decapitated head, on the other hand, alludes to a story that introduces other religious actors who have lived in Antakya together with Alawis and Sunnis for centuries, in fact predating them, even though it is the latter two that now constitute the majority of Antakya’s population of some 200,000 people. As narrated by Jozef and many other Orthodox Christians in Antakya, the story of Habibi Neccar goes as follows:

In the first century AD, Jesus sends his two apostles, Peter and Paul (referred to as Yuhanna and Pavlus in Islamic sources) from Jerusalem to the Roman city of Antioch. On their way, the apostles encounter Habibi Neccar, a pagan carpenter from Antioch who earns his living by making and selling idols. When the apostles heal his bedridden son, Habibi Neccar joins the faith. He takes refuge in Mount Silpius to repent and pray to God. Other citizens of Antioch, however, do not welcome the newcomers.

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3 While some of these traditional practices are also performed by Sunni believers, such as offering votive to, lighting candles, or expecting healing from shrines, most are peculiar to Arab Alawis.

4 “Habibi Neccar” literally means “Beloved Carpenter” in Arabic.
Jesus sends Barnabas as his third apostle, who also fails to persuade the city’s inhabitants. They hold secret meetings in a grotto church on the slopes of Mount Silpius, and acquire the name “Christian” for the first time, marking Antioch as the place of origin for the historical differentiation between Judaism and Christianity. When Habibi Neccar comes down to the city to persuade his fellow citizens to follow the apostles, they are all martyred. The Roman ruler decapitates him. His body remains on the slopes of Mount Silpius while his head rolls down the mountain and arrives in the city.\(^5\)

The living memory of Habibi Neccar as a sacred yet local figure from a distant past is materialized in three religious sites in Antakya, as well as in what now is called Mount Habibi Neccar (Mount Silpius), the series of hills running north-east to south-west around the old city of Antakya that act as its natural fortress. Today, Habibi Neccar’s body is believed to be buried in his cave in these hills forming a minor shrine (ziyaret).\(^6\) It is visited by locals from Muslim and Christian denominations, but particularly Alawis who have a much more established custom of shrine visiting than do Sunnis or Christians (see Chapter 4).

The head of Habibi Neccar is entombed under Habibi Neccar Mosque and constitutes the Habibi Neccar Ziyaretgahi. The local historian Mehmet Tekin (2006:46) views the eternal separation of the head from the body through the establishment of two distinct tombs as a conscious decision on the part of the city’s religious authorities to commemorate the Antakyans’ infidelity. One of

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\(^5\) There are other versions of this story in which Habibi Neccar appears as a Muslim, rather than a Christian. According to one in Arabic sources, the incident takes place in Antakya but 600 years later. Habibi Neccar appears as a soldier of Ebu Ubeyde, the commander of the Caliph Omar who conquers the city. Habib is martyred during the first Islamic conquest of Antakya, decapitated by the enemy’s sword (Tekin 2006:47). The Turkish Tahtaci Alevi—another heterodox Muslim group in Turkey which shows similarities with Shi’a Islam (see Note 16)—in a nearby Mediterranean city, Mersin, tell another tale. In this account, Habibi Neccar is a spiritual guide of Alevi peasants and villagers and provides them with wood from the forest, in accordance with the traditional profession of the Alevis in the region and the religious significance that the forest and trees hold for them (Tekin 2006:51). Many people in Antakya, including Muslims, however, accept Habibi Neccar as originally a Christian figure. 

\(^6\) Unlike the mosques and shrines located inside the mosques, which are tied to the Directorate of Religious Affairs and kept by the office of the Mufti, the tombs are not under the responsibility of a state institution. The Alawi tombs are looked after by appointed Alawi sheiks and through the donations of the community.
the Sunni visitors to the shrine revealed to me that Antakya is cursed because of this incident and it will fall 40 days before Judgment Day. “The incident happened long before the advent of Islam,” she added. “This is why we Muslims will go to heaven before them [Jews and Christians]. İnşallah.”

This is a belief shared by many Muslims, the reason for which is later explained to me in an interview with the Grand Mufti of Hatay: The incident and its expected consequences are mentioned in the seventeenth verse of Yasin Surah in the Koran and often referred to by the imams in Antakya during their mosque sermons. Local historian Tekin (2006:11) comments on this thus: “Although Habibi Neccar is a Christian figure, his memory is enlivened through the Koran. Yasin Surah rendered his story the property not only of Christians but of all humanity.”

An Alawi sheikh frames this embracement as “the true example of tolerance in Antakya,” but the Grand Mufti has a slightly different interpretation of what tolerance means in this context: “To name a mosque in honour of a Christian saint is the proof of Muslim tolerance; you would never see a synagogue or a church named after a great Muslim.” When I mention this remark to Jozef, he responds bitterly. “Did you see the recently built ablution and prayer places for the shrine on the hills?” he asks. “That is a place of worship for Christians and Alawis as well. They are trying to turn it into a Sunni tomb.”

The mosque that the mufti identifies as the proof of tolerance is also an object of contestation. The official discourse names it “the first mosque in Anatolia,” suggesting an attempt to balance the city’s sacred history for Christians with a historical reference to Islam. Spatially, this naming indicates also a national claim over the territory, assuming it to be part of Turkish Anatolia rather

7 The Grand Mufti is the head of the local branch of Turkey’s Directorate of Religious Affairs in charge of the appointments and affairs of imams of mosques, as well as of the Islamic affairs of citizens in the province.
than the Arab Levant. Temporally, it also implies a battle of “firsts,” within which “the oldest” wins and thus holds the prime right to place.

The city tourist brochure claims that the site emerged first as a mosque during the rule of the second Caliph Omar in the 7th century AD, was destroyed and converted into a church during Byzantine rule in the 11th century, and reconstructed as a mosque first by the Mamluks in the 13th century, then by the Ottomans in 1858. The accounts of the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches of Antakya, on the other hand, emphasize the non-Muslim origins of the mosque: that it was built on the site of an ancient Pagan temple as a Byzantine church, the shell of which then was incorporated into a mosque by the Mamluks.

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The overlapping and contested narratives of Habibi Neccar encapsulate the multiplicity of ways in which religious difference is and has long been inhabited, lived,negotiated, and regulated in Antakya. This multiplicity includes persecution, assimilation, and toleration; displacement and replacement; translation, appropriation, and mutual borrowing; hospitality and hostility, and comparison and incommensurability. While the tales about Habibi Neccar mark the differentiation of Christianity from Islam, as well as of Judaism from Christianity, they also manifest how porous the boundaries have historically been between and within these faiths.

The boundaries themselves, as well as the ways in which they connect and disconnect people are as material as the monumentalized presence of Habibi Neccar in Antakya. They index the materiality of bodily movements, affective forces, sensorial experiences, discrepant memories, symbolic markers, and aesthetic forms. They draw attention to inter-subjective processes that map time onto space, and bind humans to objects and other humans. They register the remnants
of different historical eras and styles (Roman, Mediterranean, Arab, Ottoman, colonial French, and Republican), of the different yet related ways in which these regimes regulated difference, and of the variety of alignments and dissents they have produced.

This dissertation examines how religious differences figure theologically, economically, aesthetically, and politically in the range of daily interactions, tensions, and negotiations in Antakya today. How, I ask, do diverse actors draw, cross, and surpass religious boundaries at the geographical periphery of the constitutionally secular and predominantly Sunni Muslim country that is Turkey? When and how does difference turn into sameness, become tolerated, or become subsumed into other and wider collectivities, and what role do country borders play in this process? And how do the local, national, and imperial regimes of diversity-management inflect each other while mediating and perhaps reifying religious differences on the ground?

My exploration of these questions during fieldwork in Antakya in 2010 and 2011 brought me to three inter-related arguments that constitute the framework of this dissertation:

1) “Religions” are not fully formed and internally coherent wholes that then come to intersect (or conflict) with each other, as often presumed in dualist and pluralist models of difference. As Veena Das suggests for Muslim-Hindu relations in India, “religious traditions themselves get constituted through interactive processes [of boundary making and boundary crossing] at different scales of social life” (Das 2013:69; See also Bender and Klassen 2010).

2) These interactive processes are not limited to theological domains and often include institutional processes of diversity-management, competing moralities of institutional and non-institutional agents, gendered relations of intimacy within families and kin
groups, and economic interactions. In other words, religious difference is almost always produced at the intersection of multiple and heterogeneous discourses, practices, boundaries, and regimes of governance, and is not solely to do with the tenets of the religions.

3) The story of religious difference in contemporary Antakya is simultaneously the story of secularism in Turkey, and elsewhere. It registers a contemporary shift in the official discourse of secularism in Turkey from “freedom from religion” to “freedom of religion.” And more importantly, it reveals how the secular is not only a political and legal framework that mediates, resolves, and manages religious diversity, but also becomes an aesthetic form of hearing, seeing, and sensing the cultural products of religious engagements.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

1.2.1 Anthropology of Religious Diversity

Since its beginnings, the anthropology of religion has debated the possibility of defining religion as shared human experience and a universal social phenomenon (Asad 1993; Durkheim 2001[1912]; Geertz 1973). Equally influential in the field have been the attempts to recognize, clarify, and contextualize differences, divisions, and variations indicated by “religions” (Lambek 2013:2). While earlier work paid attention to issues surrounding religious syncretism, composites, and cohabitation through the distinctions between folk and formal religions (Geertz 1971; el-Zein 1977; Marriot 1955; Worsley 1957), critical scholarship on colonialism highlighted the relationship between local religious practices and missionary work in colonial and postcolonial contexts (Boddy 2007; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Keane 2007; Shaw and Stewart 1994). With the emergence of new religious movements in the 1970s, questions of
religious diversity became more entangled with the complex processes of modernity, globalization, and migration in relationship to the growing vocality and visibility of religion in the public sphere (Csordas 2007; Daswani 2010; Deeb 2006; Hirschkind 2006; Meyer 2004).

Eva Spies (2013) identifies three main models in anthropological approaches to religious diversity that run through this history. The first are dualistic frames that position different religious traditions as incompatible with and opposed to each other (Gellner 1983; see also Huntington 1996). The second are models of interconnection in which religious discourses and practices are considered to be mutually translatable. These, Spies divides roughly into “models of mixing,” which emphasize blending or hybridization of religions (Hannerz 1987; Meyer 1999; Shaw and Stewart 1994), models that use the concept of “the market” and draw on a rational-choice model to argue for the privatization of religious beliefs and practices as matters of personal preference and choice (Berger 1979; Iannaccone 1992), and finally the “pluralism” model which presents a liberal conception of peaceful coexistence between religious collectivities and approaches religious difference as one among other mechanisms of differentiation, such as class, gender and race (Casanova 1994; Hefner 2011; Taylor 2007). Although each of these models of interconnection reflects distinct academic debates and genealogies, Spies notes, they all relate diverse religious traditions to each other with reference to a common, meta standard, such as a “system of meaning,” rational market logic, or the standards of liberal democracy.

Spies engages with her third model in her analysis of a burial ritual in Madagascar. Building on the works of Bernstein (1991) and Lambek (1993; 2008), she argues that in order to understand the relationship between two or more religious positions without imposing a common standard,
one should also account for their incommensurabilities, that is, how they co-exist and even overlap without opposing, mixing, or merging into a larger coherent whole.

As will be described shortly in greater detail, the histories of the institutions, discourses and relations in and through which religious diversity unfolds in Antakya make it almost impossible to approach religious difference in this particular context solely through a model of incommensurability. Yet dualistic or intersectionality frames also fail to capture the complexity of this heterogeneous field. If nothing else, after all, the people at issue here are all “people of the book,” that is, “members” of Abrahamic religions, people who directly or indirectly engage with particular textual traditions and their inter-textual interpretations in the Judaic-Christian-Muslim lineage—as noted in the debates about Habibi Neccar. Their histories, theologies and practices are, moreover, inexorably intertwined, not only through their references to common texts or stories, but also through daily and institutional processes of othering, borrowing, translation, and power.

In her genealogical investigation into the concept of “world religions,” Tomoko Masuzawa (2005) highlights the common origins of pluralist and dualist models in Western academic discourse on religion. She suggests that the concept of “world religions” and the concomitant ideology of religious pluralism began as a discourse of othering Eastern religions. The efforts to Hellenize and Aryanize Christianity in the 19th century, paralleled by the Semitization of Islam, not only cracked the old alliance of Abrahamic monotheisms, but also positioned Europe “as the harbinger of universal history, as a prototype of unity amid plurality” (2005:xii). The new discourse of pluralism, the ruling ethos of academic work on religion since the early 20th century, “neither displaced nor disabled the logic of European hegemony—formerly couched in the language of universality of Christianity” (2005:xiv). Rather, it reinforced the East-West
dichotomy in a new form, by positioning “inclusive” universality against a Semitized monotheism representing exclusivity and rejection of multiplicity.

Talal Asad (1986) offered a similar analysis in his critique of Western anthropological conceptualizations of Islam. Engaging with Ernest Gellner’s *Muslim Society* (1983), he claimed that most of these works relied on an inherent comparison between Islam and Christianity as reflecting “differing historical configurations of power and belief, one essentially located in Europe, the other in the Middle East” (Asad 1986:3). In light also of the genealogy provided by Masuzawa and Spies’ dualistic framing, one can discern the underlying logic of historical contrasts in a globalist discourse like Huntington’s (1996) “clash of civilizations,” with its emphasis on the inherent conflict and incompatibility between “Muslim” and “Western” values.

One reflex of recent anthropological work on Islam towards such claims of incompatibility has been to address the modernness of Muslim subjects in the contemporary global world (Deeb 2006; Hefner 1998). I take a somewhat different path and, bearing in mind the figure of Habibi Neccar, suggest a focus on the interactions, encounters, and boundaries between different religious traditions whose history precedes the arrival of discourses and practices that we ambiguously call “modern.”

Most branches of Eastern Christianity and Sephardic Judaism have been portrayed in Western scholarship as “minor branches in the Middle East of a history that develops elsewhere—in Europe, and at the roots of Western civilizations” (Asad 1986:3). But Christians, Jews, and

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8 In the context of secularization theory, this can be extended to an argument about the modernness of religion and piety in general.

9 Ottomanist historians have taken a similar approach in their conceptualization of religious interactions (e.g., Barkey 2008; Rothman 2011), but their historical approach leaves unexamined the dynamic interplay between the traditions in their contemporary formations and how these formations make use of the past in the present.
Muslims have continuously informed each other’s religious and cultural practices in Antakya. They have cooked the same dishes for their religious feasts; they have used similar architectural styles for their places of worship; they have buried their dead in different sections of the same cemetery. In some circumstances, as depicted above, they have visited the same shrines.

In this dissertation I do not propose simply to draw parallels between different religious traditions, such as Fischer (2003) does in his account of the madrassa system in Iran, or Hefner (1998) and Csordas (2007) do in their respective conceptualizations of globalization and transnationalism of different religions. Instead, I suggest focusing on religious boundaries that define, constitute, or challenge identities of different kinds and how they take shape in different moments and processes of encounter. This focus is especially necessary in border localities, like Antakya, where we encounter the most hybrid and plural mixes of populations with ambiguous identities and porous loyalties (eg. Donnan 1999; Driessen 1992; Kalir 2010; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Pelkmans 2006), and where social and political institutions take considerable effort to qualify and regulate such differences (Wilson and Donnan 2012a:6).

By focusing on heterogeneous encounters across denominations, this dissertation leans on a constructivist understanding of religion and reflects on how individuals, discourses, and power mechanisms work toward the construction, maintenance, and reification of difference. I also seek to show that “religious traditions do not only work as markers for drawing boundaries but are in each case resources for [the] (re)construction of values, visions of life, ways to act in the world, ethics and explanations” (Spies 2013:130). In the context of my fieldsite, this means attending both to the official attempts to demarcate and regulate religions, and also to the ways that people draw on their own religious traditions and practices of living together while enacting and contesting these attempts.
This approach invites us to rethink the tendency in the anthropology of religion to understand Abrahamic religions “as separate traditions with their own authoritative discourses and practices” (Das 2013:69), a tendency that has recently manifested itself in the compartmentalization of subfields such as “anthropology of Islam,” or “anthropology of Christianity.” This is not to deny the significant differences between the myriad of historically situated features, relationships, and dynamics of what are obviously identifiable religious traditions that makes it entirely valid to analyze them as singularities, but separately (See Asad 1986; 1993; 2003). Yet a focus on the networks of encounter and exchange beyond their bounded institutional and civilizational histories also offers a valuable point of view, at least as a corrective revealing how the boundaries between these traditions are not as strict in daily life as claimed in public and academic discourses on world religions.

1.2.2 Questions of Secularism

As Asad’s exploration of secularism makes clear, the anthropology of religion in contemporary times is unavoidably also an anthropology of secularism. Secularism and the secular as a particular assemblage and way of relating to the world beyond “the sphere of religion” has been deeply involved in the work of assessing, defining, and regulating the confines and meanings of the religious (Asad 2003; Lambek 2012). With the realization of this work, scholars began to question the possibility of treating the domains of the secular and the religious as distinct givens (Agrama 2010; Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008; Hirschkind 2006) and indeed the very authority of this distinction (Lambek 2012). In this context of problematizing the very boundary of the secular and the religious, then, manifestly, issues of religious boundaries are already implicated.

As one of the few Muslim-majority countries where secular democracy persists as a dominant constitutional force, Turkey has proven to be a fruitful site to explore these questions. Secularism
and its relationship to Islam has been the most popular topic in the international scholarship on Turkey, including the majority of ethnographic studies conducted in the country over the last twenty years (Berkes and Ahmad 1964; Dole 2012; Gole 1996; Henkel 2007; Mardin 1991; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Özyürek 2006; Saktanber 2002; Silverstein 2011; Tambar 2009; Tuğal 2009; Turam 2006; Walton 2013; White 2002).

Most of these works engage with, reinforce or attempt to unpack the well-worn debates on the battle between the Islamists and secularists: the practitioners of a “modernized” Islam who acquired an increasing public visibility as against the devoted followers of the early Republican values instituted to modernize Turkey along “Western” lines. When attention shifted from institutional ideologies and state actors to ordinary citizens, the object of study became either those who identified themselves as “secularists” and “Kemalists” (Navaro-Yashin 2002; Özyürek 2006) or those who were involved in Islamic revivalist movements, in civil and overtly political forms (e.g. Gole 1996; Saktanber 2002; Tuğal 2009; Walton 2010).

My work builds upon this literature but extends it by showing how Islam in Turkey is constituted as much through its conduct with religious others as through its internal dynamics of power in relation to the secular state. As eloquently expressed by Brian Silverman, “arguments about Islam’s allegedly alternative relationship to political modernity need to be nuanced by pointing out that the latter in Turkey is not a legacy of colonialism (in any direct sense) … but, rather, has its genealogy in Ottoman reform movements” (2011:119).10 Such nuances require us to attend not only to Sunni Islam, as most studies of Turkish secularism do—for exceptions see Brink-Danan (2012), Özyürek (2009a), and Tambar (2010)—but also to other religious practices and

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10 See also Meeker (2002) and Mitchell (1988). Mitchell, in particular, points out that the reforms of Muhammad Ali of Egypt were a form of “auto-colonization,” and that the (Ottoman) Tanzimat reforms formed an attempt to obviate Western interference by playing the “Western game” (see below).
identities that have presented a challenge for the Turkish Sunni identity of the “secular” Republic.

Secondly and more importantly, I take issue with the tendency in both literatures to focus predominantly on the realm of political doctrines, legal regulations, and new religio-political movements, while interrogating the place of secularism in the Muslim world (Agrama 2010; Hansen 2000; Eisenlohr 2006; Fernando 2010). Even though it is impossible to talk about the formations of religious life and practice without invoking the frameworks of religious movements and consciously fashioned selves (as we see in the case of Habibi Neccar), such formations as I have encountered in Antakya often fall outside them.

One theoretical challenge of this dissertation, then, is how to address religion (and its embeddedness in the secular) “in a way that neither excessively politicizes nor excessively depoliticizes it” (Lambek 2012). This challenge informs my analysis of the relationship between performative representations of religious difference and mundane religious engagements. I show how the two are intimately linked and shape each other, yet at the same time never fully overlap. People draw on their own experiences and understandings of co-existence while making sense of the official regime of tolerance. These experiences in turn transcend the official discourse and regimes of governance.

1.2.3 Of Boundaries and Thresholds

During the course of my fieldwork, I witnessed how my Muslim, Christian, and Jewish interlocutors related to each other and negotiated their multiple identities through interactive processes of representation, conflict, translation, and hospitality. I realized that religious boundaries were embedded in, defined by, and lived through boundaries of other kinds such as spatial, social, symbolic, territorial, and so on. Antakya’s inhabitants cast each other as
descendants and representatives of specific histories and residents of particular districts on the basis of which they acquire the identities of insider and outsider, guest and host, tolerant and tolerated, urban and rural, believer and non-believer, cosmopolitan and local, seller and client, husband and wife, Turk and Syrian, and so on. Some of these categories were reciprocal and constantly shifting, while others proved to be relatively more stable and fixed.

As fieldwork often meant taking part in the dynamics of these multi-layered and heterogeneous networks, I, too, was assigned, performed, and reconciled some of these categories while resisting or being denied others. Inevitably, my knowledge of how boundaries of different kinds inform religious engagements in Antakya, and of the limitations of such knowledge, is bound to my own personal experience of being a guest, a client, a traveler and a friend to my interlocutors.

In an attempt to account for the socially constructed nature of these categories, without denying their “realness” and materiality for my interlocutors (and for myself in the field), I approach religious boundaries as historical processes and “relative locations” (Green 2005; see also Barth 2012). This means that what religious boundaries are and what they divide depend on their relations to and embeddedness in other boundaries, borders, places, and people as well as the historical and political processes that produce these relations. Hence, I choose to focus not on the dualities themselves, but on the boundaries and networks that lie in-between these dualities and that construct them (i.e. the liminal [(Turner 1967)]).

Thus, I direct my ethnographic attention to heterogeneous sites of encounters where different religious traditions meet daily, conflict, and act upon each other in mutually creative as well as constraining ways. These sites range from the national border, city bazaars, and places of common worship to residential neighbourhoods, the domestic spheres of family and a multi-religious choral ensemble. The boundary-making and boundary-crossing activities of Antakya’s
residents include celebrating, grieving, traveling, singing, doing business, and living together whereas inter-faith marriages and religious conversion pose the extreme end of these cross-boundary engagements. These mechanisms also point towards how international borders provide a revealing lens onto the daily life of the state in the context not only of centre-periphery dynamics but also of “the politics of the liminal and interstitial” between nation and state (Wilson and Donnan 2012b:6).

My emphasis on the boundaries themselves builds on the insights provided by anthropologists who studied and conceptualized symbolic and social boundaries as thresholds (Douglas 1966; Gennep 2011[1908]), in-between spaces that lie beyond the either/or (Mittermaier 2010b:173; Özyürek 2009b) and that appear as “realm[s] of pure possibility where novel configurations of ideas and relations arise” (Turner 1967:97). The symbolic and conceptual distinctions people make between themselves and others in Antakya very much rely on their lived experiences of literal, visible, and territorial boundaries, such as the Turkish-Syrian border, the intersections of neighbourhoods, and the courtyards of houses and the archways of these courtyards and alleys that connect them to one another.

Such distinctions take palpable and sensorial forms and highlight “the role of symbolic resources (e.g. conceptual distinctions, interpretive strategies, cultural traditions) in creating, maintaining, contesting, and sometimes dissolving institutionalized social differences, including the various expressions of territorial inequality (Lamont and Molnár 2002:168; see also Bourdieu 1984). A sacred figure like Habibi Neccar, for example, can itself function as the symbolic boundary through which Antakyans enforce, rationalize, normalize, contest, and reframe the meaning of social boundaries, defined in this case by people’s religious affiliation. In brief, the symbolic and the material feed back into one another, producing difference in the process.
As Fredrick Barth (1969) indicated in his work on ethnic boundaries, while classifying, dividing and differentiating, such markers also enable social interactions, form social bonds, and articulate certain collective identities with respect to others (see also Cohen 2012; Thelen 1999). It is in such contingent processes of sociality and relationality that these boundaries acquire the qualities of a threshold. The fragility and ambiguity of social perimeters become most troubling in these realms of relationality, requiring the work of the body in its entirety, beyond the cognitive processes of differentiation to which Barth attends. Thus, as will become evident, the boundaries between Alawis, Sunnis, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Jews of Antakya are drawn by and trespassed through the movements and sensorial experiences of the body as much as through the way people talk to and about each other. It should not, then, come as a surprise that the sign by the Directorate of Religious Affairs at the threshold of the shrine centralizes the body as its main target in differentiating between orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

The embodied interactions across boundaries gain their meaning and social value in the context of their institutionalization and in relation to a variety of regimes of governance (Starr 1992; Verdery 1994). In the case of Antakya, this compels us to attend to the discursive construction of the term “minority” in the making of national borders and identities (see below). As Richard Handler describes in his work on nationalism in Quebec, the nation-state constructs the nation as “a collection of collective individuals,” a person/body which possesses “things,” such as minority groups (1988:6, 179). While nationalism presents these groups as individuated beings bounded in space by the inviolability of naturalized borders, cross-border and cross-boundary relations at the personal level continuously unsettle such neat presentations (Khosravi 2010). The tension between the interpersonal and identitarian revealed in this work emerges throughout, in every chapter, because it remains a crucial ingredient of the confrontation and accommodation between various established forms of faith and the adaptation to changing conditions of life.
Although many writers have viewed such contentious and accommodating relations as moments of hybridization, creolization, métissage, or, in specifically religious contexts, syncretisation (Bhabha 2012; Stewart 2007; Stokes 1998; Stoler 2002; Young 1995), I prefer the term “heterogeneous.” Unlike the concept of hybridity, which assumes a complete fusion of formerly distinct and internally homogeneous positions, the idea of heterogeneity allows us to address what Schielke (2010) calls “the uneasy coexistence” between different sets of institutions, movements, practices, and affiliations in their multiple combinations. It recognizes the structural continuity of interactions and their historicity beyond the moment of physical contact, and accounts for both their commensurabilities and incommensurabilities across time and space.

To convey a better sense of the structures that constitute the heterogeneity of my fieldsite, in the next section I contextualize Antakya with a critical reading of key historical and geopolitical developments that have given texture to the lives of its contemporary inhabitants. In the nationalist imagination, as Martin Stokes (1998:268) notes, Turkey’s southern border not only separates Turkey from the rest of the Muslim world but also its “present from its past, order from chaos,” aligning the country toward “modern and secular Europe” rather than “the Islamic Middle East.” From that perspective, the following narrative is also an attempt to demonstrate how the story of religious difference in Antakya speaks to the past and present of the Middle East and Europe as well as of Turkey and informs the future trajectories of their borders and intertwinement.

### 1.3 Antakya at the Intersection of Multiple Borders

Antakya has long been regarded as a transitional zone, for example as lying between what the 17th century Ottoman traveller Evliya Celebi termed the land of the Arabs and that of the Rum
Located near the most northeastern point of the Mediterranean, originally on the east bank (now on both) of the River Orontes (in ancient times the chief river of the Levant), this city has been at the crossroads of several overland trade and pilgrimage routes for millennia, open to the passage of raiders and traders, nomads, travelers, and pilgrims, appointed officials and immigrants (Dankoff 2004; Kasaba 2006:210). The Roman city of Antioch was the largest city in the world after Rome and Alexandria (Downey 1961). After the Byzantines, Antakya came under the rule of Persians (540-542), Arabs (638-969), Byzantines again (969-1084), Crusaders (1098-1268), Saljuks (1084-1098), Mamluks (1268-1516), Ottomans (1516-1918) and French (1920-1937) before being incorporated into modern Turkey with the province of Hatay in 1939 (Shields 2011:17).

Over time, the city lost its commercial role to Aleppo and Alexandretta, and the Eastern Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch moved to Damascus with the increase of resettled Muslims in the region. Antakya became home to Arabic speaking Jewish, Orthodox, Sunni and Alawi groups, Alawi and Sunni Turkoman nomads, Yazidi, Alawi and Sunni Kurdish tribes, as well as Assyrians, Circassians and Armenians with ties to Gregorian, Protestant, and Catholic churches (Gunduz 2009; Kasaba 2006; Khoury 1987; Shields 2011). Religious difference in Antakya today is built upon this multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual heritage of peoples who crossed, conquered or settled in the region, as well as upon the rules developed and deployed to

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11 The term “Rum” from (in English) “Roman,” is used in Turkey today, including by the Rum people themselves, to refer to the (purportedly Greek ethnic origin) Orthodox population of Anatolia and other parts of the ex-Ottoman Empire (Birtek 2007). It is covered by but more specific than the contemporary English “Greek,” which lumps this together with the Hellenic population of mainland Greece.

12 Together with Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, Antioch was one of the five major episcopal sees housing patriarchates of the Roman Empire. It is argued to have been around the 13th or 14th century after the Mamluk conquest, that the Antioch patriarchate moved to Damascus (Ibn Kathir 1932:319; Pahlitzsch 1999).
regulate their movements and settlement, interactions, obligations and freedoms—most recently through the Ottoman *millet* system, the French Mandate and the Turkish Republican regime.

### 1.3.1 Antakya in the Ottoman Province of Aleppo

The Ottoman conquest of Antakya coincided with what historians call “a scripturalist interlude” and centralization in Ottoman state making (Barkey 2004:160). Seeing itself as the successor of the Eastern Roman Empire, the Ottoman state had emerged from negotiated settlements between heterodox and orthodox Sunni Muslims and practitioners of various forms of Christianity “through brokerage across groups, ideas, and cultural formations” (Barkey 2004:29). By the 16th century, a gradual move was underway towards an increased state monopoly based on religion, combining the sultan’s dynasty with Sunni orthodoxy.  

This meant more involvement by a Sunni-dominant state in identifying “legible” boundaries and identities (Scott 1998), discussing the markers of difference between Muslims and non-Muslims (Seni 2006), and constructing the “other” in religious terms while seeking stability through interreligious peace.

The regime of diversity that came out of these transformations, known today as the “Ottoman millet system,” was built on the Sharia rules concerning the treatment of *dhimmis*, non-Muslim citizens of Islamic states. Adopting a similar model of governance, the Ottoman millet system divided the Ottoman subjects into communities of Muslims, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, with the non-Muslims ordered by importance according to demographic size (Seni 2006). The two Christian (Orthodox) millets were complicated during the 19th century with claims and some

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13 The 16th century for the Ottomans was highly characterized by the military and ideological battle with the Safavid Empire in Iran, and the Sunni orthodoxy thus defined itself in opposition to Safavid Shi’ism (Barkey 2008). In this role, the Safavids were later replaced by European regimes.

14 Under the Sharia rule, the dhimm status was originally afforded to Christians and Jews, the *ehli kitab* (people of the book): over time, it was extended to Zoroastrians, Hindus, and Buddhists; others, to whom it did not apply, were *kafir* (nonbelievers) (Campo 2009:421).
successes in gaining millet status by Syriacs (Orthodox) and subdivisions of Catholics and Protestants (see below); Shi’as and Alawis, however were viewed as deviant forms of Islam (Doğrue and Leman 2009:596).

As I discuss in Chapter 2, this hierarchical regime had less to do with Islam as a religion than with maintaining stability and regulating diversity without compromising the Empire’s sovereignty (Barkey 2008; Emon 2012). While it afforded dhimmis a persecution-free existence and autonomy in internal affairs (issues of marriage, family, and worship) in return for higher taxes, it tended to persecute those who did not easily fit its organization scheme, “those who defied boundaries and those for whom a blueprint did not exist,” including all kinds of heterodox Islamic movements within the Sufi and Shi’a sects (Barkey 2004:163).15

This differential treatment of religious groups evoked different responses from each group, which continue to affect how their successors in Antakya relate to the shifts in government ideologies and policies in Turkey. The collective memory of the Alawis in Antakya, for instance, is still imbued with the mass killings of their ancestors during the rule of the Ottoman Sultan Selim II who conquered the city on his expedition to assume the title of Caliph of Islam. Alawis also tend to embrace the “secularist” principles of the Turkish Republic and its denial of the Ottoman past more so than the remaining Christians and Jews in Antakya.16

15 The treatment of Shi’as and Alawis continued the battle for hegemony in Islam with the Safavid Empire.

16 This is not peculiar to Arab Alawis in Turkey, and has, in fact, a more rooted presence in the case of Turkish Alevi. See Shankland (2003), Tambar (2010) and Walton (2013) for anthropological accounts of the secularism and Kemalism of Turkey’s Alevi population. To clarify, the Alawi and Alevi are both considered to be Shia sects; the former are predominantly Arab and in present-day Turkey native only to Hatay, Adana and Mersin; the latter are primarily Anatolian, a Bektasi-Sufi lineage concentrated in Turkey, internally divided along Turkish, Kurdish, and Arab ethno-linguistic lines. The Alawis are important in Antakya, but demographically insignificant in the country as a whole, while the Alevi make up around 15-20% of the national population. See Özyürek (2009c:236) for further discussion on the complexities involved in describing Alevism, which, I believe, can also be extended to Alawism.
Despite the shift from brokerage to classification, and related moments of insecurity for Christian and Jewish populations, the established boundaries between the Ottoman subjects never functioned as rigid and impermeable markers of difference until the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Social historians document the presence of social mixing between groups even at the legal level (Peirce 2003), and the existence of communities and individuals who pragmatically switched their religious affiliation, intermarried, or practiced more than one religion in the Ottoman Empire (Barkey 2008; Birtek 2007; Braude 1982).

Of course, the pre-modern situation was not entirely fluid: differences in who mixed with whom depended on factors such as regional characteristics, level of urbanization, and political and socio-economic class (Birtek 2007). Furthermore, in Antakya as elsewhere in the Ottoman territories, ethnic and religious mixing had its social and spatial limits (Raymond 1994:15). Remnants of economic and spatial specialization of particular millets during the Ottoman era are still traceable in Antakya’s historical souk, for instance (Chapter 3). However, unlike the picture painted by European travellers, pilgrims, and missionaries from the 16\textsuperscript{th} century on (Downey 1961), and the scholarship of the French School of Damascus on the “Islamic city” in the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, residential quarters of Antakya were by no means homogeneous units of religious groups under the Ottoman rule (Eldem 1999; Raymond 1994).\footnote{There are an abundant number of travel accounts on the city by European travellers, pilgrims and missionaries starting from the 16\textsuperscript{th} century when the first European embassies were established on Ottoman lands. Most were produced during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century as part of what MacKenzie (2005) calls “empires of travel” in the context of the colonial interest and the civilizing mission of European powers in the region. Most use similar metaphors revealing the “citationary nature of Orientalism” (Said 1978:177) and juxtapose the elegant, rationally planned and wealthy city of the Romans in their imaginations to the disorderly, chaotic, and unsanitary Ottoman/Turkish provincial town they visited (Altug 2002:19; Acikgoz 2008:18, 29). These accounts have resonances also in the scholarship produced by the French school of Damascus (Sauvaget 1951; Weulersse 1934).}
A response to “Western European incursions on behalf of the Ottoman Christian population” (Mahmood 2012:421), the Tanzimat reforms of 1839–76 brought about significant transformations in the legal and political outlook of the Empire and its regulation of diversity. Initiated by Ottoman intellectuals educated in European institutions (Berkes and Ahmad 1964; Evans 2008; Mardin 1991), the reforms sought to modernize Ottoman institutions along the lines of Western modern knowledge through the secularized vocabularies of society, individual, public and popular sovereignty, and, likewise, to replace the Ottoman millet system with Ottomanism (Berkes and Ahmad 1964; Mardin 1991; Messick 1993).\textsuperscript{18} The result, however, was the reification of millet boundaries, their transformation into “bounded identities,” and the creation of new millets, promoted by the increasing activities of Christian missionary movements (Shaw 1976).

The effects of the Tanzimat reforms on the Ottoman Levant were complex and diverse. In Lebanon, for instance, “European and Ottoman officials engaged in a contest to win the loyalty of the local inhabitants—the French by claiming to protect the Maronites; the British, the Druze; and the Ottomans by proclaiming the sultan’s benevolence toward all his religiously equal subjects” (Makdisi 2000). Aimed to increase taxes through the granting of land titles, the land reforms during the Tanzimat era forced long-range nomadic Turcoman tribes and Anatolian nomads to settle on the Amik plain in the hinterland of Antakya (Aswad 1971:19), and empowered the Turcoman landlords working with sharecroppers of Arab (mostly Alawi) and

\textsuperscript{18} To that end, the reforms guaranteed all Ottoman subjects security for their lives, honour and property (1839), reorganized the finance system, the Civil and Criminal Code according to the French model (1840), promised “full legal equality for citizens of all religions” (1856), abolished capitulation tax on non-Muslims (1856), and adopted the Land Code (1857) and the so-called “Nationality Law of 1869” for creating a common Ottoman citizenship irrespective of religious or ethnic divisions (Birtek 2007:38; Ahmad 1993:4).
Kurdish origin. The landless and land-poor rural proletariat created by these reforms eventually migrated to Antakya, among other places, in the 1950s (Stokes 1998:281).

1.3.2 The Sanjak of Alexandretta

Religious difference in the region gained new political characteristics in the early 20th century when “the terms ‘minority’ and ‘majority’ came to serve as constitutional devices for resolving differences that the ideology of nationalism sought to eradicate, eliminate or assimilate” (Mahmood 2012:424). In the aftermath of WWI, when the Ottoman Empire was dissolved, the nation-state became the dominant political form, and the Republic of Turkey was founded, Antakya, the harbour city Iskenderun (Alexandretta) and the Amik Plain became part of France-mandated Syria as the “Sanjak of Alexandretta” (Hourani 1946). The introduction of Wilsonian principles of self-determination meant that “religious identity came to be increasingly inflected by ethnic, racial and linguistic forms of belonging” (Mahmood 2012:426). Constituting the legitimate basis for claims to the “national right of self-determination,” such identifications were particularly problematic for the Empire’s Middle Eastern territories under mandate regimes.

Unlike most of the Levant and North Africa where European domination often fostered sectarian conflict through its languages of majority and minority (Khoury 1987; Makdisi 2000; Weiss 2010), the Sanjak of Alexandretta under French rule was marked by communal inter-dependence and immense diversity rather than ethnic or religious conflict (Satloff 1986). Thus, while Turkey was experiencing a secularization process in an attempt to dissociate itself from the dissolved Empire’s Islamic legacy, France left the socio-cultural practices of the millet system intact; in

19 See Aswad’s (1971:1) ethnography of the Al Shiukh tribe in the Amik Plain for the long-term effects of the granting of land titles and sedentarization in the 19th century.
fact, the Alawi community now became treated as a distinct millet (Doğruel and Leman 2009:595; Pekesen 2006:61).

By the early 1930s, there were about 21 religious communities in the Sanjak of Alexandretta speaking at least five languages: Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, Kurdish, and Circassian (Bazantay 1935; Shields 2011). Official French statistics of 1936 gave a population of 220 thousand, comprising 38 percent Turks, 28 percent Alawis, 12 percent Armenians, 10 percent Sunni Arabs, and 8 percent Christian Arabs, with Jews, Circassians, and Kurds making up the remaining 4 percent (Pekesen 2006; Sanjian 1956:39). Against these rigid classifications, however, it was not uncommon for people in Antakya to speak more than two languages, with one or more of these an instrument for commerce, prayer, or government rather than determinant of ethnic identity (Shields 2011:19).

Little has been written about how the local people managed this variety and their overlapping affiliations. Although some scholars suggest that Antakya’s population shared the outlook of Aleppines, who took their diversity positively as an indicator of the city’s commercial importance (Shields 2011; Watenpaugh 2006), the only certainty is there was no sharp conflict between Turkish and Arab nationalisms until the mid-1930s. Satloff (1986:147) attributes the communal compromise in Antakya during the Mandate era to “the trade-off between the maintenance of traditional political power in exchange for across-the-board economic prosperity” (see Chapter 3).

When France signalled its retreat from the Syrian territories in 1936, Turkey’s irredentist efforts accelerated the tension not only between Arabs and Turks, but also between the “new classes of financially secure artisans” and the “modern-educated youth dissatisfied with the appointment of political power” (Satloff 1986:147). These tensions erupted as violent clashes after Alexandretta
was recognized as an independent state in 1937 following an agreement between Turkey and France (Hourani 1946:356). This state was called the “Republic of Hatay” in reference to Hittites, the ancient Anatolian people claimed as “proto-Turkish” and also ancestral to local Alawis (Sanjian 1956:39).  

The politics of naming places and communities reflected the increasing political significance of population numbers in deciding the fate of the Hatay state. Central to such population wars was the uncertainty of whether “minority” and “nationality” were objective designations identifiable through ethnic, linguistic, or religious affiliation, or subjective psychological processes based on individuals’ feelings of belonging. Turkey coerced and persuaded the region’s local inhabitants to identify with Turkishness and register in the Turkish electoral body, while also resettling ethnically and linguistically Turkish populations in the region (Shields 2011), thus characterizing the Republic’s relationship to Hatay, and Antakya in particular.

In appearance, the Republic of Hatay was an independent state, yet it was not taken as such by Arab nationalists. The president of the new Hatay Republic, Tayfur Sokmen, was a former member of Atatürk’s Republican People’s Party in Ankara (Sokmen 1978), the state language of the new republic was declared to be Turkish, and the new Republic’s national flag bore an uncanny resemblance to Turkey’s. As predicted by Christians and Armenians who cooperated with Arab Muslims in advocating for Hatay to become part of Syria (Neyzi 2004:287), the Hatay Parliament voted for Hatay’s annexation to Turkey in 1939, and the process—even now, still not

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20 According to the Turkish History Thesis, which was especially influential in nation-building folkloric projects of the 1930s, Hittites were among the Turkic tribes who migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia (Gur 2007). Calling the Sanjak, Hatay, was an attempt at once to stress the Turkic origins of the region and to insert Turkish culture into the chain of historical continuity constructed among European, Anatolian, and Mesopotamian civilizations.
formally recognized by Syria—was completed with a referendum stage-managed from Ankara (Micallef 2006:141).

1.3.3 Antakya as a Turkish City in the Province of Hatay

Most scholarship on Antakya and its surroundings belongs to the early 20th century and attempts to either legitimize or de-legitimize Hatay’s annexation to Turkey from an international relations perspective.21 Writings published in Syria and France question France’s authority to cede a territory that was not under its sovereignty (e.g. Bazantay 1935; D’elebecque 1937), while Turkish scholars use statistical and archaeological data to prove that the region was part of Turkish Anatolia, as can still be traced in the official claims about the Habibi Neccar Mosque being the first mosque in Anatolia (i.e., as opposed to the Levant). Both positions emphasize territorial sovereignty, however, and demonstrate how,

Instead of recognizing parallel and contiguous communities distinct by virtue of their confessional, denominational, or tribal/ethnic affiliation, the nation state sought to represent ‘the people,’ united by a shared history, culture and territory, wherein each individual qua citizen was tied to the state through a legal system of rights and obligations (Mahmood 2012:424).

Building on the Tanzimat heritage, the radical, Westernizing reforms of the early Republican Turkey aimed to define the “proper” place of religion by creating individual subject-citizens out of “the clay of pious members of an Islamic community” (Saktanber 2002:135). Accordingly, the Republican regime based national citizenship exclusively on Turkish language and ethnicity and

21 Recent scholarship on the region also focuses mostly on this period (Akyol 2009; Micallef 2006; Pekesen 2006; Shields 2011).
repressed the public visibility of Islam, while embracing the religion of the majority, Sunni Islam, as integral to Turkishness and the cohesiveness of society (Neyzi 2002; Özyürek 2009a). Against interpretation of the privileging of Sunni identity as antagonistic to the Republic’s secularist stance (Cagaptay 2009; Davison 2003; Ulutas 2010), therefore, I assume the position of those who treat this secularism as the very exercise of state sovereignty (Agrama 2010; Asad 2006; Fernando 2010; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2006).

This approach takes the institutional emphasis on Sunni Islam in Turkey as reflective of its secularist tendency to commensurate and solidify “differences” in order to regulate them. Insofar as religion does not pose a threat to the modern secular order, it can be molded into a shared cultural value and common basis of Turkishness as the religion of the “majority.” It is this blending of religious and ethnic identity that reveals the majoritarian ethos of the modern state, in the tension “between the principles of equality and the values of the majority” (Agrama 2010:507).

In the case of Turkey, this tension has been most salient in the dealings of the secular state with its non-Muslim citizens as the new Turkish state strove to institute a homogeneous national community (Zürcher 2004). Essentially, religion was taken as a marker of ethno-national

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22 Turkey has a secular constitution with no official state religion. It defines all citizens of the Republic of Turkey as Turkish and official population census polls do not include information regarding the ethnic and religious affiliation of citizens. Yet it is often stated by politicians and the media that 99 per cent of Turkey’s population is Muslim, a number that includes Shi’a citizens. The Directorate of Religious Affairs, the central religious institution of the state, reflects the teachings of the Hanefi School of Sunni Islam. Religious affiliation is listed on national identity cards. Despite a 2006 regulation allowing people to leave the religious section of their identity cards blank, the government continued to restrict applicants’ choice of religion to the options of Muslim, Greek Orthodox, Christian, Jew, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist, Religionless, Other.

23 According to the Treaty of Lausanne, which legally binds Turkey’s conduct with minorities at the international level, the church and minority foundations regulate the religious affairs and the property of the non-Muslim minorities living in Turkey. These foundations are independent from the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) and instead are governed by the General Directorate for Foundations (Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü).
affiliation in an extended process of massacres, forced migrations, and oppression originating in the late Ottoman period that was at once both a Turkification and de-Christianization of the Anatolian territory (Cowan 2008; Demetriou 2006; Hirschon 2003). The lateness of Hatay’s incorporation into Turkey only alleviated the effects of this ethnic, religious, and linguistic homogenization.

Unable to accommodate to the dominant ideologies of Turkish citizenship and fearing reprisals, many people left for Syria and Lebanon after the annexation. The first to leave were the Armenians, some of whom had been resettled in the region by France after surviving the 1915 massacres and deportations (genocide). They were followed over time by the Alawis, Orthodox Christians, and Sunni Arabs as well as some Turks unhappy with the new identity of the Republic (Pekesen 2006:63). Non-Turks and non-Sunnis who remained often encountered suspicions about their role in the delay of Hatay’s union with Turkey (Micallef 2006:149). They were often treated as potential transgressors, and felt themselves to be second-class citizens always needing to prove their loyalty to the Turkish state.

Many elderly citizens of Antakya remember the “Citizen! Speak Turkish” [Vatandaş! Türkçe Konuş] campaign of the 1940s, when speaking Arabic in public was severely punished. They recall the Turkification of names and places, the Wealth Levy in 1942 that specifically targeted the Christian and Jewish citizens, and state confiscation of the properties of their relatives who

funding of these foundations comes not from the state but from individual or institutional donations and the rents of the properties of these foundations.

24 Vakıflı, the only Armenian village that chose to stay, is Turkey’s only remaining ethnic Armenian village today. Located in the mountains 30 kilometers west of Antakya, it recently became a popular tourist site and token of Turkish-Armenian rapprochement.
migrated to Syria. The state’s resettling in Hatay of a group of landless Turks from the Black Sea Region in the 1960s and Afghan refugees in the 1980s only confirmed these feelings of exclusion.

In her work on the economy and politics in Turkish Hatay, Elizabeth Picard (1983) argued that the Arabic speaking population residing in Hatay adopted different approaches to Turkish rule on the basis of their religious affiliation. The Alawis preferred to have as few relations with any central power as possible, the Christians feared a Muslim government on both sides of the border, while the (at least higher class) Sunni Muslims favoured the law and order of the Turkish state (Picard 1983). Although the region was economically and geographically marginalized after its connection with Aleppo (in Syria) was cut off, people also maintained their links with the Arab world through family connections, affinities, and cross-border economic activities, as well as through labour migration to the Gulf countries, especially by rural Christians and Alawis (Chapter 3).

When Picard was conducting her research, in the late 1970s, the political (leftist-rightist) division and civil disorder in Turkey separated the Alawi and Sunni neighbourhoods of Antakya, where, I was told, there were some violent clashes. The border dispute with Syria had also taken on new characteristics by this time, with Turkey being a NATO member and Syria a Soviet ally. Later, based on research in Hatay, Martin Stokes approached the Turkish-Syrian border anthropologically, through the interplay between literal and imagined borders for young Turkish Sunni men who listened to Arabesque, a popular music genre known as a “hybrid Turkish version of Arab popular songs” (1998:265). Popularized especially among domestic migrants in
urban centres of Turkey between the 1960s and 1990s, Arabesque music breached these multiple boundaries of ideological, ethnic, gendered, geopolitical and economic nature.\textsuperscript{25}

Stokes took this breach as a productive realm of culture through which people in border localities “embrace notions of hybridity and plurality which are often unsayable” (1998:264). In other words, the nonverbal domain of Arabesque indexed the fractured and partial worlds, or what Stokes, following Foucault (1986), called the “heterotopic space,” which was unthinkable within the nation-state’s commitment to co-opt and eradicate plurality. For the youth living in the economic and political margins of Turkey, Arabesque became a way to bridge the gap between the power to which they were entitled and the real powerlessness of their lives (Stokes 1998:284).

As these studies make clear, Antakya’s specific history has separated the city from the particular histories of both Turkey and Syria and positioned its inhabitants within a liminal space. Thus, in line with Sara Green’s conceptualization of marginality as “the heart of things, precisely because of its asserted marginalization in relation to the heart of things” (2005:2), analysis of Antakya as an aberration from the norm and a marginalized territory discloses the shifting relationship between sameness and difference and minoritization and marginalization, as well as religion and politics in contemporary Turkey. The very exceptionality of Antakya illuminates how secularism and state sovereignty in Turkey have always already been defined by their complicated relationship to the Middle East and Europe.

\textsuperscript{25} By now, Arabic was no longer forbidden in public places and the “Arabness” of Hatay not a burning issue. The border continued to be a problematic space, however, due to allegations of Syrian support for the PKK (Kurdish Worker’s Party) and Turkey’s blocking the flow of water from the Euphrates River.
Now, in the new millennium and in the context of Turkey’s changing political and economic order, the heterogeneity of Antakya’s social, spatial, and demographic composition enabled by its marginal and borderly position brings the city once again to the centre of public attention. The present period marks a new turn in the governance of religious diversity in the Republic, a turn in the meanings of secularism and its conceptual relationship to religious boundaries that nevertheless speaks back to the multiple temporalities and geopolitical struggles covered above.

### 1.3.4 Antakya as the City of Peace and Tolerance

The victory of the neo-conservative Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, henceforth, “AKP”) in the general election of 2002 signalled a new turn in the state regulation of ethnic and religious difference in Turkey. Forming Turkey’s first majority government since the 1990s and then going on to enjoy what was to become the longest unbroken run of power since the pre-WWII establishment period, the AKP ideologically positioned itself against the “secularist” Republican regime through a nostalgic framing of the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic model of pluralism.

Widely referred to as “neo-Ottomanism,” this stance has manifested itself aesthetically in urban renewal projects, media, and cultural projects and performances (Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi 2013; Potuoglu-Cook 2005; Walton 2010), and politically in Turkey’s attempts to assert itself in the “Muslim Middle East” as a regional power and a model for democracy (Cagaptay 2009; Onar 2009; Taspinar 2008). It also implied a turn in the governance of religion, most clearly revealed in the freedoms now extended to covered women (e.g., to study and work in state institutions). A key symbol and Kemalist redline, the “headscarf ban” was deeply contested, sometimes bitterly, and certainly through the 1990s with the deployment of state power. The AKP government eventually removed the ban in 2013. This represented what currently appears to be the final
demise of strict secularism, a sea change in the status quo reflected by the fact that it even became a non-issue as enabling legislation was passed unopposed in Parliament and without any public controversy. Yet even more pertinent to the argument presented here was the public framing of this development—in terms of a secular discourse in the liberal tradition, as a “human right” (a perspective introduced in Chapter 2, as related to the religious pluralism of Antakya Choir of Civilizations).

One concrete effect on Antakya of the neo-Ottoman turn to the Middle East in Turkish foreign policy was the mutual cancellation of the entry visa requirement between Turkey and Syria in 2009. Towards the end of my fieldwork, this rapprochement had begun to crumble with the start of the Syrian uprisings. I discuss the beginnings of this process in Chapter 5, where I detail the links and tensions between household and state performances of hospitality towards the Syrian newcomers. The Turkish government’s welcome of Syrian refugees and its pro-rebel stance in this process, however, were equally reflective of the so-called neo-Ottoman shift in Turkey’s foreign policy. Indeed, the official status of these people as “guests” rather than “refugees,” although doubtless motivated by practical interests, also implied a neo-Ottoman approach.

The future-oriented imagination of a multi-religious Islamic past has also been related to Turkey’s relationship to the EU under AKP rule, which in 2005 gained the success of recognition

26 In formal politics, the turn appears to have been significantly integrated into the stance of the main opposition party (the secularist Republican People’s Party, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi [CHP]).

27 Much has changed in the political atmosphere of Antakya and Turkey during the preparation of this dissertation, primarily due to the increasing authoritarianism (and sectarianism) of the Turkish government (exposed by the Gezi Park protests) and events in Syria and Egypt. Thus, the main dynamic of neo-Ottomanism is essentially spent, and it is mutating into a new force, or interplay of contestations. From that perspective, this dissertation represents a retrospective endeavour. However, it remains relevant because the fundamentals underlying the discourse of tolerance and pluralism remain in place. That is, the forces that moved the post-millennial turn in the governance of religion as an expression of neo-Ottomanism have become integrated into “the system” and operative through new modes of public life and rewritten codes of being and interaction.
for Turkey as a candidate for membership (having first applied in 1987). This set Turkey on the path of needing to fulfill the Copenhagen Political Criteria, which include issues under the categories of democracy, rule of law, human rights, and “respect for and protection of minorities” (Özyürek 2009c:245). Combined with the identity politics of the era and the ongoing conflict with the Kurdish guerrillas in Southeastern provinces, these criteria pressured the government towards an emergent politics of pluralism, motivating state democratization ventures in the 2000s (Tambar 2014). An emergent politics of pluralism tackled the issue of “religious minorities” through references to the Ottoman model of religious co-existence and a related discourse of Islamic tolerance (Chapter 2). The government’s emphasis on “religion,” I argue, also became a way to obscure other forms of oppression, particularly with respect to the Kurdish problem.

It was in this context that Antakya came to the fore and gained a new prominence as the city of peace and tolerance, a discourse which often referred to the city’s multi-faith rather than multi-ethnic composition. The national newspapers, which had hitherto published articles on the region only on matters related to Hatay’s national significance in the context of Turkey-Syria relationships (Micallef 2006), began to carry items such as the visit of Antakya’s mayor to the Vatican in 2002 to discuss with Pope Jean-Paul II the harmonious coexistence of the city’s Muslim and Christian communities, “the First International Meeting of Civilizations” in Antakya which brought together the national and international representatives of the “world” religions, and the 2007 foundation of the multi-denominational Antakya Choir of Civilizations. This type of news coverage usually emphasized Turkey’s peaceful atmosphere against global discourses on the “clash of civilizations” and their emphasis on the inherent conflict between Muslim and ‘Western’ values. A series of inter-faith conferences in Istanbul held during the 2000s, which, among other things, contributed to a neo-Ottoman place-making of pious organizations (Walton
also focused attention on Antakya as a particular site, a node in Turkey’s cosmopolitan composition. During the period of my fieldwork, there was not one speech given by the Governor of Hatay or the Mayor of Antakya that failed to mention the multi-faith and “tolerant” nature of the city. In the manuals of the city’s governing agencies and tourism bureau, the name Hatay was rarely mentioned without the slogan “City of Peace, Culture and Tolerance.” The city emblem of Hatay also communicated a message of “peace in Turkey” through an image of a dove carrying an olive-like daphne branch below the symbol of Turkish flag in Turkish flag colours (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Antakya and festival emblems (top, l–r: Governorship of Hatay, Antakya Choir of Civilizations, First International Meeting of Civilizations; bottom, l–r: Hatay Festival images used in Hatay, Turkey’s third city, Izmir, and Turkey’s capital, Ankara—note how this emphasizes the middle letters “ATA” of the word “Hatay,” referring to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, alongside the different colours [for communities] of Turkey).

As I show in this dissertation, the shift in Turkish politics from exclusionary nationalism to tolerant pluralism implied a new form of national citizenship, which positioned itself against the earlier Republican ideal of an imagined homogeneous community, yet maintained its emphasis on the nation. The transformation of different faiths and denominations into separate but equally
representable elements of the nation rendered the public visibility of religion less threatening for the secular nation-state.

In this political path from the acceptance of “difference” within a vertical system of hierarchy, first, to its denial and exclusion, and then, its valorization and depoliticization, those inhabiting the “difference” held an ambivalent position. The daily practices and networks of exchange between Christian, Jewish and Muslim residents of Antakya through music, material culture, religious symbolism, and hospitality practices implied a more complex sociality, within which people both transcended and materialized religious boundaries.

1.4 Fieldwork

Covering the period between May 2010 and November 2011 (with a few months of interruption in the winter of 2011), the main research for this dissertation was conducted in the midst of the political transformations that brought Antakya to the centre of public attention. During this time, I stayed in a guesthouse in the old city, which had been owned and run for over 30 years by a German Catholic nun. Maria (and the guesthouse, or rather, guesthouse complex since several buildings are used) was involved in various inter-religious dialogue activities (Chapter 4). My first interlocutors in the city were the neighbours and relatives of Maria’s helper, Meryem, an Orthodox Christian woman from a nearby village, who occasionally visited and participated in the daily prayers in the guesthouse complex. Next, I was introduced to the Antakya Choir of Civilizations, of which both Maria and Meryem were then members.

The Choir and its weekly rehearsals became my entry point to a wide network of relations situated far beyond the choir settings. The choir members were not professional musicians, but local people reached mostly through the religious foundations with which they were affiliated. I tracked some of them from the hall where the Choir met for practice to their houses in different
neighbourhoods of the city, to Antakya’s historical souk where they worked and/or shopped, and to the mosques, shrines, churches, and the synagogue where they prayed.

As my network of contacts expanded, I came to realize that my closest relationships happened to be with people from Arabic-speaking families with no particular differentiation on the basis of their Alawi, Christian or Jewish backgrounds. When I think about it beyond the contingent dynamics of my personal relationships, I feel that their openness, relative to my Turkish Sunni interlocutors, was partly due to their appreciation of being recognized and the possibility of conveying their minoritized voices further afield, as though a type of testimony.

Where I lived and spent most of my time also affected my focus on boundaries. Some of Antakya’s quarters were historically associated with particular religious communities, but the old city and its surroundings were nevertheless the most demographically mixed districts of the city. The synagogue and churches of Antakya, as well as the mosques of historical and religious significance (such as the Habibi Neccar Mosque), are located in the old city within walking distance of each other. The main institutional buildings, such as the Municipality of Antakya, the Governorship of Hatay, the Directorate of Culture and Tourism, and the office of the Grand Mufti are also located close by.

Comprising some 110 families and 1500 people according to the numbers provided by the Antakya Orthodox Church Foundation, the urban Christians of Antakya have mostly abandoned, sold, or rented out their townhouses in the old city to move into the modern apartment buildings surrounding the old city on the east bank of the Orontes that constitute the neighbourhood of Sumerler, home to economically better-off families from mixed backgrounds. The Jews in Antakya, whose numbers dropped to 150 after the first and second waves of migrations to Israel, Istanbul, and Europe in 1948 and in the late 1970s live scattered in the same neighbourhoods.
together with the Christians, Alawis, and Muslims. At the time of my fieldwork, there were only 35 Jews living in Antakya, most of whom were textile merchants and retirees (the numbers continued to drop after I left).

The new apartment buildings on the west bank of Orontes across from Sumerler are inhabited almost exclusively by Alawi middle- and lower-class immigrants from nearby villages. This quarter, Armutlu, neighbours a Sunni area, with a military complex standing as a material border since its establishment after the 1980 military coup (Navaro-Yashin 2013). Except for a few upper-class professionals who lived in Sumerler or around the old city, most of my Alawi interlocutors lived in Armutlu, a walk of 15 to 20 minutes from the guesthouse where I stayed.

During my fieldwork, I made sure to attend all the public celebrations of religious and national days in Antakya and its surroundings. I observed inter-faith events, conferences and workshops organized by governmental and non-governmental agencies. I participated in the activities of religious organizations—such as the Alawi Ehl-i Beyt Foundation, the Antakya Orthodox Church Foundation, and the Jewish Foundation—and attended the concerts and weekly rehearsals of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations. I collected books, booklets, local newspapers, pictures, and objects about religious co-existence in Antakya. I spent time and conducted interviews with representatives of religious communities, the members and organizers of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations, and state officials from the Governorship of Hatay and the Antakya Municipality. The data that I collected through these tasks allowed me identify how people in Antakya made official discourses and representations a part of their own lives (through embracement, investment, criticism or denial) and related to the changing conceptions, ideals, practices and institutions of religious life in Turkey.
Fieldwork also meant hours of walking, talking, and listening, and moments of singing hymns, visiting shrines, praying in churches, mosques and the synagogue, and eating and drinking with my friends in their houses, cafes or restaurants. It entailed getting used to the heat, the rhythm, the sounds, and smell of the city, navigating its streets, and always trying to get to know new people. It turned me into a guest, a client, a friend, an ally, a suspect, and an intermediary voice in addition to my position as researcher. It also required my having to negotiate situations in which one or more of these positions conflicted with another. Before elaborating on this difference in the context of my positionality in the field, I would like to unpack some of the mundane acts that constituted my fieldwork.

1.4.1 Movements

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau (1984) asserts that the routine “arts of doing” can never be fully disciplined and therefore carry the potential to subvert the structures of power. In the concrete example of “walking in the city,” for instance, the unorganized paths and unpredictable shortcuts that characterize the pedestrian bustle of urban space resist being determined by the unifying and panoramic visions of maps and plans produced by the “strategies” of governments, corporations, and other institutions. This resistance reminds us that “the ordinary practitioners of the city live ‘down below,’ below the thresholds at which visibility begins” (1984:93).

De Certeau’s reflections on walking in the city have inspired many anthropologists who explored the ethnographic quality of walking (Cerwonka and Malkki 2008; Gilsenan 2013; Napolitano 2007; Pink 2008; Yi’En 2013). In a similar vein, I came to realize that “walking” in Antakya became more than an interval spent reaching my research “sites” or meeting points with interlocutors. As I walked, I learned to identify the material borders and thresholds of the city
through the movements of my own body and gaze as well as the words of those who accompanied me. Different pedestrian paths presented me with different styles and layers of the old city: the blank walls of townhouses concealing courtyards, the dilapidated Ottoman houses leaning into each other, the newer concrete tenements standing where the old had finally collapsed or been abandoned. On shortcuts, I noticed the “religious markers” painted or carved on the old archways, a few Stars of David on abandoned or neglected houses, and numerous signs of the Crescent announcing Haj Pilgrimages completed.

My daily walks familiarized me with the exact points where the labyrinth of shady alleys emerged into the orderly streets, wide boulevards and modern apartment buildings of the newer parts of the city. They also introduced me to the places of transition and interfaces of accessibility for the inhabitants of the city. Moving back and forth between the stores of my interlocutors in different quarters of the Antakya souk, I recognized how the spatial and communal boundaries were defined by the dynamism of movements that took place around them (Chapter 3). I also became attentive to how such boundaries were trivialized by the daily conduct of my interlocutors, who walked in and out of the archways on neighbourly or religious visits, to exchange gifts and goods, or pursue or settle mundane quarrels and marriage arrangements.

As a way of seeing, walking, however, was not sufficient for me to understand how the persistent heterogeneity of Antakya was “deeply implicated in powers, identities and sources of authority that lie far beyond the concrete here and now” (Keane 1997:xiii). It was not enough to capture the dynamism of movements across boundaries entailed in past journeys of immigration and pilgrimage by different groups. I learned most in these walks when others shared their knowledge with me on what used to be in the places we passed through or about the people that we greeted. Walking also became a field site in itself, as I acquired the most intimate knowledges
about religion and life in Antakya during long walks with my closer friends to the hills of Habibi Neccar.

1.4.2 Words

Much of my time in Antakya was spent talking with and listening to my interlocutors about a wide range of issues, from domestic and international politics and the meanings of religious sites and rituals to economic difficulties and personal and familial problems. While I initially tried to restrict the themes in these conversations to my research questions, I learned to listen to what people had to say and ask myself why they wanted to talk, for instance, about “tolerance” rather than their own marginalization. I drew on my prior knowledge of and communication with the speakers, the conditions of the particular context in which we were speaking, and their mimes and gestures in order to get a sense of their imagined audiences, whether they were cynical, genuine, or instrumental in their comments, and why.

Not surprisingly, the recorded interviews often presented a more formal language and self-conscious representation of the speaker’s own life. Although at the time they seemed like a simple repetition of official discourses, transcribing the interviews and juxtaposing them with my notes on the informal and daily conversations pushed me to think about what rendered certain words worth publicizing and others trivial. This pointed me to the discrepancies between representation and experience, as well as to how even the most repetitive accounts exposed in their nuances the fragilities within the official discourse. I learned not to dismiss representation as “fake” and attempted to appreciate how it became part of my interlocutors’ “reality” (issues tackled here mostly in Chapter 2 in the context of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations).

Recorded in the interviews were abstract opinions about Antakya, Turkey, Syria, tolerance, the choir, the souk, the neighbourhoods, Arabness, Jewishness, Christendom, Islam, Alawism and so
on and so forth. This happened to be the case even for the personal life-stories that I recorded. My transcribed memorizations of daily conversations, on the other hand, were almost always comments about specific individuals: a neighbour, mother-in-law, husband, sister, cousin, somebody else’s business partner, or fellow Choir-members, organizers, and the director. Such conversations always invoked complicated relationships between intimacy and socio-cultural boundaries: the interpersonal issues raised or alluded to were neither independent from nor reducible to collective or communal identities.

Most of my communication with my interlocutors took place in Turkish. Except for elderly women in Christian and Alawi villages, who had not been sent to school in their youth, everyone in Hatay knew Turkish. In fact, especially in the urban setting of Antakya, the younger generations all knew Turkish better than Arabic—the end result of six decades of assimilationist education policies on the part of Turkish Republic. Middle- and upper-class families especially had been encouraged to speak in Turkish rather than Arabic in order to get on in life and avoid discrimination in the future. Arabic was a language people knew how to speak, but not how to write or read (except for a few who went to Syria or Lebanon for their university education). Although it was spoken mostly in domestic settings, however, I regularly heard Arabic being used in public spaces.

My knowledge of Arabic was not sufficient enough for more complex interactions, but, thanks to classes on colloquial Arabic in Toronto and private lessons with two of my key interlocutors in Antakya (an Alawi sheikh and a Syrian Jew), I was able to follow the thread of conversations and identify some of the contexts in which people preferred Arabic to Turkish. I noticed, for instance, that people would switch to Arabic for bargaining and gossiping or teasing and criticizing with fellow Arabic speakers. The intimacy of these occasions was reflective of the
domain to which Arabic was institutionally relegated. It was also the sign of how this exclusion turned language itself into a strategy to demarcate and guard the boundaries of the intimate and personal, especially in the presence of outsiders.  

1.4.3 Acts

In the anthropological pursuit of how humans create their world, draw its contours, and act in relation to particular structures of power, one of the strongest directions has been to focus on practice and the body. In conversation with Durkheim and Van Gennep’s approaches to rites, Bourdieu’s conceptualization of habitus and Foucault’s concepts of discipline and biopolitics, this emphasis has taken different forms from the classical studies of ritual acts (Rappaport 1999; Turner 1967; 1969; 1974) and body techniques (Csordas 1990; Lock 1993; Mauss 1973) to more recent works on disciplinary practices and cultivated dispositions (Boddy 1998; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005) and performativity (Castaneda 2006; Morris 1995).

What people do to their bodies as well as what they do with their bodies is formed “in dynamic interactions among human agents, social institutions, cultural meanings, conventions, and constraints; between subjects and their humanly constructed environment of objects, spaces, others; through one’s practical engagement with the world” (Boddy 1998:98). To the extent that “participant observation” turns the ethnographer into a “doer” as much as an “observer,” these dynamic interactions and practical engagements with the world constitute an integral part of the fieldwork.

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28 On one occasion, for example, one of the two daughters of an Alawi family with whom I stayed in the Samandağ district of Hatay discovered that I understood their conversations in Arabic; she looked surprised and, turning to her sister, said in Turkish, with a half-serious half-teasing smile, “We’ll have to be careful about what we say… she’s started to understand Arabic. We won’t be able to gossip about her anymore.”
My approach to how religious difference is made and lived in Antakya attends to the different domains of social practice that are culturally formed and politically informed. These domains are simultaneously ideological, practical, and sensory, and are targeted by, enliven, and challenge various regimes of diversity-management that prevail in Antakya. In this context, I understand social encounters across religions to be characterized not only by various conceptions of the self and other, but also by the very acts that materialize such conceptions and their boundaries. Accordingly, I was concerned to observe what my interlocutors did or did not do and to join them (or not) in some of these activities. I participated in the various religious and familial rituals; I paid attention to their visiting patterns, economic activities, and aesthetic performances.

Some of these activities were repetitive and formulaic; others were more occasional and spontaneous. In some cases they invoked religious texts and tales, as in the case of Habibi Neccar, while in others they were put to the work of generating objects, forming social ties and maintaining relationships. My reflections on the affective, aesthetic, and sensorial politics of singing (and listening) in Chapter 2, various forms of economic transactions in and outside the Antakya souk in Chapter 3, ritualized enactments of religious cosmopolitanism in Chapter 4, and household practices of hospitality and exchange in Chapter 5 are all prompted by this attention.

1.5 “Where are you from?” Understanding Difference in its Place

“Ethnographers enter the field as legible signs of Otherness” claims Michael Herzfeld (2009) in a recent analysis of ethnography as an embodied practice. The personal experience of being variously read in the field not only defines the conditions of possibility for the ethnographer’s participation in social life, but also raises questions around the issues of difference that have always been central to anthropology as a discipline. My exploration of how my interlocutors in
Antakya experience cultural (and religious) difference in their neighbours is not so detached from how they understand such difference in their various visitors, such as tourists, journalists and pilgrims, along with ethnographers.

The significance of “place” and locality in delineating the boundaries of the self and the other may be examined through looking at the ways in which the ethnographer becomes part of the boundary-making processes. Here, that means an examination of my selves in Antakya, oscillating between a total stranger, a “guest,” and an inhabitant of the very subject positions I studied. The multiple ways in which I was perceived, challenged, and attributed certain roles in Antakya demonstrate what it means to belong to a place, to share a history, and to be part of a community in a border city. They also complicate the widespread assumptions around doing fieldwork “at home” and the category of “native anthropologist.”

In Antakya, one would rarely hear the (Turkish) words “yabancı” (stranger) or “yerli” (local/native) on their own, without implicit or explicit signifiers of location attached to them (in a structure after a form like “bir yerin yerlisi/yabancısı olmak” [to be a local of/stranger to somewhere]. People would rarely ask each other about their religious or ethnic affiliation in their first encounter, unless they were more or less certain that it coincided with their own, and instead would use other identifiers, such as the place where people were from or resided. As Jozef explained to me, someone living in Antakya’s Armutlu or Harbiye neighbourhoods, or Hatay’s Samandağ district was likely to be an Alawi, whereas someone from Antakya’s Cumhuriyet neighbourhood, or Hatay’s Reyhanlı district was “probably a Sunni.”

The degrees to which I was seen as an outsider or an insider in the field varied greatly based on the nature of our relationship (customer-vendor, guest-host, neighbour, etc.) and location of interaction (the same person would interact with me differently depending on whether we met in
the city market, at home, during Choir rehearsals, etc.). While the multiplicity and interconnectedness of these subject-positions led to confusions about the most appropriate conduct with any given interlocutor in any given situation, they also provided me with a better sense of everyday sociality in the city.\(^{29}\)

The ambiguity of my identity was especially noticeable in how I was introduced to others, how people were introduced to me, and the first questions I received in the first moments of encounter. Most significant in shaping these introductory moments were questions regarding my place of origin. “Nerelisin?” [Where are you from?] is a question with which people living anywhere in Turkey are quite familiar, asked sometimes even before one’s name. Born and raised in Istanbul, and having lived nowhere else all my life until I left the country, I learned from a young age to follow standard practice and answer this question with the birthplace of my father and his father. In a cosmopolitan city where more than half the population were migrants from other parts of Turkey, there was nothing unusual in this question since any attempt to insist on introducing one’s self as *Istaniuli* required some justification.

In Antakya, however, things became more complicated for me. My appearance at first glance led to quick assumptions that I was from the region and many openly expressed their astonishment to find out later that this was not the case. Despite all my corrections, the Vice-Governor of Hatay continued to introduce me to others as “a researcher from Antakya, studying in Canada.” Others commented on the proximity of my father’s hometown, Tarsus, with “Buralı sayılırsın” [You can be counted as from here/You’re from here, near enough]. For the people I continued communication with, this phrase was replaced by “Aileden sayılır” [She’s family, good as] or

\(^{29}\) Once I shared with Jozef my uncertainties around the researching-living distinction. “I don’t understand the dilemma,” he replied, “You are researching by living in Antakya.” Indeed, ethnography is itself a form of life, one which involves multiple identities that may be conceived as mutually constitutive, not exclusive.
“Bizden sayılır” [Like one of us]. This sense of an “as if” status expressed by these colloquialisms was the closest I would get to becoming an insider or “native.” I was awarded the role of “guest from nearby.”

The degree of geographical and national proximity to the region also determined how significant the question, “Where are you from?” was for the questioner, and indicated the strength of national belonging this question conveyed even in the peripheries of a national territory. For instance, I doubt that the American anthropologist who was in town the year before I arrived was further questioned about why he came to study Antakya even though he was not from there. On the other hand, the identity of my family mattered less to the people than that of a local researcher whose affiliation with a well-known Alawi family of the region was very often included in my interlocutors’ comments on her research.

I was a stranger who was at once familiar, positioned somewhere between the foreign anthropologist and the local sociologist. The problem posed by this familiarity was best expressed in the confusion people had regarding how to introduce me to their community. Our shared language (but not the dialect), manners, look and political status (as citizens of the same country, at least) connected us in a way that always made me more than just a researcher, even for those whom I met only to interview, and one time. On some occasions, I was introduced as a relative or a visiting guest instead of researcher, as I initially suggested. This was justified with a comment on my gender, age, and sometimes religion. It would be easier and they would be asked fewer questions, they added, if I was simply a Canadian researcher or a tourist.

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30 In a visit to the realtor Muhammet’s mother in the nursing home of Antakya, Muhammet did not correct the assumptions of the nurses that I was his daughter, saying “Let them think that, it’s easier.” On the way back, when one of the nurses to whom he gave a lift questioned further, again, he only increased the level of verisimilitude a little, by introducing me as a friend of his daughter and a guest in their house.
Although this issue was not framed in terms of my religious affiliation, my attendance at the Sunday mass beside my Orthodox Christian interlocutors in the front seats, rather than at the back like the foreign or Turkish tourists, would probably make “what I was” more relevant to the questions of who I was and where I came from. Accordingly, some devout Christians addressed not only the geographical proximity but also the religious linkage between my town of origin and Antakya, saying “Tarsus is our twin city, it is the birthplace of Saint Paul.”

Proximity, however, did not always engender confidence and a feeling of closeness. It also turned my Sunni identity into a political matter or even a source of suspicion for some whose religious “difference” had only recently been celebrated in the Republic. Regardless of my personal beliefs and ideas, my religious identity represented that of the majority who directly or indirectly oppressed many. But having a Sunni Muslim family did not make my entrance into the pious Sunni circles any easier, either, since I was too secular and spending so much time with non-Muslims and staying in a Catholic nun’s house.

Although questions around “what I was” were a source of personal discomfort, they also afforded me experiential insights into “believing in the same God” as expressed outside of the recent discourses of tolerance and pluralism. The apologetic or hesitating manner in which I engaged with questions around my religious identity very often evoked a comforting response from the questioner with words like “You’re a Muslim, so what? We’re all subjects [kul] of the same God, we all came from Adam and Eve.” In such moments, I realized, whether I “believed” or not became more important than who or what I was.

Faith as the lowest common denominator had a significant social role in mediating religious differences to facilitate human connection and social interaction for the people of Antakya (as described in Chapter 4). Indeed, this was exactly why people’s embrace of its appropriation by
political discourses of tolerance proved a fast and successful process. It was repeating to people the stories they already told about themselves and each other, and in doing so, granting them and their original tellers official recognition.

Although my Turkish and Sunni background was fundamental in shaping my ethnographic experience in Antakya, my affiliation with Canada did not go unnoticed. In one of my visits to the rehearsals of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations, I arrived during a ten-minute break, when the choir members were socializing with each other. I noticed Mehmet and Ismail in the crowd, and with a confidence derived from associations with both outside the Choir (one was teaching me Arabic, the other had a fabric shop in the city market which I often visited), I approached them and joined their conversation. As the topic came to their children’s education, and in particular Mehmet’s desire to send his son to Europe for education, Mehmet suddenly remembered the purpose of my stay in Antakya—which was exactly when our informal conversation turned into a self-conscious self-display in his remark, “Why didn’t you bring your camera? You could have taken our picture to show friendship between an Alawi and a Jew.”

Already familiar with the reporting, photographing, and documenting going on in Antakya around the theme of tolerance, peace and fraternity, and actively involved in such rhetoric through their participation in the Choir, these people had a clear sense that speaking to a camera (or its substitute) equated to making their voice heard by “the world.” In a similar way, speaking to me in the context of my research became an opportunity for people to give a message to Canada, about themselves and Antakya, but also about Turkey. In such circumstances, I was seen not as the main addressee of such representations but rather as their conveyor, a collaborator even, who was charged with the responsibility of keeping secret unpleasant things about “our” country and the city. Although I was initially upset to be mistaken for a journalist or tourist and
tried hard to make the distinction clear in people’s minds, such mistakes allowed me also to reflect on the larger structural processes that caused my path to converge with those of tourists, journalists, pilgrims, and filmmakers.

Of all the positions I occupied in the field, the only one that never changed was my status as a guest. Being a guest became the very definition of my ambiguous position at the conjunction of inside and outside, and of distance and proximity. Everyday meanings and practices of hospitality are considered in Chapter 5, but it may be appropriate to make a brief introductory comment here on my status as a long-term guest in the field.

1.5.1 Anthropologist as a guest

It is a very typical practice among ethnographers to spend most or all of their fieldwork as the houseguest of a local family. In the early days of my fieldwork, I had to choose between staying in Maria’s guesthouse and being the houseguest of an Alawi family in the Armutlu neighbourhood. The latter was the house of a real estate agent, Muhammet, with whom I had consulted in my search for a suitable home in Antakya. I ended up staying in the guesthouse because of its closeness to my research sites and the complications regarding the availability of my second option (the place offered to me was where Muhammet’s three brothers would stay when they visited Antakya). After being welcomed into the guestrooms of my interlocutors’ houses in the following months, I realized that this initial choice was in fact between two different modes of guesthood.

Without being aware of it, I had chosen to be the guest in a more public setting, which, despite the identity of its owner (who herself was considered to be a long-term guest in the city) and her activities, marked me as the guest of Antakya rather than of a particular family. People related to me as a stranger and a traveler whose foreignness could be managed and converted into a distant
familiarity, rather than as an internal guest whose identity was inseparable from that of her long-term local host.

My use of the term “stranger” here is not equivalent to “outsider.” What I have in mind is Georg Simmel’s description of the stranger as “the potential wanderer,” one who “has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going.” Simmel notes:

[The stranger] is fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself… The stranger is by nature no “owner of soil”—soil not only in the physical, but also in the figurative sense of a life-substance which is fixed, if not in a point in space, at least in an ideal point of the social environment. Although in more intimate relations, he may develop all kinds of charm and significance, as long as he is considered a stranger in the eyes of the other, he is not an “owner of soil” (Simmel 1950:402)

Following others who have reflected on anthropology’s living engagement with hospitality both as a lived space and a conceptual exercise (Candea and da Col 2012; Dresch 2000; Herzfeld 1987; Pitt-Rivers 1954; Shryock 2009), I suggest that the guesthood of an anthropologist may be understood through the insights provided by Simmel’s definition of the stranger. The anthropologist as a guest can never fully be a host in the field because she is no “owner of soil.” Yet she is not a complete outsider either. Embodying “that synthesis of nearness and distance which constitutes the formal position of the stranger,” she becomes “an organic member of the group” despite “being inorganically appended to it” (Simmel 1950:402, 405).

Unlike Simmel, I do not view this position in between remoteness and nearness to be a more objective one that generates neutral and non-binding relationships with different group members. On the contrary, there are many obligations and ethical commitments that emerge from the
intermediary status of guesthood for the anthropologist, one of which concerns the question of how to reciprocate the kind of hospitality one receives as a stranger. If the ethnographer is no owner of soil in the field, she at least can be the host of her interlocutors’ words, memories, concerns, and lives in writing. This dissertation, among other things, should be considered as an attempt to reciprocate the gift of hospitality received in the field by moving my hosts’ lives and voices beyond their own time and space. It is also a written expression of my feeling of both belonging and not belonging, which has characterized my fieldwork experience in Antakya and my connection to its people.

1.6 Chapter Outline

The dissertation is divided into four chapters, each looking at a site of encounters where diverse people, ideologies, identities, and religions meet and shape each other: 1) the Antakya Choir of Civilizations, 2) Antakya’s historical souk and connected spaces, 3) discourses and practices of religious cosmopolitanism, 4) neighbourly relations, practices of hospitality, and gift economies in the home-courtyard-alley-street complex. These sites are linked to each other as well as to Turkey, the Middle East and Europe through shared histories, familial networks, bodily movements, and ethical and sensory regimes, and the circulation of symbols, objects, people, and words. As such, they resonate with and add new realms to those formulated by Das (2013) in her conceptualization of religious diversity: the theological reflections on religious difference, the management of religious difference as statecraft, local forms of circulation, mediation and schism between religious communities, and intimate realms of self-formation and sociality.

Chapter 2 examines the local, national and international staging of religious difference as “tolerance” in Antakya through the case of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations. Engaging with the scholarly debates on the role of tolerance in mediating the tension between national
citizenship and religious difference, I demonstrate how Antakya’s multi-religious Choir objectifies the different and at times incommensurable musical traditions of Alawism, Sunni Islam, Judaism, and Orthodox Christianity as equally representable elements of the nation. I argue that while rendering religious difference less confrontational and more accommodating to the secular definitions of public, the everyday politics of tolerance also opens up new spaces for the “political representation” of Turkey’s religious minorities. Entwining the aesthetic, political, and social in a particular way, such performances reveal the affective and social force of secularism “concerned with the organization of sensibilities, sentiment and possibilities” (Dole 2012:8), which is not reducible to the “problem” of religion in politics.

Chapter 3 approaches the secular regulation of religious difference from another angle, as it unfolds in Antakya’s historical souk and is troubled by the differing modes of relatedness and circulation that constitute the souk as place. In particular, I take issue with the modern division of public and private, which constitutes the core of secular understandings of social space and the place of religion. I argue that the public-private dichotomy fails to capture the co-constitution of religious, economic, and political interactions in the space of the souk. Detailing in an ethnographic manner how difference is negotiated on the ground, I demonstrate that the souk space is not confined to the physical space (place) of the souk, but includes wider networks of social intimacy, the circulation and mediation through material culture, and the gendered realm of the family and home. By bringing into perspective the history of the souk, the historical transformations of the economic status of its actors, and of Antakya’s economic life in general, this chapter also seeks to show how the question of religious diversity as statecraft is not peculiar to secularism and the modern nation-state. The Ottoman millet and guild systems still retain their traces in the souk space, especially in the spatio-communal division of professions amongst the city’s Christian and Jewish actors and even more so through the material effects of the
invocations of the Ottoman past in the neoliberal restructuring of politics and economics in contemporary Turkey.

The fourth chapter, on religious cosmopolitanism, is where I engage most explicitly with the theological reflections of my interlocutors. I demonstrate how people in Antakya settle into, employ, and perform a particular discourse of “religion” for various theological, political, and pragmatic reasons. More than a performative act, this discourse, in which all paths lead to God, expresses a social form of being and relating to the difference of religious others in a way that disrupts the secular bias in the literature on cosmopolitanism. I explain the differing reasons behind people in Antakya communicating their cosmopolitan orientations through concepts such as “faith,” “belief,” and “religiousness.” Drawing on Asad’s critique of the notion of “belief” (see also Rappaport 1999), I argue that far from referring to an introspective self, as in secular conceptualizations of religion, these orientations are produced by and speak to a set of social relationships, identities, and power structures in which the individual “believers” are embedded.

Chapter 5 focuses on the ethics and politics of hospitality that create differentiations less along religious lines than on the basis of locality, rootedness, and the specifics of national citizenship. The effect of Antakya’s closeness to the Turkish-Syrian border on the city’s heterogeneity constitutes a central theme in this discussion. Taking as my starting point the arrival of the first Syrians as misafirs (guests) in Antakya after the Syrian uprisings in March 2011, I reflect on the past and present forms of border-crossings carried out by my interlocutors for the purposes of marriage, work, and trade. I compare the “Syrian” as a long-term internal/familial misafir within Antakya’s religious communities and the “Syrian” as the misafir of the Turkish state. I argue that the difference between these two forms of guesthood allows the Arabic-speaking residents of Antakya to recognize the limitations of their own state, residence, and citizenship in Turkey.
When read as a story of secularism in Turkey, this ethnography presents us with four different dimensions of the secular as a social, political, and aesthetic force. Chapter 2 portrays its relationship to nationalism, Chapter 3 explores its connection to economy and reliance on the public-private dichotomy, Chapter 4 problematizes its ethos of individual autonomy and equation of religion with individual “belief,” and Chapter 5 debates its performance of sovereignty in investigating the micro-political realms of ordinary life that prove to be indifferent to secularism.

1.7 Whose Boundaries?

Like most conceptual tools that we employ in our descriptions and analyses of ethnographic data, the tension between emic and etic categorizations holds also for the concept of “boundary” and for the identities, practices, and social roles that it defines. In his later work, Fredrick Barth (2012) argued that an ethnographic study of boundaries should be sensitive to people’s lived experience and language as well as to the conceptual construct of a boundary that is attributed to them by others, including the anthropologist. In the context of my research, I find it important to understand this tension also through the concept of “relative locations.” The assumed dyad and boundary line between researcher and researched does not fully apply to a network of relations, including multiple audiences that may or may not be present at the moment of interaction (see Ewing 2006).

I remember a time in the early days of my fieldwork when an interlocutor wanted to introduce me to a couple who lived in the same apartment building as she. She told me that they would be ideal for my research. I realized why she thought that way after we entered their store. She first introduced me to them as a researcher from Canada, and then turned to me to say “And Lale and Mikael are Jews from Antakya.” The moment Mikael heard the word, “Jew,” his face turned sour. After a few moments of tense silence, he began interrogating me about whether I was from
Antakya, why then was I interested in it, and why it mattered who were Jews and who were not, with a tone that made me think that he was in fact asking what I was really after. I, too, felt the discomfort upon hearing this introduction, not because of the expected interrogation that came afterwards, but because it exposed one of the fundamental paradoxes of my fieldwork experience.

Until that day, I had avoided asking people directly about their communal and religious affiliations or bringing these affiliations to the centre of our discussion unless they themselves did. I had been drawn to Antakya partly due to the public visibility of its religious plurality relative to other parts of Turkey—but I did not want to take the significance of religion and religious difference in people’s lives for granted. Nor did I want to reduce religion to an identity marker, especially given the hierarchical production of its identitarian qualities, turning some into “minorities” while normalizing others.

The Jewishness of Mikael posed a problem both in terms of his personal relationship to Judaism, and in terms of the minoritized position of the Jewish identity with regard to the dominant categories of Turkish citizenship. After we got to know each other better, we talked about this first encounter and the reasons behind the discomfort that it created in both of us. I knew by then that Mikael did not practice Judaism and identified himself as “a secular Turkish citizen” who did not believe in any religions. He refused to go to the synagogue on Saturdays, even though Antakya’s drastically diminishing Jewish community was in desperate need of every single Jewish man to be able to continue its religious rituals in Antakya’s last remaining synagogue. Mikael was many other things before being a Jew, and did not want his Jewishness to be the first thing revealed about himself to a stranger.
“Jewishness” was not, on the other hand, something that Mikael refused completely. He had, after all, chosen to marry a Jew from Antakya, which did not seem to be a coincidence given the small number of eligible single woman in the community. Furthermore, each time I visited him in his store, I would see the webpage of Şalom, Turkey’s Jewish weekly, open on his computer screen. In our conversations, he would comment on the condition of being a Jew in Turkey and criticize the current government’s Islamic inclinations. According to him, these tensions or identifications were not about “religion” per se. “Maybe the problem is not about the religions themselves, but whose religion is in power,” he told me once. “Jews may be oppressed in Turkey as a minority, but look at Israel! There, Jews are in power, and there they oppress Muslims.”

I learned a lot from my first encounter with Mikael and his wife, our shared feeling of discomfort in this encounter, and the multifarious reasons behind this discomfort that I discovered over time. Before anything else, these became the constant reminder of how my own engagement, questions, and writing will never be free from re-inscribing some of what I try to deconstruct in this work. This dissertation, to a certain extent, is the very product of the impossibility to talk about “difference” without reproducing it. Each time I refer to my interlocutors as “Alawis,” “Jews,” “Sunnis,” “Christians” or as “Arabs,” and “Turks,” I contribute to the work of boundary-making and boundary-maintenance. Yet I gesture also towards a complicated map of naming and non-naming within which such categorizations do matter depending on when they are made, to whom they are communicated, and what they presuppose.

It should be clear from the example of how I was introduced to Mikael and his wife that even when people did use identity markers to address each other, such namings took place in particular contexts that often included other actors. In this particular example, these actors included myself as a researcher and a stranger, a presumed, possible future audience of an
undefined Turkish and international public, as well as the Turkish state as the ultimate producer of “differences.” The effect of people’s awareness of such wider audiences was not always discomfort, but often a self-conscious and performative embrace of these identity-markers as we see in the case of two choir members performing “a friendship between an Alawi and a Jew” for a camera. To complicate things even further, such categorizations did matter beyond performance in a lot of other contexts, regardless of whether other actors were involved or not. We see this most powerfully in my opening story about the Habibi Neccar, but it runs through all the chapters of this dissertation.

The second caveat that comes out of this example and that structures my fieldwork and writing experience is the slippery ground between “religion” and “ethnicity” in Antakya. For most of my interlocutors, the “difference” they inhabited was simultaneously to do with their religious affiliation and their Arab ethnic origin that was recognizable through their accent in speaking Turkish and Arabic. Furthermore, there were many for whom religious affiliation oscillated between a theological commitment and an identity marker, which in itself was not so different from their ethnic identities.

Such slippages are no coincidence and embody the long history of minoritization and differentiation described (above 1.3). They demonstrate the continuous role of the state, in its imperial, national, secular, and liberal forms in reifying and commensurating “differences,” and working as the internal homogenizer of what is bounded by such differences (1.2). Instead of taking these slippages as a problem, I prefer to understand them as the very indicator of how religious difference is never only about religion, a point suggested as part of the main framework of this dissertation (1.1). Religion, I will suggest, is made through constant negotiation between
politics, theology, and aesthetics, as well as the embodied and intimate realms of family and locality at the intersection of interpersonal and identitarian relationships.
2 A Symphony of God: Re/Presenting Religious Difference in Public

We are not “us and them.” We are ONE, on Earth and under the sun!

At the end of their “BİRİZ!” [We are ONE] concert, the performers assembled on stage to repeat this verse, in Turkish, Kurdish, and Laz. Organized as part of the “Istanbul – the Cultural Capital of Europe” series in Istanbul in 2010 by the Turkish rock singer Demir Demirkan, this event featured the Kurdish singer Aynur, Laz folk singer Ayşenur Kolivar and Eurovision-wining Turkish pop singer Sertap Eréner, together with the Antakya Choir of Civilizations. Before going on stage, Kolivar explained the idea behind the event:

Nowadays, Turkey is going through a period where the importance of being together and one is discussed in a new way. We always said, “We are united” or “We need to be united,” but unity had different meanings before. It meant, in a way, becoming the same. Today, however, we will be “one” on stage without denying our differences. We will listen to each other and sing in each other’s languages. We will give the message that if we can find union in our differences on stage, we can do it in our lives as well.

When members of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations spoke, they communicated the same message, but with an overt emphasis on religion. Introducing themselves in turn as “the priest of the Antakya Orthodox Church,” “a member and a sheikh of the Alawi community in Antakya,” “an Armenian citizen of the Republic of Turkey,” “a Jewish teacher,” and “a Sunni imam serving in an Alawi Mosque in Antakya,” the Choir members each emphasized the unity of the three Abrahamic religions under one true God as the formula of hoşgörü (tolerance) and peace in the world. This, they declared, was something that people had achieved in Antakya and wanted to

31 The Laz language (Lazca) is a Kartvelian language spoken on the Black Sea region of Turkey, with about 30,000 native speakers of Laz remaining today.
spread to the rest of Turkey and around the world. “Music is a bridge between hearts” one of them noted, “We may not pray and worship in the same way, but we can all sing together. We shall form a symphony of God with our different voices, races, colours, and beliefs.”

In this chapter, I examine what constitutes “oneness” and “difference” in aesthetic representations and performances of religious difference in Antakya. Imaginatively tying the aesthetic to the political, “representation” here refers both to the sense of artistic and aesthetic portrayal of a form, conviction or identity, and to re-representation as a matter of proxy, including the “representative” charged with the task of “speaking for” a particular community. In particular, I am concerned with how these two forms of representation unite in the concept of “hoşgörü,” and mediate the relationship between the “oneness” of the nation and the “difference” of its non-Turkish and non-Sunni population.

As a Turkish neologism engrained in everyday language to address a non-confrontational way of managing diverse opinions, identities, and beliefs, “hoşgörü” has become a key term in the new political language of the Turkish state as directed by the government of ten years, employed to represent, in both aesthetic and political terms, the transformation in the state attitude towards the nation, religion, and secularism. The ramifications of hoşgörü demand scholarly attention, moreover, not only as a perspective on Turkey’s shifting (and persisting) relationships with its minoritized communities, but also in the context of its recent neo-Ottoman reconfiguration of international relations with Europe and the Middle East (see Introduction).

32 Here I draw from Spivak’s (1999:259) analysis of Marx’s distinction between Vertretung (representation) and Darstellung (re-presentation) as together complicit in addressing the problems of “speaking in the name of.”

33 In simple terms, Turkey is around 90% ethnic Turk and 70% Sunni Muslim (although the meanings of both of these categories ought really to be deeply problematized).
This transformation, signified through the government’s terms “açılım” (opening) and “ileri demokrasi” (advanced democracy), implies a change in the relationship between state and society that defies the traditional dispensation of the Republic and its six constituent principles: “laicism,” “statism,” “republicanism,” “revolutionism,” “populism,” and “nationalism.” The shift suggests that, with the addition (or juxtaposition) of “pluralism” to these principles, the Turkish state “opens” itself to differences in society (Potuoglu-Cook 2010; Walton 2010). By rearticulating the acceptable boundaries of “difference” and its public appearances in constituting the oneness of the nation, the new political order seeks to render religious practices and their incommensurable differences (related in various ways to ethnicity and language) as less confrontational and more accommodating to the secular definitions of “public”.

As a border town and one of the few multi-religious cities left in Turkey, Antakya has a unique history and cultural diversity which makes it an excellent case-study setting through which to consider the recent pluralist turn in Turkish politics and its implications for the new public role of religion. In other words, it is because rather than in spite of its exceptionality that Antakya has been (re)incorporated into the national imaginations of a unified Turkey as the “city of peace and tolerance.” The Antakya Choir of Civilizations has been central to this process of reincorporation.

34 These have historically specific meanings, which may be more or less close to the assumed.
35 Taking a cue from Tambar’s analysis of pluralism in Turkey, I would like to emphasize here the difference between pluralism (çoğulculuk) and multiculturalism (çokıltürlülük). Although both terms emphasize heterogeneity and the political and legal acknowledgement of social difference, the idea of pluralism “leaves undetermined the nature of the social difference in question, whereas multiculturalism already invokes one of the terms that is at stake, namely, ‘culture’” (Tambar 2010:653).
36 By “public,” I refer not only to the common spaces of conversation, collective action, and performance, but also to a conceptual sphere of coexistence in which “people conceive themselves as participating directly in a nation-wide (sometimes even international) discussion” (Taylor 2007:210; See also Habermas 1989).
As a multi-religious choral ensemble founded in 2007 with the support of the local (provincial) governorship to celebrate Antakya’s religious “diversity” in public, the Choir’s mission rapidly transformed into a political performance representing the country as whole, with the Choir giving concerts to UN ambassadors in New York City, US congressmen in Washington DC, and EU parliamentarians in Brussels. Nominated for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize and weaving local representations of religious co-existence in Antakya into its representations of the national “hoşgörü,” the Choir became an iconic symbol of the Turkish state’s new self-promotion: multiple voices and communities coming together to form a single voice, the voice of the nation.

This chapter takes a closer look at the local, national, and international staging of religious difference as “hoşgörü” in Antakya and focuses its attention on the musical and spoken voices of the various actors who take part in these stagings. Such attention exposes some of the mechanisms through which politicized ideas of “hoşgörü” become entangled with the performances, affects, and vocabularies of the nation. The translation of the religious co-existence of multiple communities in Antakya into a narrative of “hoşgörü” is not simply an effect of new liberal politics in contemporary Turkey, but also reckons with the established discourses and practices of the Ottoman and Turkish regimes of diversity-management on a quotidian and institutional level. Although demands for greater political recognition of cultural diversity and public expressions of communal difference challenge the modernist imaginations of a homogeneous national body, or in Kolivar’s words “sameness,” on which the Turkish Republic was consciously founded and through which it was rigorously expressed, the categories of the nation continue to determine the conditions under which “difference,” particularly religious difference, becomes publicly visible—and audible. In other words, the pluralist reframing of politics in Turkey operates within and through, rather than replaces the formerly hegemonic understandings of national unity.
The expression of nationalism in representations of religious difference inform also the performances of the Antakya Choir of Civilization, when particular modes of speaking, singing, and listening are mobilized to transfer distinct religious attachments into a mass feeling of national belonging and solidarity. As I discuss in the second half of this chapter, the ability of these performances to turn singers, listeners, and consumers into dutiful citizens depends on how people experience and construe the social and religious implications of hoşgörü in daily life while expressing their “difference” and “sameness.”

In what follows, I first provide a background to the national context in which the practice of collective singing becomes “hoşgörü” and symbolizes the blending of differences. Then, I give an ethnographic description of a scene from a concert given by the Antakya Choir, through which I discuss its affective, aesthetic, and sensorial politics of secularism. Drawing on my observations, informal conversations, and recorded interviews with different Choir members, I turn my attention in the second half of the chapter to the multiple registers and appearances of hoşgörü, with a particular focus on the performances, rhetoric, and individual stories around the Choir. This reveals not only the diversity of voices comprising “the symphony of God” in one tune, but also touches on a diverse realm of attachments, frictions, and power within the institutional and nationalist representations of religious difference.

2.1 The State’s Song of Pluralism

May 20th, 2011, 7pm. I get off the elevator on the fourth floor of a residential apartment building, and enter the hall where, I have been told, the Antakya Choir of Civilizations meets twice weekly for practice. Otherwise used for wedding, engagement, and circumcision celebrations, the pentagonal hall is punctuated by four thick columns. The tables are pushed to the corners of the hall to make space for the chairs arranged between the columns facing the stage. As the
musicians tune their instruments and the seated choir members chat, Yilmaz makes the day’s announcements. These can be extensive. Some days the announcements take longer than the actual musical rehearsals and turn into a kind of preaching about the mission of the choir, the expectations from the members, and the wrongness of particular acts undertaken by particular individuals (whose names are sometimes mentioned). And indeed, it transpires, today is one of the preaching days.

As he gives information about the upcoming auditions and asks members to spread the word, Yilmaz also shares his views on how to balance musical skills with communal affiliation while expanding the choir. “Of course we will pay attention to the talents of new members,” he states, “But it is not a good thing to have too many people from one community. We don’t want all the new members to be Alawis or Sunnis. We have to be democratic.”

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Soon after I was introduced to the Antakya Choir of Civilizations and granted permission to attend their weekly rehearsals, Turkish television stations started to broadcast a video clip as part of the election campaign of AKP for the upcoming elections in June 2011. The clip employed a rapid-cut technique to show different individuals singing a single song, with the people in the clip carefully selected to reflect the diversity of the population that the AKP was hailing as its potential voters. Some were in modern city clothing, others in folkloric costumes associated with particular regions of rural Turkey; some women were shown uncovered and others covered, the latter after the different generational, denominational, and urban-rural styles found in Turkey today. A few people were represented with their musical instruments, including the Western guitar, traditional folk instruments, like the long-necked saz, davul (drum) and zurna (horn), and instruments associated with Ottoman classical music, such as the ud (lute) and the kanun (zither),
while others performed regional folk dances, which are still integral to Anatolian popular culture. The lyrics of the election song conformed to the spirit of the clip and its call for “unity in diversity”:

Aynı yoldan geçmişiz biz (We came down the same road)
Aynı sudan içmişiz biz (We drank the same water)
Yazımız bir kışımız bir (Our summers, our winters the same)
Aynı dağın yeliyiz biz (We are the wind of the same mountain)
...
Gönüller bir dualar bir (Hearts as one; prayers as one)
Bir Allah’ın kuluyuz biz (We are the subjects of the same God)
Has bahçemiz yurdumuzdur (Our special garden is our country)
Aynı bağın gülüyüz biz (We are roses in the same orchard)

Although the identification of Turkey as a “mosaic” had been used for years to address the multiplicity of ethnicities, cultures, and faiths that exist within the country’s national borders, this was the first time in the history of modern Turkey that the mosaic metaphor had been mobilized by a powerful political party to communicate a substantial political stance. From its foundation in 1923 until the 2000s, the Turkish Republic was officially committed to a secular nationalism that denied any sort of affiliation with the Ottoman Empire it succeeded—in fact, that structurally self-defined in dyadic opposition to this—and strove instead to institute a homogeneous national community on the basis of a shared ethnicity, language, and religion (see Introduction). Although Islam’s public presence has been most troublesome for the secularist sensibilities of Turkey’s ruling elites and generated a power struggle in the 1990s between groups identified as “Islamists” and “secularists” (Navaro-Yashin 2002; Özyürek 2006), Sunni
Islam as the religion of the majority always functioned as a de-facto determinant of who was and who was not a Turk (Baer 2004; Neyzi 2002; Özyürek 2009a). In this context, statements like “Turkey is a mosaic,” emphasizing so-called “cultural” practices, mostly served to de-politicize the question of pluralism and rarely entailed material political implications for citizens not identifying with the country’s Turkish Sunni majority.

Demands in Turkey for legal and political recognition of marginalized ethnic, religious and sexual identities accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s with the rise of identity politics. These demands were heavily informed by the economic liberalization of the country (Chapter 3), the armed conflict with Kurdish guerrillas (the PKK) in the Southeast, the growing vocality and visibility of political Islam, and EU harmonization packages concerning minority rights (Introduction). During this period, intellectuals, commentators, and activists began to look at the possibilities for a pluralist politics that had hitherto been precluded by the nationalist legacy of the early Republican years. Such calls for pluralism were generally part of a critique of the dominant state discourses and practices, however, rather than of the established institutional framework itself (Brink-Danan 2012; Bruinessen 1992; Tambar 2010).

The fruition of this movement with the embrace of diversity by governing bodies in the 2000s came through the rule of the AKP. Emerging out of the reformist faction of the Islamist Virtue Party and amalgamating a conservative social agenda with a neoliberal market economic policy (Tuğal 2009), the AKP has held power since 2002 with a series of dominating electoral performances, including the 2011 general elections for which the abovementioned video clip was prepared. The AKP’s emphasis on plurality should be understood in the context of a number of phenomena, including its ideological opposition to the Republican heritage and support (initially) for Turkey’s EU bid, as well as its popularity among Kurds (both on the grounds of Islamic
identity and as representing an alternative to the impasse of war, which seemed to have run its course without resolution of the conflict). Also influential was the entrance of a Kurdish party to the Turkish parliament in 2007, despite the 10 percent threshold rule that had previously excluded it from parliament.37

Identity politics provided the Islamic groups who formed the core of the AKP with an effective language with which to address the marginalization of “Islamic” lifestyles, particularly in the context of the headscarf debate, as one among many other forms of oppression inflicted by the Republican regime, particularly since the “postmodern” 1997 coup in which the army had engineered the resignation of the government led by the Islamic (then Welfare) party (Gole 2002; Saktanber 2002). By appropriating the language of pluralism and democracy, the AKP was able to garner support not only from centre-right Islamic and conservative groups, but also from liberals and marginalized ethnic communities (including Kurds).

In Antakya, people’s daily comments on AKP politics verified the power of its pluralist language. Even those who were critical of the AKP for ideological reasons agreed that Antakya had never experienced as much progress in its Republican history in terms of the government investments in the region.38 Many spoke in favour of the government’s openness to pluralism, an openness that allowed the non-Sunni citizens of Antakya to finally have their share in Turkey’s self-representation as a nation.

37 Under current electoral rules in Turkey, a party must receive 10 percent of the nationwide vote to gain representation in parliament, which historically targeted the Kurdish parties. In 2007, however, the Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) decided to run its candidates as independents to get around the rule and successfully gained 23 seats. This number increased to 36 in the 2011 elections following the same strategy despite the dissolution of the DTP and its succession by the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP).

38 People would mention things like the (2007) inauguration of the International Hatay Airport, (2011) opening of the first shopping mall, and the centrally-funded restorations of Antakya’s historic houses.
Despite the abundance of rhetoric, however, governmental practices of pluralism remained limited to the “democratic opening” policies of 2007 for reconciliation with the Kurds, such as the passing of legislation allowing Kurdish language broadcasting (by the state) and instruction (private and public), and the passing of a law in 2008 that promised to return the confiscated properties of non-Muslim foundations. These, together with some vague policies about the rights of gypsies, Alevi and women, have been viewed as insufficient and insincere by opposition groups, and resulted in unfulfilled expectations on the part of the targeted populations. Such concerns were proven to be well founded by the rapid shift in government practices following amendments to the constitution and a landslide victory in the 2011 elections.

The AKP’s employment of the discourse of pluralism should be understood, then, less as a temporary strategy oriented towards gaining votes and support than as an effort to contain, rather than deny, the minority problems in Turkey. Read thusly, this approach goes beyond the present government and party politics and asks searching questions of the emerging Turkish state and its relation to its citizenry. If we take governance not only as governmental practices that repress and/or acquire consent from the governed, but also as a kind of “rationality that is immanent in micro-powers,” exercised from innumerable points on small details and productive of particular bodies and selves (Foucault 1991), the kind of pluralism that emerges in Turkey becomes a contested realm of relationships, appropriations, and negotiations involving a range of different perspectives, practices, and representations. The perceived transformation from “sameness” to

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39 This recently (February, 2014) bore fruit with the recognition of Syriac Orthodox land rights in regard to its main monastery, Mor Gabriel, near Mardin (roughly, a three hundred miles northeast of Antakya).

40 There are very strong, seemingly justified complaints from each of these groups about the way they have been treated by the governing party in recent years.
“difference” both shapes and is shaped by governmental discourses and practices. In that sense, the video clip of the AKP’s election campaign exposes more than just the political vision of the party: it provides an insight into the conditions under which such a vision has become possible.

While the government’s pluralist turn involves domestic actors, such as NGOs, as well as international institutions, such as the EU, the representation of pluralism as “hoşgörü” frames the state as the primary actor of this turn. In other words, when addressed through the terms of “hoşgörü,” pluralism and its concomitant political openings reinscribe the (secular) state as the sole and unique force of power and thus the ultimate arbiter of multiple identities. Incorporated into a narrative of tolerant coexistence, these multiple identities appear only contingently political, reduced into cultural artifacts to be celebrated in public and re-presented on stage.

2.2 Tolerance or hoşgörü?

Philosophical debates on tolerance in Europe concern the term’s religious, and in particular, Christian, roots and its appropriation by the liberal secular order. While philosophical advocates treat the political category of “toleration” as a secular framework for a peaceful mediation between pluralistic religious viewpoints and debate the conditions of its applicability to existing political structures (Bollinger 1986; Habermas 2004; Kymlicka 1996; Rawls 1993), critics of such approaches argue that this does not so much resolve religious conflict but rather manages it, in order to reinforce state authority over the multiplicity of groups (Asad 2003; Connolly 2005; Mahmood 2006; Özyürek 2005). Some of these critics emphasize the paternalism of toleration by claiming that it is “often used on the side of those with power as a kind of condescending concession” (Derrida 2003:127). This paternalism, often coupled with majoritarianism, indexes the power differentials between the subjects and objects of toleration, which often translate into
spatial, moral, and theological boundaries between hosts and guests, the tolerant and the tolerated, as well as the tolerable and intolerable (Benhabib 2004; Brown 2006; Derrida 2003).

In her analysis of tolerance as a civilizational discourse, Wendy Brown dwells on how such boundaries give tolerance its moral value and render it a positive and desirable matter of policy as against alternatives. Tolerance, both as a political practice and an individual virtue, relies on an asymmetric structure in which the sameness and universality of the modern West is secured through its juxtaposition of liberal autonomy, secularism, and civilization against “fundamentalism,” “barbarism,” “organicism,” and “collectivized” others (Brown 2006:177; c.f., Boddy 2007; Masuzawa 2005). In such associations, the object of tolerance is aligned not only with difference and inferiority but also the need for protection and incorporation. As Brown notes, “the ethical bearing of tolerance is high-minded, while the object of high-mindedness is inevitably figured as something more lowly” (2006:178). This perspective has informed the critiques and controversies around the place of various Muslim practices and markers in Europe’s multicultural publics in recent years, as in the cases of the Danish cartoon debate (Asad et al. 2013), the foulard affair in France (Asad 2006; Scott 2007; Bowen 2010; Fernando 2010), and the programs targeting the homophobia, sexism, or anti-Semitism of Muslim immigrants (Butler 2008; Ewing 2008; 2011; Özyürek 2005).

Contemporary invocations of tolerance in Turkey make reference to such debates in Europe, yet often invert them through a nostalgia for Ottoman cosmopolitanism (Mills 2008, 2010; Türeli 2010). Islamic scholars and circles, for instance, often cite instances of discrimination against Muslims and Islamophobia in the Western world in order to ground their arguments about Islamic forbearance and humanity (Kucukcan 2003, 2006; Erdal 2006). The international interfaith dialogue events organized by the Islamic Gülen movement constitute the most well-known
example of this (Hendrick 2013; Kuru 2005). The movement is contextualized by a type of “Occidentalism,” as it might be dubbed, wherein the Ottoman Empire is normatively “known” in Turkey to have embraced its array of differences in a binary with the Western imperial history of abuse (e.g., colonialism as enslavement).

The cultural events sponsored, supported or directly implemented by certain state bodies in Turkey, such as those around the “Istanbul – the Cultural Capital of Europe” year, contribute to similar representations. In dialogue with the EU discourses on Turkey, such events address Turkey as a “meeting of civilizations,” “a religious mosaic” and “a place for toleration” that carries the legacy of Ottoman cosmopolitanism (Brink-Danan 2012; Göktürk, Soysal, and Türeli 2010; Yardımcı 2007). The imbrication of a romanticized imperial past and an imagined future of national progress is well represented in the words of the institutional head of the Sunni faith in Hatay, the province’s Grand Mufti: “The culture of tolerance in Hatay is due to Islam and Ottoman politics, but also reflects Turkey’s commitment to modernity and democracy” (personal interview, March 2011).

When placed in a historical perspective, such representations become quite ironic, however. In fact, and in contrast to its long history in Euro-Christian political theology, tolerance has never been a theologically or politically powerful concept in Turkey’s history until recently, or indeed in the Ottoman Empire with which it is often associated. It is true that, at the time of the

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41 The Gülen movement is a transnational religious and social movement developed out of the Turkish Nurcu movement and led by Turkish Islamic scholar and preacher Fettullah Gülen who now lives in the USA. The movement has no official name but is usually called Hizmet (Service) by its followers and is known as Cemaat (the community) to the broader Turkish public. Gülen and his followers were an important ally of AKP until December 2013 (see Conclusion).

42 In her recent ethnography on the Jewish life in Istanbul, Marcy Brink-Danan (2012) describes how, for instance, the official rhetoric of tolerance addressed the hospitality of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey towards Jews when they were being persecuted by Christian monarchs 500 years ago and their nationalist successors in the 1930s.
Enlightenment and the Ottoman heyday, the multi-confessional space enabled by the Ottoman millet system provided an ethical point of contrast to the intolerance of medieval and Reformation Europe in the writings of early liberal theorists (Locke 1990; Voltaire 1912); and it is also the case that the millet system is still referred to as an alternative mode of “toleration” by contemporary thinkers in addressing the current problems of liberal democracies in the Western world (Baer, Makdisi, and Shryock 2009; eg. Kymlicka 1992; Žižek 2009) Nevertheless, as Ottomanist historians show, the Empire’s organizational perspective on diversity did not embrace this toleration, either as discourse or as ideology (Aboona 2008; Barkey 2008; Rodrigue 1995). It neither accorded moral worth to the absence of persecution, nor viewed it as a moral-political vision of the good.

The Ottoman regime of diversity was grounded instead in an organizational concern for qualifying and maintaining communal boundaries, establishing peace and order, and ensuring the loyalty of communities under its rule (Emon 2012). This regime emerged from the negotiations between social forces, representatives of communities (including, e.g., the Patriarchs, through whom other communities were represented), and state agents; and it only emerged as one among many policies designed to incorporate diverse groups, their manpower, and resources into the imperial way of life (Barkey 2008; Birtek 2007; Rodrigue 1995). Oppression and threat of expulsion along with assimilation and conversion were also Ottoman policies of incorporation, and the rule that non-Muslims would not be actively persecuted did not imply their acceptance into society as full members and welcomed communities (Barkey 2008:110).

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43 E.g., Syriacs through the Armenian, Armenian Catholics and Protestants through the Armenian Orthodox.
The idea that tolerance is integral to Islamic theology is also debated. Some Islamic circles claim that the concept of tolerance is limiting because it relies on the dualistic paradigm of Western Christianity, one that sees intolerance or bigotry in the absence of tolerance (Erdal 2006; Ozemre 1996). These circles highlight the incompatibility of this dualistic paradigm with the multi-valued system of Islam, which (instead) emphasizes *adalet* (justice), *merhamet* (compassion), *sabr* (patience) and *ihsan* (benevolence) as well as jihad as the guiding principles for the maintenance of social order. Emphasizing that the Koran and hadith do *not* promote an ethics of tolerance, they insist that the “non-violent” coexistence of non-Muslim communities under Islamic Empires was not due to Muslims’ feelings of tolerance (or charity), but was rather the activation of an Islamic morality and its guiding principles.

The Turkish (i.e., non-Arabic and non-Islamic) concept of “hoşgörü” of the Republican period has been very much ingrained into daily language but until recently was not addressed as an explicitly political or theological term. The term consists of two parts: *hoş* (pleasant, nice) and *görü* (from the verb görmek, to see). Literally, *hoşgörü* means to see something as pleasant. It is due to this link between seeing and tolerating that “hoşgörü” can be pertinently considered as something to be performed for the public eye.

Yet while the verb *hoşgörmek* is synonymous with *mazur görmek* (to pardon)—or its Arabic version *samaha* (to allow, permit)—and thus confirms the superiority of its subject, the noun *hoşgörü* is closer to “openness” in daily use and expresses a virtue that gains its value when possessed mutually and not only by one party. The verb form derived from this noun *hoşgörüülü olmak* (to be tolerant) is more commonly used than *hoşgörmek*, and marks tolerance as a reciprocal mode of being, rather than a unidirectional charitable act.
Its reciprocal tone of openness makes the term appealing and appropriable by political authorities intent on invoking a more inclusive polity in Turkey—including Antakya’s pivotal role in creating this—while at the same time masking the subtler modes of violence that the state’s new liberal face exercises. The recent reframing of the Islamic understandings of religious coexistence channelled through this term may fail to capture those who are not Muslim and pious; the new associations made through hoşgörü to the liberal secular notions of tolerance and European modernity may fail to persuade some Islamic actors. Yet the ethical ways of being-with and openness implied in the daily use of this term proved sufficiently powerful to attract a wide array of actors in Antakya and beyond, who possess divergent stakes and goals, yet converge to embrace it. Debated are the terms, conditions and possibility of “hoşgörü” rather than its necessity or desirability.

2.3 Is hoşgörü real?

In his study of folklore performances, cultural programs, tourism, and heritage in Quebecois nationalism, Richard Handler uses the term “cultural objectification” to explain the processes through which a particular group of people and their practices and symbols are taken to be a “thing,” a bounded, continuous, and homogeneous entity “truly characterizable in terms of the properties it bears” and “precisely distinguishable from other analogous entities” (1988:14). I observed a similar process of objectification in official representations of hoşgörü in Antakya. Objectified as a performance, advertising modus, and an aesthetic form, religious difference became neutralized, reified, and converted into a cultural artefact commensurate with ethnic identifications. This process of objectification, so integral to secular power and its claims to

44 Or, more precisely, at the time of writing, that the state’s more liberal face has exercised and, it is argued (see introduction) will likely do so again in the future.
toleration (McClure 1990), generates new questions about the relationship between representation and reality, or in Bateson’s terms between “play” and “objective truth” (1951:124). The following examples illustrate how these questions played out in different institutional contexts.

When I first visited the Vice-Governor’s office to obtain permission to conduct my research, he gave me a small painting of the city created by a local artist, with a handwritten phrase at the bottom which read, “Ezan, Çan, Hazan.” This was, simultaneously, a term for the Muslim call to prayer, Christian church bells, and Jewish Chazzan, as well as the title of a documentary about Antakya produced by the state television station in 2004. While signing the back of the painting, the vice-governor told me that the image of the church bell, minaret, and the synagogue it portrayed was not imaginary but real. The image was a painted version of a well-known photograph taken from the courtyard of the city’s Catholic Church. Although no synagogue can be seen from the courtyard, and the original image shows only the free-standing bell with a cross in the foreground and minaret of Sermaye Mosque in the background (Figure 2), the Vice-Governor justified the insertion of the synagogue, emphasizing that it was only a short walking distance from where the photograph was taken.
Regardless of whether or not it reflected his personal views, the Vice-Governor’s insistence that the representation was real because the synagogue was real and nearby itself indicated the materiality of hoşgörü as a representation (and imagination) to my interlocutors. This was “a metacommunicative message,” to borrow Bateson’s term, in the sense that in its very claim to realness, it acknowledged that the image was “just” a representation “which [could] be trusted, distrusted, falsified, denied, amplified, corrected and so forth” (1972:178). The image and the view, like map and territory in the play frame (Bateson 1951), were both equated and differentiated. The same was also the case for the relationship between the message communicated through the image (the representation of hoşgörü) and what the message stood for (hoşgörü as the lived reality of my interlocutors), as can be further identified in the following examples.

45 Bateson defines “metacommunication” or “communication about communication” as “all exchanged cues and propositions about a) codification, and b) relationship between communicators” (Bateson 1951:209). Metacommunication thus entails a mutual awareness of the frame and context of conversation, i.e. exchanging signals that would carry the message, “this is play.”
Eager to help me find what I was looking for, the Vice-Governor also charged one of his staff to fetch some pictures that he referred to as the “pictures of brotherhood.” Taken at an event during the 2010 “European Heritage Days,” these pictures portrayed the city governor, the mayor, the Jewish, Orthodox Christian, and Alawi community leaders, the priests of the Orthodox and Catholic churches of Antakya, and the state-appointed mufti all holding hands with one another (Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Antakya political and community leaders, hand-in-hand for European Heritage Days](image)

Hoşgörü as an official performance of fraternity for the public eye was also central to the structuring of the national and official celebrations in the city. During the national days, such as the anniversary of Hatay’s annexation by Turkey, Republic Day, and Liberation Day, as well as the two Eid holidays (the only official religious holidays in Turkey), the city’s community leaders would pose for the cameras lining up to shake hands with the Governor and other officials. Shortly after shaking hands, the attendees would pose again while sharing food at the same table. This ritualized procedure was usually mitigated through the exchange of jokes about “Who came from whom?” [Kim kimden çıktı?], meaning, “Which community gave birth to which?” As a statement about the performance itself, as well, these jokes were an
acknowledgement of the “play” context and its limits to reach beyond performance. They were a playful way of saying that “these actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions for which they stand would denote” (Bateson 1972:180).

The gap between the “play” and “real” was recognized and addressed in more critical commentaries, as well. A local journalist whom I met during one of these events once referred to this framing as an example of “zorlama” (forced) hoşgörü. He contrasted the “performance” of hoşgörü enforced by governmental procedures to the “real” hoşgörü as lived by the city’s ordinary citizens. This view was shared especially by critics of the government in the city, who described the event as “göstermelik” (for show, implying pretend, artificial) and emphasized the problems with the state’s appropriation and manipulation of the “real” hoşgörü. In further juxtaposition to the state version, I was told about neighbours, school friends, and business or marriage partners who belonged to different religious communities. People also made reference to the coexistence of Sunni mosques and Alawi tombs, synagogue and churches, all within close walking distance of one another. Underlying this critique were suspicions about the state’s sudden interest in Antakya after years of neglect and marginalization, best expressed in Jozef’s following comments: “We have been living here together for centuries. We love each other, but we also fight with each other. But until now, we never felt the necessity to name our relationships with others.”

The need to “name” difference and togetherness characterizes the new national citizenship in Turkey and its links to the modern secular discourses of tolerance. Although one way to unpack this characterization is to work within the paradigm of “real” and “appropriated” hoşgörü and focus on the gap between the two, I prefer to read against the grain of the Vice-Governor’s approach and its critics and take a closer look at how expressions of “real” and “staged” hoşgörü
inform and define each other. In other words, I would like to focus on the paradoxes that emerge when the statement “this is play” is turned into the question “is this play?”  

For this, I return to the Antakya Choir of Civilizations and examine how different actors and institutions partake in its aesthetic and musical representation of hoşgörü, how they relate to its multiple referents and negotiate the paradoxes contained within the choir’s categorization of religious difference.

2.4 The Antakya Choir of Civilizations

The modern amphitheater of Antakya holds an audience of over two thousand. On this night of June 3rd, 2011, the seats are all taken by the city inhabitants, who have come to listen to the now very famous Antakya Choir of Civilizations. Located in an upper-class neighbourhood, the amphitheatre echoes the Roman past of Antakya in its shape but fits well within the contemporary urban landscape with its modern travertine tiles and graffitied outer walls. The corner where I stand is one of the two spots behind the stage from where the audience is visible.

As I watch the hectic, chaotic movements of the choir members before the show, some occasionally come near me, looking to spot family members in the audience. This is a big night, the first time that the Choir has performed to such a large group of ordinary people in its hometown, as most shows are held at hotels or in small venues for limited audiences composed of important businessmen, bureaucrats, and journalists. This is also the first time that the choir will be on stage with a near full complement of members, since the number of singers, as well as

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46 Bateson discusses this overturing in what he calls “the dim region where art, magic, and religion meet and overlap” symbolized by “the flag which men will die to save, and the sacrament that is felt to be more than an outwards and visible sign, given unto us” (1972:183).
particular individuals, are generally chosen in rotation, according to various logistics, including the concert venue’s size and expenses related to travel and accommodation.

When it is time for the performance to begin, I leave backstage to take my seat in the audience. In order to get a good view of both the performers and the audience, I make my way along the crowded steps to the outer, top level of the amphitheatre, where I stay for the rest of the concert. The cacophony of chatter dies as the approximately one hundred-strong, white-robed choir takes the stage. Yilmaz, the director of the Choir, comes to the microphone and repeats the words that by now I have almost memorized:

No single person looks like another. People have different fingerprints, different eye colours, skin colours, and hair. There are only two things common to all humanity. One is that every person’s tears have the same colour; and secondly, all people, at least those who believe, believe in one God. They may have different paths to God, but love for God is the same. If music is the universal language that all religions have, let’s communicate our love for each other through the hymns of our Sunni, Alawi, Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish, and Armenian fellows. Let’s show the rest of the world that Antakya is the land of peace and hoşgörü!

Yilmaz closes with the words of the 13th century Sufi mystic Yunus Emre: “because, we love the created for the sake of the Creator.” Following loud applause for this introduction, the Choir begins its opening song, the “Ode to Joy” from Beethoven’s 9th symphony. The song’s Turkish lyrics serve to indicate the cultural mix of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim songs to follow: “Kardeş olun ey İnsanlar Bunu İster Tanırımz” (O people! Be friends. This is what our God wants from us). The single tune in which it is sung, on the other hand, creates a sonic image of unity and sameness overriding difference.47

47 Because the choir members were not professional musicians, they sang all the same notes rather than in harmony.
Human differences can be transcended, we understand from Yilmaz’s opening, through a movement from our common emotions of suffering and love for fellows to an all-embracing, inclusive love for the monotheistic God of the different Abrahamic traditions. Then, following the opening song, he emphasizes this point by comparing the Choir to Kardeş Türküler (Fraternity Ballads), the professional music branch of the Folklore Club at Bosphorus University, which, since its foundation in 1993, has performed interpretations of Anatolian folksongs in Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish, Assyrian, Armenian, and Laz as a foil to cultural polarization and ethnic tension. Without openly criticizing the politicized nature of the Kardeş Türküler stance regarding the ethnic (and in particular Kurdish) conflict in Turkey, Yilmaz argues that Kardeş Türküler stays local because of its concentration on folk songs while the Choir goes beyond, to the global, through its commitment to the idea of universal love for Allah: “When they ask our religion, we say God,” he says, “When they ask our politics or societal concerns, we again say God. This is what moves us beyond particularities and polarizations.”

Throughout the concert, Yilmaz moves back and forth between his seat and the stage, where he presents each song to the audience with some additional commentary on the particular community from which the songs originate. Before the Orthodox hymn for instance, he refers to Antakya as Antioch, the land of the first Christians, and describes the Orthodox Christians of Antakya as their descendants. The subtext is that the Orthodox community of Antakya are Christians from birth and their national loyalty should not be questioned on the basis of their religious affiliation; therefore, they are “one of us”—unlike, it almost seems to follow, those who converted through the influence of missionaries.

48 Aysenur Kolivar (above) was active with Kardeş Türküler before commencing her solo career.
For the Sunni hymn, Yılmaz emphasizes the tolerance of Islam and recounts the story of Habibi Neccar (above, Introduction) as the “only” Christian saint whose name is given to a mosque. Before the performance of the Catholic hymns in Latin, he reminds the audience that the Catholic Church of Antakya today shares a common wall with the Sermaye Mosque. The Armenian folk song “Sari Gelin” is performed with both Turkish and Armenian lyrics, and introduced with a reference to Vakıflı, Turkey’s last remaining ethnic Armenian village, which, Yılmaz says, is located in Hatay Province near Antakya not by coincidence.

The Turkish lyrics of the Alevi song are sung in two different styles, starting in the conventional rhythms of the cem ceremony of the Turkish Alevis, and moving to a style similar to the Sunni hymns before returning to the Alevi format. This shift in style functions as a musical illustration of Yılmaz’s preceding speech on the absence of an Alawi-Sunni conflict in Antakya, even in the years of heightened conflict between the Alevi leftist and Sunni rightist groups in Turkey.

The Hebrew hymns and folk songs follow a narration of stereotypical jokes about Jews, portraying them as greedy, stingy, and scheming merchants or clergy. These jokes receive passionate laughter and applause from the audience. Having heard the same jokes from my Jewish interlocutors on other occasions, I feel ambivalent about the process by which they make their way onto this particular stage. In our later encounters, both Yılmaz and the Jewish members of the Choir seem troubled less by their conveyance to the stage than by my questioning of it.

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49 *Cem* is the central corporate worship service within the Alevi community, during which the *aşık* (bard) plays the *bağlama* (long-necked lute) whilst singing spiritual songs, and participants dance in a circle (as a rite of initiation for adolescents or a commemoration ritual for revered figures in early Islamic history).
former Jewish member of the Choir even takes pride in being the first one to tell these jokes to Yilmaz and wants to take more credit for this contribution to the concert performances.\textsuperscript{50}

The concert ends with the nationalistic Turkish song, “Bir Baş kadır Benim Memleketim” [My Country is Unique], the lyrics of which romanticize and glorify Turkey’s landscape, natural resources, heroes, and epic stories. This is the only time in the entire performance when the audience is openly invited to join in the singing, as marked by the turn of the conductor, Seyda, towards the audience and her movements, which suggest that she is now also conducting them. The transformation of listeners into singers multiplies the voices of the choir, and together with the rhythmic clapping that accompanies the singing, fills the soundscape of the amphitheater.

The concert in Antakya, typical in its general style and repertoire although more interactive with the audience than many of their other concerts, illustrates the kind of politics underlying the claims of the Choir’s transpolitical status. Although each song with its specific references and local histories is celebrated, what really matters is the totality of the performance, and in particular, how these individual songs become part of a bigger story of togetherness and unity.

The first and the last songs hint at the glue that holds these differences together. It is not simply the music that Yilmaz defines as the universal language and prayer of peace, or a transcendental love for God and “humanity” as God’s creation: it is also the Turkish patriotism embedded in ideas of land, flag, and communitarian belonging. Rather than embodying competing

\textsuperscript{50} On other occasions during my fieldwork, I heard Jews telling anti-Semitic jokes. A typical example was what my Jewish friends (usually male) would say whenever I returned to the waiter the unused sugar-cubes that accompanied the tea we had ordered. Addressing the waiter and making sure that I hear, they would say, “Don’t forget to take off the cost of the sugar from our bill!” and then burst into laughter. Martin Grotjahn (1987:96) summarizes the logic behind such jokes: “[I]t is as if the Jew tells his enemies: You do not need to attack us. We can do that ourselves—and even better. But we can take it and we will come out all right.” Regardless of whether this signifies a deprecating survival strategy or a political tactic to strip daily forms of anti-Semitism of their power, its employment at a public performance in an event associated with tolerance was quite shocking—and revelatory, I would argue, of the symbolic violence embedded in tolerance.
positionings and attachments, ideas of universality and nationalism are dovetailed into each other, but in differing capacities and with different weights.

The first song plays with “high culture” and the assumed associations of Western classical music in Turkey through the intimation of ideas of universality and modernity. This is achieved in part through the addition of Turkish lyrics to the music, which serves to make it more relatable and memorable to the audience. Then, after inviting the audience into the familiar realm of the modernist and elitist conceptualizations of “universal” music, the performance reframes universality in the equation of humanity with the “community of believers.”

Such an equation seems to contradict a Kantian understanding of cosmopolitanism, which conceives religious practices, convictions, and communities as the theopolitical limit of the “worldwide community of beings tolerating the presence of each other” (Kant 1957[1795]:20–21). Yet it still works within the secular ethos of cosmopolitanism rooted in the Kantian tradition that views “freedom of religion” as a universal norm outside the realm of politics (Benhabib et al. 2006:71). The public declaration that togetherness under the same God is the condition of cosmopolitanism gains transpolitical status precisely because it is underwritten by the same set of distinctly secular norms, norms that approach religious differences as commensurate, comparable, and representable expressions of belief. In the case of the Choir, the most significant

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51 Cultural policies in the field of music in Turkey since the 1930s have included formal education in Western polyphonic music in conservatories modeled on Western schools, symphony orchestras giving free concerts around the country, the regular broadcast of classical music on the state radio, state balls organized by government employees with European music and waltzes, and the addition of Western musical history and its composers to the curriculum of schools (Tekelioğlu 1996). In accordance with this perspective, a member of the conservatory in Antakya often criticized the absence of polyphonic singing in the Choir’s performances and saw it as proof of their low musical quality. See Stokes (2010) for a detailed analysis of the role of Western classical music in processes of Turkish modernization and nation-building processes.
of these norms that gives the abstract conception of “world citizenship” a concrete quality and identifiable character is “national citizenship.”

*Ode to Joy* might be the first step in establishing the connection between the Choir and the audience as people in “common possession of the surface of the earth” (Kant 1957:21). Yet it is not until the last song that oneness is achieved performatively. The cheerful singing of a patriotic song releases the audience into the climactic moment of the concert, the moment when the “community of believers” becomes the “nation,” the “common surface” becomes the “homeland,” and affective energies built up throughout the concert are transformed and transposed into a passionate love for both.

If singing on stage is one way of mobilizing mass feelings and evoking communal attachments in public, Yilmaz’s introductions constitute another. Both music and speech activate the capacity of sound to resonate with embodied knowledge in listeners as believers in God and the nation, and to touch their faith. They achieve this, of course, with distinct rhetorical styles and different positionings of the ear in relation to the nation and religion. In his ethnography of cassette-sermon listening in Cairo, Hirschkind (2006:40) addresses ways in which rationalization driven by anticolonial and nationalist movements in 19th and 20th century Egypt led to a transformation in the relationship between listening and the transmission of public messages. His analysis is pertinent here.

Essentially, Hirschkind argues that the new sensory epistemologies in Egypt followed a cognitivist conception of hearing, and privileged “the rhetorical labour of skilful human speakers” in convincing the audience of the beauty and truth of the message to be transmitted through sound. In contrast to Arabo-Islamic musical theory and the Sufi tradition, which emphasizes both the responsiveness of the listener and the qualities of the performance, the
nationalist efforts to construct a modern public sphere envisioned the “masses” as a “public audience,” the passive recipients of a call to citizenly participation. Yilmaz’s speeches during the concerts can be understood as part of a similar modernist sonic framework, one that approaches the “public” as a normative space for education, mass-communication and recognition (see also Anderson 1991; Street 1993; Warner 1990).

Targeting the listeners’ hearts as well as their minds, the speaking voice of a charismatic figure conveys its messages in the most direct and literal way possible. The power this affords, even when the spoken tone takes on a poetic hue, suggests that transmission of the message of hoşgörü and its related feelings of compassion and solidarity need not be entrusted to the musical voice alone. At one level the spoken and musical voices complement each other on stage as cognitive and affective mechanisms of transmission, but on another it is the former that contextualizes the latter. This circumscription of the music implies that there is more to the representation of religious identities than simply a public performance.

In the Choir’s performance, it is clear that the voice mediated through words becomes the authoritative vocalization of the community’s musical self-representation, this being primarily that of the community of performers on stage but ultimately embracing the audience also, inviting them in as fellow performers. This authoritative voice seeks to discipline not only the audience’s ear by directly telling them “what to listen for” but also the singers’ individual and communal performances by connecting these performances to the larger story of the Turkish nation. It directs both re-presentation and the representation, as communal expression and as that with which the community identifies. As another call to citizenly participation, the collective singing at the end suggests that both the audience and the singers must make their bodies and hearts into instruments capable of re-sounding the words of the nation to which they submit.
The musical voice—literal (human) and figurative (instrumental)—plays a rather different role to the spoken voice, leaving meaning unverbalized and undeclared. The rhythms and melodies, lyrics and intonations, but also the communal/collective memories, religious sentiments, and personal attachments evoked by the songs combine to trigger the affective qualities of listening some of which may sidestep the transcendent love for God and the nation. Given that most of the lyrics are unintelligible to the audience, and even to the singers themselves, the power of the music lies beyond socio-linguistic frames and the didactic realm.

It is true that the processes of song selection already disciplines sensibilities, and that musical meaning can be directed. Compared to the scripted speeches, however, these songs have a wider capacity to produce “alternative articulations of sound and subject, and new ways of animating and embodying historical experience” (Hirschkind 2006:32) because they are repositories of past memories and emotive forces beyond those of the nation. It is this capacity that makes a further mediation of singing and the codification of music within sociolinguistic frames necessary.

The extent to which Yilmaz’s speeches were successful in mobilizing the intended emotions and disciplining the listener is indeterminate. Some Choir members expressed their appreciation of his oratory (the speeches had been added to the performances the year I conducted my fieldwork) and stated that they were “moved” or “touched” by them; others found them unnecessary,

52 The expanding repertoire of the Choir includes songs not only in Arabic as well as Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, and Hebrew, but also Italian, German, and Latin. Since very few of these languages are actually spoken in Antakya and none except Turkish is intelligible to all, the singers are given the lyrics transliterated into Turkish, which they memorize during rehearsals through collective repetitions after the director (I have seen some members attaching these papers to the walls of their kitchens and suchlike so as to facilitate the process). Memorization, rather than “understanding” is key here, since for none of these non-Turkish songs was a Turkish translation provided to the singers. This distinction became most salient to me during one of the rehearsals, when the soloist, Meltem was trying to help the other members to memorize the lyrics of a Kurdish song. A key member of the Choir with her distinctive, beautiful voice, this Kurdish nurse from Mersin understood the lyrics and wanted to relay them to the others, but Yilmaz prevented her since it would prolong the rehearsals. He made it clear that as long as the lyrics were not dangerous (meaning did not express political statements or criticisms of Turkey’s conduct with the Kurds), there was no need to know what they meant.
however, and detracting from the flow. Some of the criticisms expressed practical concerns, such as the prolonged duration of the concerts which lengthened the standing time for the singers; but the same critical voices also complimented Yilmaz’s charisma in getting the message across, and some even juxtaposed it to their own abilities or inabilities to speak in public.

One striking example was the case of an imam who compared Yilmaz’s speeches to his own sermons in the mosque. The imam framed the difference in the form of a secular-religious divide by attaching different qualities to the two modes of speech. “I can talk from night to morning and educate people on matters of religion, but when it comes to nonspecific ordinary talk in public, to fire up the masses, to arouse their excitement and all, I do not trust myself,” he said, adding “Yılmaz does it much better than any of us could.” The inversion of standard secular-cognitive and religious-affective equations here only affirms that the “non-religious” talk on the stage is not only about inculcating into passive audiences the opinions, attitudes, and responsibilities that would constitute religious subjects as new Turkish citizens, but also about instilling in them the corresponding affections, excitements, and passion. The introduction of the oratory indicates also the changing nature of the state’s involvement in the project, and how this deployment of hoşgörü and the Choir’s very mission became more closely supervised by government agencies while simultaneously appearing as “non-political” or “beyond politics.” Therefore, a review of its history is instructive.

2.4.1 The Foundation and Transformation of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations

The Antakya Choir of Civilization was originally formed for a one-off event as part of the Turkish Culture and Tourism Week hosted by Hatay Province in 2007. Initially called “the Rainbow Choir,” its members were drawn in equal numbers from Armenian, Alawi, Sunni, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish communities living in the region. In the first two concerts, each
community was dressed differently, stood separately and sang only their own hymns, except for the first and the last songs, which were performed by all members. After the Culture and Tourism week was over, director Yilmaz and conductor Seyda decided to continue the choir, but with a change in name and format, to stress not only togetherness but also unity. The transformation of the Rainbow Choir into the Choir of Civilizations not only resulted in an increase in members (to well over a hundred), but also a standardization of costumes (which were now nonethnic/communal, so nondenominational) and music (with all songs performed by the whole ensemble), and the non-segregation of communities during performances (Figure 4).

![Figure 4. The Antakya Choir of Civilization on stage (note the nationalist framing of the flag and Atatürk images)](image)

The new incarnation received immediate public attention and widespread support. For its founders and official bodies alike, one of the main reasons behind the formation of the Choir was

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53 The first concerts were conducted by Seyda with Yilmaz taking an administrative role in organization and promotion; a state employed music teacher, Seyda was later relocated to Istanbul, upon which Yilmaz took over the conducting duties (except for those concerts that Seyda was able to attend).
the promotion of Hatay. For Yilmaz, religious plurality was a distinctive feature of this peripheral city and could be promoted to gain attention from the centre. Yilmaz mentioned as inspirational the satirical Turkish movie Selamsız Bandosu (The Band of Selamsiz [lit., no greeting]) (1987). In this movie, the mayor of Selamsiz, a small, fictitious town in central Anatolia, learns that the President of Turkey will be passing through on a train tour. In order both to honour the President and attract his attention to the problems facing the town due to state neglect, he decides to form a band with the help of a music teacher he brings from a nearby city. The movie portrays the struggles he and the music teacher experience in creating a band from the town’s residents, who have never seen a musical instrument in their lives. In the end, the band is successfully formed but the train carrying the President does not stop. The town’s people only see the image of a hand slowly waving as the train passes.

Working within the paradigm of the centre/periphery and elite/common people dichotomies in criticizing the state’s absence, the movie provides an apt analogy of the kind of political work with which the Antakya Choir of Civilizations was initially charged. The story of the Choir diverges from the movie plot, however, since in this narrative the President does stop, the band does get to play, and the state does notice. Initially organized for the ministers and bureaucrats from the capital during their visit for Culture and Tourism Week in Hatay—life very much imitating fiction in this respect—over time, the Choir began to aim to attract the interest of EU and UN bureaucrats and the international public visiting Turkey. Although its starting point was the multi-faith character of the city, the role of the Choir, Yilmaz emphasized, was not just to “represent” hoşgörü but also to “create” it.  

54 During our conversation, Yilmaz made a distinction between hoşgörü and tolerans, the latter a direct translation (from French) that is rarely used in everyday language. He associated hoşgörü with a kind of paternalism of the majority in respect of the minority, with tolerans as more accommodating to coexistence on equal terms. Although
To explain this point, he employed the same distinction between “real” and “fake” hoşgörü. Yilmaz was not from Antakya, however, and as an outsider, unlike those who are native to the city, he did not believe in the existence of a “real” hoşgörü there:

The camaraderie that everybody talks about is fake, it’s for show only. They put the community leaders together for the official days and call it “hoşgörü,” but nobody really went down to the level of the ordinary people before our project. We brought together different communities for the “production” of something on common ground. Yes, people used to go to each other’s funerals, weddings, and some even lived in the same neighbourhoods and apartments, but they were not touching each other’s lives at the level of production. [Here] there are teachers, workers, doctors, retired people, housewives, imams, and jewelry makers…

At first they saw everything as a matter of representation. They thought within the limits of particularity, they were concerned more about where they stood in the representation. We try to teach them the universality of all this. Music is a universal language. It is beyond differences. This is why we also wanted the community leaders and authorities to take a step back and become less involved in our relationship with the members as the Choir got bigger.

The idea of the Choir as producer of hoşgörü in Antakya refers not only to collective singing on stage but also to the kinds of sociality that emerge from people’s engagement with the Choir, and with each other through the Choir. These include small talk in the breaks during weekly rehearsals, experiences of traveling together and sharing the same hotel rooms, playing backgammon in the open-air coffeehouses of Antakya Park, visiting the houses, offices, and

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his personal suggestion to use tolerans instead of hoşgörü involved a bifurcation of their political meanings, it was also, I assumed, an attempt to circumvent criticisms of the political implications of hoşgörü (and the English “tolerance,” for that matter) by attributing the problem to its over- or misuse and offering a (relatively) new term that could be filled with more positive connotations.
stores of other choir-members, attending their weddings and funerals, and sending text messages to celebrate one another’s religious holidays. To maintain this sense of community, at the start of rehearsals Yılmaz would also provide updates on the activities of previous and current members, such as job application results, health-related issues, and news of marriages, births, and deaths.

In fact, many members who commented on the existence of the “real” hoşgörü in Antakya also confessed to me that when they first joined the choir, they only knew the members of their own communities and close circles. The Choir did indeed become a platform for them to get to know other communities in their city. “Knowing each other” shifted over time from acquaintanceship by sight towards close camaraderie or complete dislike, neither of which recognized any communal boundaries. Similarly, the kinds of productivity inspired by people’s involvements in the Choir also extended to something beyond “producing something on common ground”.

One day, on a lunch break in Maria’s guesthouse, I noticed Benedetta wearing a necklace with the familiar image of the entwined Cross, Crescent, and Star of David set into a piece metal cut in the shape of Hatay province. When I asked her where she had got it from, she said it was made by Apo, a former member of the Choir, who was an Orthodox jewellery-maker in the historical souk.\(^55\) Maria took a closer look at the necklace after I drew attention to it and commented that it would have been better if the map was of Turkey, not Hatay, since people from outside would not easily recognize it. Benedetta’s simple response—“But this isn’t something you find all over Turkey, it’s only here, in Antakya”—revealed tensions, tensions at the core of the Choir’s shifting role from communicating what Antakyans wanted to say about each other to a more formal representation of “hoşgörü in Turkey”

\(^55\) Jewellery making is a traditional source of income for Orthodox Christians across the region. See Chapter 3
The next time I saw him, I asked Apo about the necklace. He said he had started doing these kinds of pieces after joining the Choir. He had been inspired especially by the emblem of the Choir, which has the same image but placed in an Ottoman Star design. When another silversmith mentioned to him that some customers asked for necklaces in the shape of Hatay, Apo combined the ideas and produced the necklace. “It is the best thing to represent Hatay with,” he said, “Maybe the inspiration came with the Choir, but life here was like that long before the Choir was formed.” This statement motivated him to start a new conversation about his childhood memories, which involved playing with the Jewish and Muslim kids of the neighbourhood where he had grown up, and sharing the same desks with them in schools.

Indeed, the representation of Antakya’s hoşgörü entails more than producing and wearing necklaces with the symbols of different religious communities living in the city. Yilmaz’s comments quoted above address how the question of representing religious difference becomes entangled with the question of authority and mediation. The politics of representation in the Choir involved not only an ideological construction of images and portraits that are put to work through the performances on stage—representation as an aesthetic portrayal (Spivak 1999)—but also the questions of authority and power struggles around them (re-presentation/proxy).

2.4.2 Singing: A religious or a cultural practice?

The nuances in the way the Choir’s institutionalization was recounted to me by its members registered different understandings of the place of religion in the Choir’s representation of Antakya. Ismail, the owner of a small fabric shop in the historical-city market-area, emphasized that it was through the request of the head of the Antakya Jewish Foundation that he had become involved in the project. Although he had no musical training, he felt obliged to be part of the choir given that his community, one of the smallest with only around 30 people in total, would
be poorly represented if even one person declined the request. The feeling of obligation expressed was resonant with the accounts I heard from him and other Jewish men in town about the moral obligation of attending the Saturday Sabbaths in the city’s only synagogue so that the minyan could be formed.\footnote{Minyan: the quorum of ten male Jewish adults required for the Saturday Sabbaths. The rabbi comes from Istanbul upon the request of the community, and to find the ten male adults was a highly challenging task for the community members, the cause of constant fights related to absences.}

The responsibility to continue Jewish religious practices was in a sense inseparable from the survival of the community and its recognition in public arenas, the Choir being just one such arena—but this did not necessarily mean that praying in the synagogue was equated to singing on stage. The difference between the two acts for Ismail was marked by the presence and absence of musical instruments. For him, the accompanying instruments added to the richness of Jewish prayer, and such musicality in the synagogue was not appropriate. “It is just different,” he remarked. The difference is not in the religiosity of the song, however. No matter where, how, and by whom it is performed, the song is still sacred, and by virtue of this quality, denies any clear-cut distinction between “cultural” and “religious” performance.

This denial was well illustrated by the tension that arose between Yilmaz and Salma, the daughter of a rabbi from Damascus who had married into a Jewish family in Antakya and became part of the Choir. When Salma challenged the director for cutting the Sabbath Morning Prayer “El-Adon” in half during their concert in Belgium which, she insisted, caused a sin on every singer’s part, she was told that they were not on stage for religious purposes. Although she agreed with the comment and did not see her performances on stage as a purely religious act, the explanation did not satisfy her since the prayer’s religious quality was beyond the context in which it was performed. This was also the reason why the community needed to consult with the
Chief Rabbinate in Istanbul when they were selecting Jewish songs for the Choir’s repertoire and receive its permission to sing the prayers in concerts.

Manifestly, the Jewish prayers were imbued with the power to cloud contextual differences between stage and synagogue, depending on how successfully the singers conveyed the religious feelings associated with them. In other words, both the song and the performance mattered. To support this point, another Jewish member, Amit, told me about an incident in which the Chief Rabbi from Istanbul approached the choir after a concert and expressed his appreciation by saying that they made him feel as though he were in a synagogue.

The singing of hymns was not equally related to the different religious identities of each community represented in the Choir, however. In one case, for example, it was plainly incompatible. Mehmet, an Alawi sheikh and one of the founding members of the Alawi Ehl-i Beyt Foundation in Antakya, told me that when the Governorship contacted the Foundation for assistance in finding Alawi singers, the task seemed a burden to many:

We encountered a difficulty that relates to our culture. Music in prayer exists in Shiism in Iran, in Anatolian Alevism, in Christianity, and maybe even Judaism. But we don’t have any of that. We read the Koran; we have a lot of religious feasts, but Alawis in Antakya do not know any mersiye or kasides like the ones sung by Sunni imams.\(^57\) Also, we don’t have cems like the Anatolian Alevis. That’s why we had difficulty at first, not only persuading our people that it was acceptable to represent Alawism through songs on stage, but also finding songs that would really represent us. After a lot of research, we found some Arabic songs that praise Ehl-i Beyt, Hz. Ali and the twelve imams, and translated them into Turkish.

\(^{57}\) Kaside/Mersiye: two poetry forms in Divan literature. Poems are read with music that praise important Islamic figures or express some sort of suffering behind the dead figures.
One of these was a Shi’a song called “Mevla Ali,” which was objected to by some Sunni and Christian members during the process of the Choir’s standardization. Accused of representing Ali, the Fourth Caliph, as God, the song was eliminated from the Choir’s repertoire, together with some other hymns with specific lyrics about Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and Muhammed, to forestall religious conflict within (and outside) the group. However, the replacement of “Mevla Ali” by some Turkish Alevi cem songs offended many Alawis in Antakya who, as a minority within a religious minority, find it important to distinguish themselves from the more widely known Bektaşi-Sufi lineage within Shi’a Islam in Turkey. For Mehmet, to be equated with the “Anatolian” Alevi through the performance of the latter’s songs meant a double-effacement, one that rendered the Alawi not only oppressed by the dominant Sunni identity but also invisible and unrepresentable beyond the terms and categories of the Turkish and Kurdish Alevis.

Despite his disappointments at such “misrepresentations,” however, Mehmet was one of the most loyal and committed members of the Choir. In his office where we talked, the walls were covered with invitations and souvenirs from previous concerts and newspaper articles about the Choir. Displayed next to the religious artwork he had made, such as wood carvings of Koranic verses and Imam Ali’s sword, as well as pictures of Atatürk, was a framed newspaper article on one of the first concerts that the Choir had given. The picture accompanying the article showed the members in the costumes of their separate communities, yet the tags that labeled each community were not from the original newspaper page. They had been prepared and glued to the picture by Mehmet himself, as he proudly told me when I asked his permission to take its picture (Figure 5).

58 The Turkish and Kurdish Alevis all perform some sort of cem ceremony, albeit with variations. Arab Alawis, on the other hand, draw their teachings and rituals from the esoteric interpretation of the Koran (see Chapter 4).
Mehmet’s active participation in this act of categorization was a form of “cultural work” (Stokes 1998:267) that enabled him to position his religious identity within the plurality of a border locality in accordance with a liberal politics of recognition. A further step that he had taken was to form the first Alawi Choir of the Ehl-i Beyt Foundation, to freely sing the songs he had initially recommended to the Choir of Civilizations and introduce the culture of singing to Antakya’s Alawi community.

Debates over the details of which songs to sing and how, as well as what to wear—crucial, of course, in the re-presentation—are integral to the different understandings of hoşgörü in the Choir. Ferit, an Orthodox Christian from the Antakya Orthodox Foundation, explained his take on the subject in the following words:

When the Choir was first founded, we, the Orthodox community, supported it. But over time, it lost its meaning. I don’t find it right that everybody is forced to sing each other’s hymns. A Christian should be able to sing the songs that are about Jesus or Mary if they wish. The Alawis should be able to sing Mevla Ali. It is their belief, why deny it? To me, hoşgörü means being able to listen to those who have different beliefs but not necessarily
taking part in their singing.

The distinction Ferit makes between “listening” and “singing” is key to understanding the tensions embedded in Turkey’s conduct with religious plurality. Listening and singing suggest two modes of toleration that have different political implications. For Ferit, the changes to the format of the Choir come at the expense of the community’s public visibility (hence its neutralization) and particular religious sensibilities. With the standardization of songs and the mingling of groups, the representation of the Orthodox community in the Choir becomes less about the visibility of the identifiable community members under a recognized authority than about the performance of particular Orthodox hymns by unidentifiable subjects. This new regulation of representation has the effect of transforming “incommensurable expressions of religious difference” into “a ‘diversity’ of religious practices” for public consumption (McClure 1990:386). It also demonstrates how the politics of representation here involves a struggle not only over how to represent religious diversity (through which songs, dresses, and images), but also over who will do the representing.

Notwithstanding the project’s emphasis on religion, the toleration associated with “singing” in the case of the Choir is embedded in a secular understanding of pluralism. It redefines the stakes of religious conflict from a purely civil or cultural perspective, that is, “not as conflicting truth claims requiring allegiance or defence, but rather as politically indifferent matters of private belief” (McClure 1990:366). Within such a framework, the endeavour to bridge religious differences sets aside what seem to be intractable or irresolvable disagreements from a secular point of view. Thus the sensitivities around particular religious or sacred figures function as one such arena of disagreement and render certain hymns intolerable.

The decision Ferit makes between “singing” and “listening” is not a simple refusal to have more
contact with other religions than his community already has: it is a decision about what to compromise in a public representing of the religious self. Toleration through “listening,” in this particular case, seems like a move to protect the ability to more freely address the community’s relationship to its own religion. Metaphorically speaking, the move from “listening” to “singing” symbolizes the loss of “internal autonomy” in the political path from the acceptance of “difference” within a hierarchical system of plurality (as in the Ottoman millet system), first to its denial and exclusion (as in Kemalist nationalism) and then to its valorization and depoliticization (as in contemporary liberal discourses).

At stake for Ferit is also the established relationship between authority and autonomy. By connecting every singer directly to the Choir director, without the mediation of their community or religious leaders, the standardization process means a reversal of the initial method through which the first members were acquired. It breaks the relationship between the authority of community leaders and the autonomy of the religious communities, threatening the symbolic power of people like Ferit. This may be why, as I was told, it was mostly community leaders and religious men rather than ordinary community members who resisted the changes to the format or performance of particular songs. Apo described the process thus:

I became part of the Choir because Padri Dominic (the Italian priest of the Catholic Church) asked me to. He realized the project was more about music than religion so he did not want to deal with it himself. The difficulty about some of the hymns derived from the controversy between the imams and the priests, really. There was no objection from the common people that I remember. Instead of letting them fight, we ended up choosing the songs that emphasize hoşgörü, love for God and peace. For me, it does not matter. Singing some other religion’s hymns does not make me a convert, does it?

For religious authorities representing the majority religion, even the removal of certain hymns failed to suffice. The Sunni members of the Rainbow Choir were all mosque imams gathered
through the order of the provincial Grand Mufti. During the Choir’s first concerts, they sang Sunni songs and dressed in black suits and ties, embodying the perfect harmony between the secularizing reforms of the early Republican years and Islam’s official face.59

Once the communities mingled, all but one of the imams left. Many of my acquaintances in the Choir agreed that the imams’ decision to leave was a reflection of their inability to adapt to the rest of the group and its cosmopolitan composition, although they also agreed with the conductor Seyda’s explanation, which emphasized the restriction imposed on them by their official status—of all the religious leaders in the Choir, the imams were the only ones employed by the state (through the Directorate of Religious Affairs).60

Accepted by almost everyone in the Choir without question as common sense, the vulnerability of the imams revealed by their decision not to potentially risk their positions by performing the sacred works of other denominations was the very indicator of the normalized status of Sunni Islam within the institutional hierarchy of religions. Active participation (singing) in non-Sunni practices on the part of the state’s religious representatives would be more than a merely “cultural” performance of recognition. It could render the recognition of the religious others more “official” than necessary, or officially sanctioned and even equal.

Muharrem was the only imam who stayed in the Choir. Although some associate this with the fact that the mosque to which he is appointed is in an Alawi neighbourhood with the implication

59 A series of laws progressively limiting the wearing of selected items of traditional clothing during the early years of the Republic targeted in particular Muslim authorities and ulema. Legislation did not explicitly prohibit veils or headscarves, and focused instead on banning fezzes and turbans for men. For the effects of the Hat Law of 1925 in Antakya after Hatay became part of Turkey, see Shields (2011).

60 Despite the name, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) in Turkey deals only issues specific to the Sunni establishment. Alevis pray in Cemevis, which have no legal status as places of worship. A separate government agency, the General Directorate for Foundations (Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü) regulates some activities of non-Muslim religious groups and their affiliated churches, monasteries, synagogues, and related religious property.
that he thus has less to risk, Muharrem recounts the reasons behind his stay differently, as the following exchange shows:

Muharrem: When they asked us [the imams] to sing all of the hymns, we said we were ok with the Alevi songs. After all, they are Muslims like us. But we don’t know what the Christian, Jewish, or Armenian songs are all about. Yes, we are trained to read in Arabic, but we don’t understand it. So we said, “They don’t need to sing ours and we don’t want to sing theirs,” and left. But when our conductor approached me later and asked me to return, I couldn’t say no. She told me, “You are a modern, civilized person and you shouldn’t care about such things.” She was right.

Seçil: Is the Choir a religious setting for you?

Muharrem: Yes of course! If I am not to stand there together with a priest, with an Alawi sheikh or with a rabbi, how is our choir different from any other in Turkey? Or what is the point of having an imam in a folk music or Turkish classical music choir? This is what makes our choir special, even though we’re all amateurs in music. But I have to admit that many of the hymns from other religions are really hard for me to memorize. It’s been four years, but I still make mistakes. Sometimes I only move my lips watching how others or our conductor do it. They make fun of me because of that. But what can I do? I am old.

Seçil: So there is no problem singing religious songs in public concerts?

Muharrem: No, because, we only sing them; we do not live them. I do not know what

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61 Muharrem’s mosque was located in an almost exclusively Alawi neighbourhood. During our interview, he refused to answer my question about whether Alawis attended the mosque. While he referred to Alawis as Muslims, he made it clear that he did not recognize the religious authority of the Alawi Ehl-i Beyt Foundation, which he saw as “a mock institution.” Mehmet had his office in the same neighbourhood, and it was interesting to observe how the religious and institutional competition between the two religious positions they represented was mediated through personal debates. More than once, Mehmet communicated his resentment at how, although he entered the Choir at the same time as Muharrem, Yilmaz had never chosen him to sing solo while Muharrem was always singing the solo even though his voice was not so good. For Mehmet, this was yet another proof of the marginalization of the Alawi community in Turkey. Muharrem, on the other hand, seemed really bothered when he heard that I was taking Arabic lessons from Mehmet and tried to persuade me to come to one of his classes to see the difference between his expertise and Mehmet’s.
saying “Hallelujah” or “Hava nagila” means. I only approach them as musical pieces and evaluate them on the basis of their musical quality.

“Only singing” here illustrates the provisional “play” context in which the concerts are framed as “not serious” (in the religious sense), hence their apolitical veneer (Bateson 1951). But play is also an instrumental mechanism of socialization. As Janice Boddy shows in her analysis of the *zar* rituals in Sudan, it may in fact point towards an alternate reality, or “a counter-reality, wherein salient social values and cultural orientations are played with, reassessed, weighted differently than in everyday life, opened up to other interpretations” (1989:156–157). The “play,” therefore, can easily seep into the serious world through its metacommunicative qualities.

In the context of the Choir, this is manifested in the ambiguous line between the religious and the musical, which in Muharrem’s narrative also reveals some of the complexity of modernity and the sense, as a religious figure, of being a civilized person. The Choir setting, for him, is at once religious and non-religious. It is “religious” on matters related to Islam, and not, as far as the other religions are concerned. These two positions are reconciled and mediated through the presence of the religious figures like Muharrem or Mehmet. In other words, the togetherness of religions within the Choir is dependent on clearly delineated “units” of religious groups with identifiable authorities to speak for those units.

While Muharrem’s religious authority in the Choir relies on his acknowledgment of other religious positionalities and authorities through singing, the same acknowledgement attenuates his authority outside the Choir settings. When framing this acknowledgement merely as an appreciation of musical quality does not suffice to silence potential criticisms on this regard, Muharrem denies the verbal components of the Christian or Jewish songs completely while performing them. He invalidates his act of recognition in his very participation in the act—or at
least, he intends this through his disavowal. Regardless of whether Muharrem really does sing these songs incorrectly or not, the need he feels to make this point to me during a recorded interview exposes the limits of religious plurality recognition for an imam in Turkey.

For pious Sunni singers like Feryal, there is more to reconcile than which songs not to perform. The very bodily presence of a young covered woman like her on stage creates contestations around the gendered nature of religion’s public visibility. At issue is finding the middle ground between the Islamic codes of sexual modesty that forbid women from singing and dancing in public, and giving voice and visibility to the covered Muslim women who were, until very recently, denied entry to certain public realms in Turkey because of their headscarves. Feryal admits that Yılmaz asked her to join the Choir to include “the women with headscarf” as a category in the Choir’s representations of religious plurality. Her headscarf marked the token conditions of her inclusion into the assemblage of objectified categories that form the choir.

The challenges she faced in this process, however, had less to do with the political and symbolic meanings of the headscarf than with the ideas of female modesty and piety that undergird the very practice of veiling for many Muslim women (Mahmood 2005). Feryal had to persuade herself before her family, friends, relatives, and all other Muslims that “appearing on stage was caiz (religiously permissible.)” This process of self-persuasion did not seem to have much to do with re-presentation of other marginalized veiled women nor expressed a political stance in the Islamist-secularist dichotomy. Unlike Muharrem, Mehmet or Ferit who framed their own adventures within the Choir as the common experience of the “Muslims,” “Alawis,” or the “Orthodox community,” Feryal’s account of her dilemma and its resolution comprised a personal narrative:
In the end, I was convinced that what I do is good. If my presence will contribute even a little bit to the accomplishment of the mission of bringing hoşgörü to the world, it shouldn’t be morally wrong to sing on stage. Islam is not the religion of violence as others think. Islam is the religion of hoşgörü, and I believe what I do serves to the truth of Islam.

As much as it replicates the dominant discourse of hoşgörü in Turkey and its underlying references to Islam, Feryal’s interpretation of her role within the Choir is not entirely complicit with the position that was initially cast for her. By framing the question of representation as an act of piety in itself oriented towards a common good rather than a political performance for “her own kind,” she not only dissolves the cultural/religious dichotomy, but also resists the “reification” of her bodily difference. Feryal does not view Islam as external to or distinct from other religious positions in its relationship to hoşgörü. What she does instead is to find a place for Islam (and her own relationship to it) within a more general understanding of hoşgörü that already encompasses other religious positionalities.

Along with the headscarf, the Jewish kippah was one of the identifiable markers that remained after the standardization of concert costumes. Most of the Jewish men continued to wear their kippahs during the concerts and did not encounter objections. Amit was the only one who refused to do so. He explained the reason to me in the following words:

We don’t wear kippah in our daily life, so why do we wear it for the concerts? To make our identities recognizable by others? Maybe I don’t want to be recognized by others! Maybe the whole point is to mingle with others so that we cannot be distinguished as Jews. I’m Turkish, too, and want to be in the Choir to prove to our audiences that I am no different to you or the others.

Amit was another of the Choir’s most devoted members. As a retired merchant (he had owned a shop in the historical souk before his business went under), he could dedicate most of his time to
the Choir’s busy schedule and was proud to do so. Amit was also a committed advocate of the Republican ideals of secularism and a follower of Atatürk. He believed that the secular regime in Turkey enabled the Jews to live more comfortably in this Muslim-majority country than they did even in Europe. His resentments about the discriminations against the Jews in Turkey were not directed at the Republican regime, but at the corrupt politicians and institutions that manipulated Atatürk’s ideals for individual gains or power struggles.

Amit saw his role in the Choir as an integral aspect of his national citizenship. “This is like a national duty for me” he told me once. “We represent the beauties of our country, help to improve its international reputation and most importantly, do this collaboratively, in solidarity.” So his desire to be “no different than the others” was not simply a shift in perspective from particularity to universal humanity, as suggested by Yilmaz. It was a demand for equality as charged with and mediated through a language of nationalism. Such a path to citizenship, however, was caught between Turkish nationalism’s twin constructivist and primordialist threads: on the one hand, the consistent necessity for those who are “different” to express their sameness, and on the other, the hegemonic denial of sameness to the “different” due to their origins. In other words, Amit desired sameness both because of and in spite of his difference. The paradox he faced was to actualize this desire for sameness in an environment that he entered precisely because of his difference.

62 The Choir is a voluntary commitment and many members cannot allocate much of their time, energy and sometimes money, especially since the travelling has increased as the Choir has gained a reputation. Apo, for instance, had to quit because he could not afford to take long breaks from work or from his marriage (his wife complained). Ismail also complained, in his case that he sometimes had to close his shop early to make it to the weekly rehearsals.

63 See Brink-Danan (2012) for an ethnographic account of how and why Turkish Jews in Istanbul historically preferred to downplay their difference. Bali (2004) also writes about the differences of the Jewish community’s responses to the assimilating policies of the Turkish Republic.
2.5 Conclusion

October 2011, 3pm. I am in Antakya Park where I have come to meet Murat, a close friend and a member of the Choir in his late twenties. He tells me about an incident that occurred during the Choir’s last trip to an Anatolian city. A selected group of individuals from each “civilization” had been chosen to accompany Yilmaz in his visit to the office of the City Governor. Because of a last minute change in the schedule, Yilmaz’s assistants could not locate the representative of the Alawi members, and one of them, a Sunni singer, ended up disguising himself as an Alawi for the meeting. “I don’t know how I feel about this,” Murat says. “Maybe it shouldn’t be a problem, especially if we are sincere about our wish to move beyond our differences. On the other hand, if a world in which such differences did not matter really existed, there would be no Choir of Civilizations in the first place or a need for one.”

In this chapter, I have examined how religious difference is objectified, neutralized and regulated through performative representations of hoşgörü in Antakya. I have argued that these representations are the product of a particular historical moment characterized by a shift in Turkish politics from an exclusionary nationalism to a pluralist one. These signify how an imperial model of diversity, once conceived and theorized in opposition to the secular nation-state, is being evoked and reframed through the terms of nationalism while at the same time gesturing towards liberal accounts of cultural difference. Never fully integrated, these political formations involve a variety of historically generated discourses, disciplinary practices, and relations of power. They are not monolithic, and nor are they unchanging, isolated, or geographically bounded. In Antakya, as elsewhere, they inflect each other and produce a heterogeneous field of interactions, tensions, and ambiguities between various religious and secular formations.
The interplay between these different formations also generates paradoxes around the question of when and how difference should turn into sameness or be tolerated or be integrated into “oneness.” In the case of Amit, for example, although the everyday politics of hoşgörü may open up new spaces of political re-presentation for Turkey’s religious minorities, it also locates these subjects within an ambiguous position both operating on the peripheries of national citizenship and performing as key figures in the country’s pluralism as staged for domestic and European audiences.

Another paradox concerns the new secularity that this pluralist nationalism embodies. By taking religious singing out of its cultural home, the place of worship or other religious context, the Choir turns it into something that needs to be identified as either “religious” or “cultural,” yet simultaneously makes this identification almost impossible. Through its format and the affective and aesthetic qualities of its concert performances, the Choir objectifies the different and at times incommensurable musical traditions of different denominations of different religions as (if) they are equally representable elements of the nation and its new secularity.

It is clear that such representation of religion is not itself a religious practice even for the most devout members of the Choir—yet to name such representation as simply “cultural” also disconcerts many participants in the project who invoke their religious affiliations as the basis of their participation. The incorporation of religious difference into national sameness without denying a visible presence to religion (as has been effected by previous, secularist projects in Turkey) demands a sense of collective living that includes but also transgresses the particularities of both religion and culture. This is where the concept of hoşgörü becomes key. Its socially grounded connotations of openness and togetherness become mobilized by political actors to represent a nation composed of a (Sunni) Muslim majority and clearly divided Christian and
Jewish and (Shi’a) Muslim minorities. In this context, the Antakya Choir of Civilizations symbolizes an appropriate, that is, an acceptable—or tolerable—way of re-presenting the religious self in public.

The question of how to approach the temporary replacement of an Alawi choir member by a Sunni one indexes a deeper paradox, one that alludes to the gap between the abstract ideas about human sameness and the concrete experience of difference on the ground. The incident itself reveals how, despite its local meanings, the politics of hoşgörü converges with liberal discourses of tolerance, pluralism or inter-faith dialogue in that “while seeming to embrace humanity as a whole, [it] often demarcate[s] otherness” (Mittermaier 2010a:181). Hochgörü as such does not explicitly exclude the other/within, but integrates it into its definition in politically less challenging ways, as a colour, or, as suggested by one of my Jewish interlocutors, “a decoration.”

In this context, the Otherness of ethno-religious minorities is not overcome. On the contrary, it is fixed and reified insofar as people are constantly invited to identify themselves with clearly defined categories of representation through re-presentation. They perform the tolerant and tolerated citizens of Turkey on the basis of their religious affiliation, and they re-present their transcendence of this through costume and the overall aesthetic of the performance which paradoxically only confirms that which is transcended. It is this reification that transforms religious categories into bounded and countable—and thus transcendable and even substitutable—entities, allowing some to disguise themselves as others within a context framed as “play” or “show.”

Forms of daily interaction in the city market, during neighbourly visits, at prayers, and even in the Choir settings in Antakya do not necessarily follow liberal models of peaceful co-existence
that “prescribe an engagement across difference instead of trying to understand interactions as they unfold in the world” (Mittermaier 2010a:182). Yet neither are the religious and national identities generated by new public appearances of religion necessarily congruent with the liberal political models of inter-religious dialogue, pluralism, and tolerance. The members of the Choir all have their own agendas and interpretations, their communal perspectives and individual criticisms of the organization. What holds them together is not simply tolerance or mutual respect, but the material relationships, conflicts, and negotiations they have with one another inside and outside of the Choir setting. In the following chapters, I delve more into how these material relationships unfold outside, in the less circumscribed realms of social life, starting with Antakya’s historical souk.
3 “Business Knows no Religion”: Antakya’s Souk and Beyond

The wave of heat known as the Biber Sicakları (Pepper Heat) arrives with the start of September. This is the only time of the year that the famous Antakyan wind stops blowing. It is also the time when red chili peppers, grown in the hinterland of the city and sold at the weekly bazaars or from carts by street peddlers, give new colour to the streets that I take to go to the souk. Women, mostly housewives, lay the peppers out on their roofs and their courtyards or string them from their balconies to dry. Today, as I walk towards the covered streets of the souk where I seek refuge from the sun and the heat, my nose and throat feel the burning of peppers, perhaps being ground in a small shop or a courtyard to serve as paprika or paste to be used over the next year.

Because the month of Ramadan has just ended, the souk has gone back to its normal routine. It is neither as empty as it was during the Ramadan fast, this year during the hot and long days of August, nor as busy as it was on the last days of Ramadan before the Eid holiday feast, when crowds of visitors and street vendors made it almost impossible to pass and most shops were open until three in the morning.64 People walk in all directions along the narrow and winding alleys or the courtyards of mosques that connect the main parallel streets of the souk to one another; they stand or amble in groups and stare into shop windows, and the sound of Arabic as well as Turkish filters through open shop doors.65

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64 Most Sunnis and a large section of Alawis in Antakya fast, while Alevis do not. Since the holy occasion is determined as a national holiday, it also takes on a non-denominational character, with time off work, family get-togethers, etc., and certainly includes the commercial trappings associated with celebration.

65 Throughout my visits to the souk, I heard Arabic especially in contexts of bargaining. Elderly people from the Arabic-speaking communities of Antakya seemed to be comfortable using Arabic to do things like complain about the price of what they wanted to buy, and would just throw some Turkish words into the conversation, a feature of Antakyan Arabic. Speaking Arabic in public was less common among the youth (see Introduction). A young Orthodox friend who was employed in his uncle’s shop in the gold bazaar told me that he and his friends alike owed their Arabic to working in the souk and having to speak and bargain with customers in Arabic rather than to their family lives. In that sense, the souk can be seen as one of the few remaining places in Antakya where Arabic is an
I usually enter the souk from its south entrance after passing through a smaller passageway lined with shops that sell pickled food, soaps, gifts, clothing, and jewelry, including a silver shop run by Ayşe and Ibrahim, an Orthodox Christian couple. Ayşe is alone today, Ibrahim in the workshop upstairs. Unlike in the past, when the jewelers would buy their wares from local artisans or craft the pieces themselves, workshops like Ibrahim’s are nowadays used more for repairs. It costs less to buy and transport mass-produced jewelry from Istanbul, Maraş and even India than to make it in the workshops of Antakya.\footnote{In 2003, an urban Christian participant in the gold business remembered jewelry production thus: “We were the first to bring the cylinder to press gold in 1928. It was my uncle who first brought and used it. In the past, there was no heavy industry. You needed to liquefy the metal to turn it into jewelry, which was very hard to do in those years. There were bellows and melting pots. People would put the metals in coal and melt it with their own hands. Then they would pour them onto an iron stick and produce the bracelets, necklaces and so on. It was like that until 1930s, maybe 1936. Then new cylinders started to come from Europe” (quoted in Emiroğlu et al. 2006:260)}

Ayşe has been helping her husband in the store for about five years, since the family returned from Alanya (a touristic city on Turkey’s Mediterranean coast, some 250 miles west from Antakya), where they had run a gold jewelry store (kuyumcu) for seven years. Before moving to Alanya, Ibrahim had a workshop where he made and repaired gold jewelry for jewelry stores in the gold bazaar, most of which were owned and run by urban Christians. Wishing to sell the jewelry he himself made, and lacking the capital and desire to compete with his already established jeweler customers, he accepted his cousin’s offer to open his own store in Alanya. Selling jewelry required different skills than making it, however, and they returned to Antakya, this time to open a silver shop, as even raw gold had become too expensive to buy. I later learned

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integral part of social interaction. In the nearby Alawi and Christian villages, on the other hand, Arabic is still the main language spoken, in all settings.
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that the shift from gold to silver is a common practice among unsuccessful jewelers in the souk’s
gold bazaar.

Ayşe was 17 when she married Ibrahim and came to Antakya as a young bride from a Christian
village in the Samandağ region of Hatay. She had never worked outside the home until the
family’s years of economic hardship upon their return from Alanya. At first, they had rented a
big store in the souk with its own workshop and kitchen, where Ayşe would cook lunch for her
husband and their assistant, an Alawi boy from a nearby village. Things changed with Ibrahim’s
decision to contribute to the construction of the family apartment with his mother and two
brothers.67

The contractor the family had hired disappeared, and, unable to recover their investment and pay
their share to the new contractor, Ayşe and Ibrahim closed the business. After a year of
unemployment they rented a store, where they are now. Since they could not afford an assistant,
Ibrahim allowed Ayşe to stay longer hours in the store, and they ended up arranging their
working hours in a more structured way. These days, Ayşe minds the shop while Ibrahim does
the repairs; Ibrahim is in the shop in the morning and evening, when Ayşe takes care of
housekeeping.

Today, Ayşe seems worried. In between the customers coming and going, she tells me that they
are losing money on sales and what they earn from repairs barely covers her costs in the kitchen.
When I ask why she thinks the business is poor, she accuses her husband’s cousin, who opened
two silver shops in the same passageway after they had opened theirs. “Not even one,” she says,

67 While extended family cohabitation can still be found among lower class inhabitants and immigrants from nearby
villages in old Antakya townhouses, it is more common now for people to live in small, family apartment blocks,
with nuclear families in separate flats. These buildings are usually four-to five storey concrete buildings built on
family-owned land with the communal investment of different family members.
with a glowering look in her eyes, “Two! Can you believe it? If he was a stranger, I’d understand it. But this is your own uncle’s son. He knows how we suffered—he suffered the same. As if there’s nowhere else in all of Antakya. This is just wrong. People you call family should help you, not stab you in the back! [Akraba dediğin sana destek olur, arkandan kuyunu kazmaz].”

At that moment, a customer came in asking for a bracelet that she had left for repair. As Ayşe phones Ibrahim to ask about the bracelet, I take a look at the pendant designs on the stand in front of me and become especially interested in the section where crosses of different sizes are located right next to the Zülfikar sword (the fictional representation of the sword of Ali), amulets, the Arabic script “Bismillahirrahmanirrahim” (the primary Islamic invocation, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful), and the crescent and star symbols of the Turkish flag. When the customer leaves, I ask Ayşe and Ibrahim, who had come down to bring the bracelet, whether these pendants are popular with customers. “Each has its own customer,” Ibrahim replies, “they sell like the others.” I ask whether they have any versions of the entwined cross, crescent and star of David, which I know is made by Apo, another Orthodox jewelry maker in the gold bazaar (see Chapter 2 and below). Ayşe becomes interested, saying it might be a good idea to attract new customers and save the business, but Ibrahim is not impressed: “Maybe the tourists would be interested in buying that kind of stuff, but locals? I don’t think so. A Muslim will refuse to wear a necklace with a cross, Christians will not want a Jewish or a Muslim symbol and so on. It will have a very limited market.”

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I had met Ibrahim’s cousin before this conversation, and indeed, he too was in the gold business prior to switching to silver. When I visited Antakya a year later, in the summer of 2012, Ayşe and Ibrahim’s store was gone (and the cousin’s two stores still in business).
In his examination of the Sefrou souk in Morocco in the 1960s and 1970s, Clifford Geertz approached the bazaar economy as a cultural micro-world embodying the mosaic pattern of “Middle Eastern” social organization, described as “cosmopolitanism in the streets and communalism in the home” (Geertz 1979:141). This mosaic, he claimed, comprises “a great heterogeneous collection of individuals sorted out partly by trade” in the form of occupational types, and partly by attributive and ethnic-like identity, called nisba types (i.e. affinity generated by language, religion, kinship, residence, birthplace, etc.), and relating to each other in intricate and crosscutting ways (Geertz 1979:150). Religious truth, in this system, is “so little subject to argument and so little responsive to temporal concerns that it ought not to hinder practical activities” (Geertz 1979:141). The diverse structure of the souk is instead handled through social processes of differentiation and interfusion: men are separated by their dissimilitude in matters of marriage, diet, worship, and education, and they are connected despite, through, and even by their differences in matters of work, friendship, politics, and trade.

Building on Geertz’s portrayal of the bazaar economy as a heterogeneous and “distinctive system of social relationships,” this chapter focuses on Antakya’s historical souk as another site of encounter where diverse people meet, form intimate networks of exchange, and relate to material goods as symbols, commodities, and sources of income. As Ayşe and Ibrahim’s chequered business history alludes to, these activities are facilitated and precluded by myriad socio-economic considerations ranging from family connections and rivalry, to supply and demand.

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69 The Turkish term for market—“çarşı”—is mostly used in official and daily language—included also in “Uzun Çarşı,” naming the city’s main (longest) arcade/covered market street (and also the most commonly used name for the whole souk). Here, I use the more familiar English (Arabic/Hebrew origin) “souk” (which Arabic-speaking Antakyans also sometimes use) for the site as a whole and the term “bazaar” for the (market) subsections of the souk.
They constitute a vernacular secularity wherein, as one interlocutor put it, “Business knows no religion.”

This secularity, however, demands that we understand the bazaar economy not as simply “distinct” or isolated from, but as shaping and shaped by border, industrial, and neoliberal economies against the backdrop of shifting regimes of governance. Socio-economic relationships within and beyond the market space of the souk involve both intermediary, intimate, and nisbatype networks and the impersonal interactions and processes of commodification that emerge with a capitalist market economy. They shape the souk’s physical, social, and representational spaces in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways. This is evident in the challenges faced by Ayşe and Ibrahim, which have paved the way for Ayşe’s entrance to the souk space in the first place. As I will show, this multi-layered relationship also structures the contemporary discourses that invoke the souk’s multi-denominational space under Ottoman rule as part of the neo-Ottoman and neo-liberal vision of economy.

Ethnographic attention to daily conduct in the souk also complicates the doctrine of separate spheres and the public-private quandaries that have been so central to the secular definitions of religion, family, gender hierarchies, and economics. In his important work *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor (2007) speaks of three realms of social self-understanding that characterize secular modernity in the West, namely the economy, the public sphere, and the sovereign people

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70 Ethnographic studies looking at the relationship between religion and economy, related to gifting, charity, market, and exchange (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Maurer 2005; Mittermaier 2014; Muehlebach 2012; Rudnyckyj 2009) question the divide between secular and religious in theorizing modern economic activities as well. In the context of Turkey, one can also list the recent literature investigating the link between Islam and neoliberal market economies (Özyürek 2006; Tuğal 2009; Walton 2013).
Unlike pre-modern hierarchical social organizations, which necessitated intermediary and personal networks such as kinship relations, religious or corporatist foundations (churches, guilds, etc.), or patronage links, these new realms, Taylor claims, are characterized by “a sociability of strangers” (Warner 2002). People relate to them horizontally, with direct and immediate access, and according to idealized notions of “equality,” “choice,” and “individualism.”

In this chapter, while attending to the realm of economy in its modern sense—referring to “an interlocking set of activities of production, consumption and exchange” (Taylor 2007:181)—I take issue with the view that it is separate from other realms of sociability in Antakya. By attending to the overlapping spaces of religious practices, economic activities, and family relationships across and along religious boundaries in the souk, I trouble the public-private distinction in two different but interrelated senses. The first concerns the spatial differentiations between home, the workplace, and places of worship. The second is about the modes of activity, types of interaction or distinctive institutions that are often associated with these places. My

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71 This analysis can be considered an addition, from a liberal point of view, to earlier attempts to conceptualize secular modernity in the Western world, which have focused on the rise of the social contract separating Church and State in the 17th and 18th centuries following religious wars in Europe. Writing on Jewish emancipation from the Christian German state, for example, Karl Marx claimed that the emergence of “civil society” as a distinct realm from political life was also “the division of the human being into a public man and a private man, the displacement of religion from the state into civil society” (1978[1844]:10). Max Weber (1905), meanwhile, interested in the relationship between religious life and earthly economic activity as two independent variables, traced an “elective affinity” between the emergence of capitalist “economy” in its modern rational sense and the utilitarian logic and this-worldly asceticism of the Protestant ethic. In Governmentality, Michel Foucault described the emergence of “political economy” as the introduction of the realm of economy to political practice with its own form of rationality beyond natural or divine laws, and detached from the “familial realm” characterized by “men, in their relations to that other kind of things, customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking” (1991:93).

72 One line of argument against this inquiry would be that “the West” that these thinkers write about has a different historical trajectory from that of “the Middle East” where my research can be located, and that the manifestations of secularism, modernity, and nationalism in Turkey cannot be understood in terms of or do not speak to the developments in Europe, except as derivatives, exceptions and alternatives. My response is to situate Turkey, together with the Middle East within what Edward Said (1993) calls “overlapping territories” and “intertwined histories.” I do not view the two territories and their histories as distinct from each other, not only because of the recent forces of globalization or Turkey’s Republican orientation to Europe, but also because of their long history of exchange (including commercial) (see Özyürek 2005 for a similar point).
analysis addresses both, and looks at how the personal ties, bodily movements, and daily negotiations of difference in the souk concur with, yet also exceed, the political and religious identities constituted through spatial and functional dimensions of the public-private distinction.

In what follows, I first provide a detailed description of space of the souk through the lens of a navigating ethnographer. Here, I introduce Antakya’s historical souk as one of my central field sites, where my key interlocutors, including the Choir members introduced in the previous chapter, spend a great deal of their time as storeowners, employees and customers. I relate my movements between the souk’s different stores and from the souk to its surroundings to the vibrant modes of circulation that constitute the souk space. Extending also towards Antakya’s houses, neighbourhoods and places of worship, these movements are used to reveal, after de Certeau (1984), what lies “down below,” and “in between” the public and private spheres.

Then, I pan away to reflect on the souk as the backbone of social, economic, and religious life in Antakya. I discuss the regional ethno-religious division of labour as it unfolds in the souk space and how this division of labour has transformed from the Ottoman period and the French Mandate to the shifting economic and governing regimes of the Turkish Republic. My discussion of these historical transformations engages with the anthropological literature on the bazaar economy, and complicates Clifford Geertz’s portrayal of souk relationality as detached from the institutional regimes of diversity-management. The separation of “spheres” as an institutional endeavour to regulate economic activities and govern populations takes multiple and complicated forms when projected onto actual places, relationships, and objects.

In the last section, I analyze encounters and interactions in Antakya’s souk space, categorized as social intimacy, material culture, and family and gender relations. Here, I delve more into the embodied and emplaced experiences of my interlocutors that connect the souk to its
surroundings through the physical media of bodies, images, and objects. I argue that these experiences imply a heterogeneous realm of encounters that resist the public-private dichotomy in both spatial and functional senses, and are therefore not easily translatable into liberal models of coexistence.

In the context of the dissertation as a whole, this chapter demonstrates how the interplay and incongruities between the symbolic and territorial boundaries across religions, as well as between the sacred and the secular rely on 1) the work of the body: how it occupies, moves, produces, consumes, senses, and interacts within social spheres, 2) the state’s differing levels of involvement in the management of ethnic and religious difference, and 3) gendered relations of intimacy within families and kin groups. By showing how religious difference is negotiated on the ground in relation to the officially and historically drawn boundaries in and beyond the space of the souk, it highlights the already existent modes of togetherness in Antakya, which are often obscured in liberal discourses of tolerance.

### 3.1 The souk as “public” and “domestic”

Leaving the passageway where Ayse and Ibrahim’s store is located, I walk along one of the busiest streets of the souk, which starts as Kunduracılar Çarşısi (Shoe Bazaar) and turns into Tüccarlar Çarşısi (Merchants’ Bazaar) (Figure 6). As I prefer the crowds to the storeowners’ gaze, I choose this route over the parallel Uzun Çarşı (Figure 7). Although the main historical street of the souk and claimed by Antakyans to be “the first bazaar in history,” Uzun Çarşı is often less crowded with its clothing and furniture stores and a few remaining woodwork and
carpentry workshops and stores. The Shoe Bazaar consists of windowed shoe showrooms on the main arcade, with workshops in the back alleys or upper floors.⁷³

In both Uzun Çarşı and the shoe bazaar, the shops are owned predominantly by Sunni merchants, with Alawī and Sunni employees. Yet my interlocutors who work in the souk associate the Uzun Çarşı storeowners with an explicit Islamic stance. This may be because some of them sell the fashionable Islamic dress for women, tesettür, that became a growing sector of the textile industry in Turkey in the 1980s and has accelerated since the late 1990s.⁷⁴

Figure 6. Entrance to the shoe bazaar, on national Independence Day (Zafer Bayramı), August 30th. The display of Turkish flag from the shops is specific to the celebration, but the main passages of the souk have flags permanently hanging from the roof (see Figure 7).

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⁷³ The Hatay Governorship webpage claims the region as the backbone of Turkey’s shoe sector, with 40 per cent of Turkish shoe demand being met from the province; more modestly, the Municipality of Antakya contends that the city meets three per cent of this demand. While Hatay includes the industrial city of Iskenderun, I find the number provided by the Governorship exaggerated.

⁷⁴ The Arabic derived “tesettür” means “covering.” In the Turkish context, it refers to a set of Islamic practices wherein women cover their bodies and head to avoid contact with men. See Gokariksel (2010) and Navaro-Yashin (2002) for a detailed discussion of the ideological and economic implications of marketing tesettür and the imbrication of sartorial politics in neoliberal economies in Turkey in the 1990s and 2000s.
Figure 7. Entrance to Uzun Çarşı, in the fall.

My next stop is Kurşunlu Han (Bullet Caravanserai), the courtyard that connects Uzun Çarşı to the shoe bazaar and lies between the tailor market and the wickerwork bazaar. Established in 1660, Kurşunlu Han originally offered a resting place for merchants traveling along the Silk Road. In the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, it hosted the wholesale businesses and stores of Jewish merchants who sold textiles and dry goods and notions. Ismail is the only Jew left there now, as the others have all died, retired, or migrated to Istanbul or Israel leaving the sector to the newly emerging urban class of Alawis.

On the sign of the empty store across from Ismail’s fabric shop, one can see the faded remnants of the name of the last Jewish merchant, who, apparently, migrated to Istanbul in 2009. Today, the Han has 54 stores, 37 of which are still active, as well as a small mosque. On the second floor of the buildings around the yard, there are also small carpentry and metalworking businesses. Ismail’s shop is located between a glassware store, a gardening store, a tailor shop owned by a
young Alawi man and a little tea shop (çay ocağı) that serves the storeowners of the souk for their own enjoyment and for their complimentary offerings to customers and visitors.

Ismail usually sits on a small wicker bench in front of his shop watching the passersby, conversing with his neighbours, and trying to catch an interested customer. When he sees me, he welcomes me inside the shop and calls for the young boy to bring two glasses of tea. I met Ismail at Choir rehearsals (he had been a member since its foundation). “I think the Choir’s been a real development for this region, a good image for Antakya,” he tells me. “Although my family and friends think I’m crazy to close my store for days to go on tours with the Choir for nothing, I like to be out and about like this. I don’t earn much from this store anyways. It’s more like a teselli, a way of spending the day with others, my friends and neighbours.”

Born in Antakya in 1949, Ismail graduated from an institute of art but returned to the family business to work with his grandfather, the first in Ismail’s family to own a store in the Han. The third generation in the business, he has been working in the store for about 45 years, although when telling me his life story, he regretted his decision to stay in the store.

Ismail: The biggest mistake I made, from a business perspective, was not to leave this Han and open stores in and outside the souk. In the past, this Han was the centre of commerce; we did not see the need. But the development of ready-made clothing, and the opening of businesses outside of the souk killed the future of our business. The souk is still lively and busy. But as you see, the Han is empty. Some say that I should sell the store, but what am I going to do if I sell it? Go sit at home and fight with my wife? At least here I feel useful and if I sell one roll of

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75 From Arabic origins, the Turkish word “teselli” translates to English as “consolation” or “condolence” and is often used in contexts of a difficulty or anxiety, which also complies with one Arabic meaning of the term. In Antakya, I noticed that people use it to refer to contexts that did not necessarily address a particular difficulty in life, but was used as a more general term to refer to a state of being free from suffering and to making one’s life pleasant with company.
fabric a day, that covers the electricity and phone bills of the store. That satisfies me.

Seçil: Do you mean competition increased with the opening of new stores outside the souk?

Ismail: I’m not sure. Maybe it didn’t change a lot of things. Our customer is a particular kind. Our customer comes here because they know us, and they are used to us [bizi tanıyanlar, bize alısanlar gelir], not the outsiders who pass through here by chance. They buy their fabric from here, and then bring it to a tailor they know to turn it into whatever they want. But this is not going to be the case in the future.

Today, Ismail reveals to me another reason why the future worries him and possibly the others who own stores in the yard. In collaboration with the Hatay Governorship and the Directorate of Culture and Tourism in Antakya, the Secretary General of Provincial Administration is planning to renovate Kurşunlu Han, and instead of giving the stores back to their owners after renovation, they want to turn it into a tourist centre with handicraft stores and art galleries.

A renovation would certainly be great for our businesses, but they force us to sell our shares. We may end up hiring a lawyer. I am ok even if they rent the place to me, that I no longer own it. But if they kick us out, that would be terrible.

The empty stores that catch my attention in the gold bazaar signal a similar process for this quieter part of the souk, as well. I hear that a renovation project that will modernize the gold bazaar is upcoming and the Mayor of Antakya has paid a visit to the souk to discuss the details. The remaining Orthodox Christian storeowners in the gold bazaar who inherited the businesses from their fathers seem to be more worried about how they will make a profit in the process of renovation than about the potential displacement that may come afterwards. Their numbers and presence in Antakya may be decreasing, but not as drastically as those of the Jewish community,
and the gold business is still the main sector in which urban Christians in Antakya are involved.\footnote{Gold jewelry is not simply a luxury item, but plays a significant role in the gift economy between families, and especially in alliances between marrying couples and their families. At weddings, guests give their gifts in the form of gold coins, bracelets or other jewelry, while recipients or their families keep track in order to be able to reciprocate correctly later. Gold also remains a trusted way of saving money. The significance of the gold business and social relations around it should be understood in this context.}

One of the descendants of a prominent Christian family in Antakya claims that the historical gold bazaar (Kuyumcular Çarşı) was established in the 1870s by his ancestors who came from Aleppo and bought about 25 stores at what was then just a caravanserai. Over time, these stores became divided among new families and kin members of this family, “my paternal cousins, my grandfather’s brothers, my uncles and so on” (Kasaba 2006:237), as it attracted other Christian jewelry makers to town. Today, the bazaar is a covered area with three gates opening out to different streets, which are all closed after 8pm.\footnote{The opening hours of gold jewelry stores are subject to governmental regulation.} There are about 59 businesses in this area: 28 jewelry shops that are still active, about 10 workshops that produce and repair for these shops, a store selling food and a few unregistered brokerage businesses that provide service to the jewelers who want to convert their customer’s credit card payments and foreign currency into Turkish lira.

The organization of space and its location make it clear that the gold bazaar is less for passersby than for customers who go there specifically to buy and sell. The stores inside the gold bazaar are smaller than those outside and do not have much space. While the customers are both men and women, and although there is one store run by a married Orthodox Christian woman who inherited the business because her father did not have any sons, the place is very male-
dominated. The men in the gold bazaar gossip a lot about each other and their customers. “It’s like one big family,” one of them tells me, “people here are not just competitors; they are also related in one way or another, through marriage, family or just being part of the same community, so even if they fight like people do in their own families, they also support each other when necessary.” That support is evident in a minor event in Apo’s workshop today.

Apo is an Orthodox jewelry maker, an active member (the main singer, in fact) of the Catholic Church, and a former member of the Choir. He has worked in the souk for 35 years, since he was six, when his father sent him to be an intern in his uncle’s workshop. Although his mother wanted him to continue his studies, he became a full time worker in the souk after graduating from high school. He now works with a partner, a Sunni jewelry maker who made it into the gold bazaar through this partnership four years ago, replacing Apo’s second cousin with whom Apo did not get along. Apo’s clients are mostly the jewelers in the bazaar and the silver shop that will be my next stop, although he also has some direct customers, people, he says, who have known him since he was a child and come to ask for jewelry repairs, or to have their children’s ears pierced.

As I sit and watch Apo repairing a gold chain while we chat about the Choir, a young employee of one of the shops in the bazaar enters and asks if he has time to talk. Apo glances at me and excuses himself to leave the shop for five minutes. I see them in intense discussion on the street corner. When he comes back, I notice a look of relief in Apo’s face, which I take as a sign that the issue is not as serious as he feared. He starts telling me about it with a sentence that I have heard from others working in the souk, men speaking of themselves or women speaking of their

78 On a number of occasions, for example, I was surprised to find out that my Orthodox Christian interlocutors in other places knew about my trip to the gold bazaar and which stores I had visited that day.
husbands: “Here, people love me and respect me a lot and this is why they consult with me about problems they have with each other or with customers.”

The problem concerns a jeweler and his client, who are also related through extended family. The client wants to buy a gold set from the jeweler to give to the bride during a wedding to which the jeweler is also invited. Instead of coming to buy the set, which is worth a considerable sum, she phones the jeweler to ask him to bring it to the wedding night and promises to pay another time. Reluctant to do this, but also worried about losing her trust, the jeweler sends his employee to hear Apo’s opinion. I ask him what he advised:

I don’t think there’s a choice here. He should do what she wants. In the past, jewelers were really powerful even taking care of each other’s business and sending customers to other shops in the bazaar if they’d already earned enough. Now, there’s so much competition. There are these stores outside the gold bazaar, the peasants who were our good customers are no longer wealthy and our customers from the city bargain more but buy less. You can’t afford to lose those who are loyal to you.

While some in the souk hold on to their old and safe networks to survive the economic transformations, others adjust to the requirements of contemporary times. Now that the government is investing in Antakya, now that the city has an airport and a new shopping mall, a new reputation as “the city of tolerance” and more tourists, some merchants take the risk of establishing new networks with other types of customers. Ethem is one of these. After he dropped out of medical school in Beirut in the early 2000s, he came back to Antakya to expand his father’s silver business that the family had started after failing in the gold business. Instead of conforming to the old style of “Make, sell, get a name!” [Yap sat, isim kazan!], as Ethem puts it, he chose to change his “vision” to, “Buy, sell, earn money!” [Al, sat, para kazan!]. This shift
meant more investment in mass-produced items using the name that the family had already earned to expand beyond familial and communal networks, providing a wide range of options for a variety of customers and making good use of the new trends and ideologies.

In the past there was a clear division of labour in the souk: Christians were craftsmen (zanaatkar), Sunnis were artisans (el işçisi), Alawis were peasants, and Jews were tradesmen. Now anybody can do anything, so you have to do something different to attract more customers. Business recognizes no religion.

Ethem now has five silver shops in Antakya: four in the busiest street of the souk, and one in a popular street outside. He has contracts with tourist guides who bring visiting groups to his store in exchange for a small commission, and he sells a wide range of products from the recent symbols of entwined cross, crescent, and star of David to Ottoman style jewelry popularized by a new Turkish TV series about the rule of Sultan Suleiman.

Ethem does not completely reject the old style, however, and this becomes his way of differentiating himself from the numerous newcomers to the business. He tries to maintain relationships with his customers, attends to each of them personally, offers them refreshments, and so on. Because he is so occupied with customers, I find it hard to have long conversations with him and instead enjoy the company of his longest serving employee, a convert to Catholicism from Alawism who often teases/criticizes Ethem for not attending church. “Those

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79 The distinction between zanaatkar and el işçisi (lit. hand workers) here implies a valuation between high skilled and low skilled artisanship on the basis of the quality of act and product. By referring to the Muslims as handicraft workers as opposed to Christian craftsmen like himself, Apo is reinforcing not only an economic and religious but also a moral difference between two communities.

80 On a few occasions, I witnessed customers coming in and asking for the rings or earrings of particular protagonist of this show.
who have committed sin should go to church [Günahı olan gitsin kiliseye],” Ethem responds. “My religious duty is here, it is to my job, to my customers, and to myself.”

Today, an old man in shabby clothes enters Ethem’s store after me, and thrusts out a censer towards me saying something I do not understand. Seemingly entertained by my cluelessness, Ethem tells the man to do it to him. After gesturing towards him with the censer a couple of times, the old man takes the coins he is given, leaves the store and goes to the clothing shop across from us. Ethem explains that this is a religious service that people in the souk receive in exchange for helping this poor man. The sacred incense is believed to purify its recipient. When I ask what people usually do in response, he says, “You can read al-Fatiha, or make the sign of the cross. I mean, you pray to God and ask for forgiveness in accordance with the rules of your religion.”

After I leave Ethem’s store, I head for the last stop of my souk visit, Emine’s workshop, located in the annex of the historical souk, an area which has developed and expanded over the last ten or fifteen years. In order to get there, I have to pass by shops specializing in goods ranging from herbs and spices and nuts through glassware and curtains and electronics to underwear and headscarves and perfume. In contrast to the many shops that I visit in the souk, Emine’s tailoring workshop is a relaxed environment, where I can sit for hours chatting with her and her 30-year-old daughter and assistant Leyla without feeling like an intruder. The workshop is hidden in a dead-end passage and rarely stumbled upon by chance.

Emine’s main customers are the owners of the few houseware stores in that part of the souk, with whom she has limited interaction. People she knows sometimes come with personal requests, but they do not require any special attention and often sit and join our conversation. Emine spends most of her time working on curtains and bed linen brought to her by the apprentices of the
houseware stores, while Leyla assists, measuring and preparing the cloth for sewing. Emine complains about sitting all day while for Leyla the problem is standing. The dull, repetitive tasks are lightened and enlivened by the jokes they make about their job, their neighbours and clients in the souk, about Antakyans as a general category, or about recent developments in Antakya and in Turkey. In fact, they talk about anything with a humorous tone as if they are performing in the presence of an audience. What lies behind the joke is the need to make ends meet in the absence of a male breadwinner in the family by spending 12 hours a day, six days a week in this workshop. But they still prefer their life in Antakya to Istanbul where they lived until the death of Emine’s husband.

One of today’s topics of conversation is the Istanbul neighbourhood the family used to live in, which houses members of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. Emine starts a sentence—“It was the first time I saw a street in Turkey full of bearded men in those heavy coats and the baggy trousers and women in full black veil”—which Leyla completes—“and we asked ourselves, ‘Did we go back in time’?” She then adds, “We don’t need to watch movies about the Ottoman times that everyone is crazy about these days. We lived in it, there is nothing to emulate.” As we laugh, more at the manner in which the conversation takes place than at its content, I look at the little tilted pictures of Atatürk, the Caliph Ali, and the evil-eye bead taped to the wall above Emine’s old-style sewing machine. Sometime later, Emine’s souk neighbour Nalan shows up at the entrance to take a break from work. She asks what we are laughing at, to which Emine responds, “Nothing, just the usual!”

Nalan is a pious and covered Sunni woman who sells tesettür clothing for women like herself at the other entrance of the passage where Emine’s workshop is located. Whenever I take this passage on my way to Emine’s workshop, I notice in her store a number of women, mostly in
tesettür clothing, sitting and chatting with Nalan. I take her short visit to Emine’s workshop as an opportunity to ask if these guests are all her customers. “At first everyone here thought of them as my customers,” she responds. “I would say, some are customers, but most are friends and acquaintances, old neighbours, new neighbours, relatives, and whoever else you can think of. Whenever they come to the souk for shopping, they make sure to visit me.” Then she glances back at her store and notices another group of women approaching for whom she leaves us to ourselves again. “This one is another type,” Emine says, and Leyla smilingly agrees, “She’s weird a lot of the time, she thinks everyone’s gossiping behind her, as if anybody cares. But she’s the only person in this passage we get along well with—opposites attract, you see.”

Maybe because of the conversation we were having before Nalan’s arrival, but also because I had listened to this mother and daughter speak many times before about their love for Atatürk and his secularist ideals (a love that many Alevis in Turkey share), I take this opposition to be a political one between secularism and Sunni Islam that speaks to but is not reducible to the religious identity of these women. The joke this time resides in the irony of getting along well with an imagined political enemy when it comes to daily interaction, yet there is nothing in the way it is expressed that suggests that Emine or Leyla experience that as a contradiction.

I had interviewed Nalan a month before this encounter and learned that she has worked in different parts of the souk since she was 11 years old, mostly helping the storeowners with the transportation of certain items and sometimes money. When I asked what her family thought about her working at such a young age, she said, “If you come from a poor family, everybody has to work. My family was conservative, but we needed anything we could get for the money to

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81 See Olsson, Özdalga and Raudvere (1998), Shankland (2003), Tambar (2010) and Walton (2013) for a detailed explanation of the nature of the Alevi attachment to Atatürk and his ideals. Although there are significant religious differences between Arab Alawis and Turkish Alevis, they share similar political commitments as Turkish citizens.
find something to eat in the evenings!” Yet she also made it clear to me that her being in a space full of men did not ruin her moral values and honour, and instead made her realize men’s deceitfulness, bad faith, and lack of morals. This was why, she claimed, she never wanted to marry.

Before renting her store fourteen years ago, she had worked as an office assistant in a number of establishments ranging from pharmacies and doctors’ and lawyers’ offices to bottled gas sellers. For a while, she had traveled between Antakya and Istanbul, selling Antakya’s local products in Istanbul and bringing back ready-made tesettür clothing to sell to her acquaintances in Antakya, a practice that paved the way for the start of her current business. Today she is the only working person in her household: her other sisters are married and have their own families. She lives with her sick mother whom she has to look after, being the only unmarried daughter.

One thing she does not like about her clothing business is bargaining with customers, which is central to most social interactions between buyers and sellers in the souk. She finds it ethically wrong to put a price label on her products higher than their value, a usual negotiating gambit. “It’s deception,” she contends. “I’ll lower the price as much as I can but because of these liars, some people are never happy with the deal I offer since they’re used to paying half the price of what’s on the label.” Another issue she talks about is Antakya’s new image. While she thinks it is a good thing at the abstract level, she is also aware that the new investments in Antakya and the increasing number of people visiting the city are the reason why the rents and living expenses are also increasing, making life harder for her and others around her.

As I start my walk back to the guesthouse in the hope that the evening has brought some coolness to the city, the souk seems more crowded than before, full of faces. There are the tired or glazed expressions of storeowners seated outside of their stores, the welcoming smiles of their
apprentices, the adult-like faces of child-workers running from one store to another, the curious and slightly nervous looks of passersby, old men, couples, women carrying their toddlers. I cannot help but remember the voice-over in the Hatay promotional video saying, “The colours, sounds, smells and lights of Uzun Çarşı represent the diversity of lives as well as of Hatay’s people. It is an indicator of commitment to life.”

Figure 8. Workshops hidden behind a rolling shutter door in Uzun Çarşı

During my fieldwork, I visited the souk almost every business day, spending anywhere from half an hour to a few hours in each store, depending on the situation. The stores that I describe above were my main stops on these visits, but there were others that also shaped my overall understanding of the heterogeneous nature of the souk space. In these visits, I did not always go as the researcher and often times went as a resident shopping or else just endeavouring to maintain my relationships in the souk.

Drawing on my visits to the souk in Antakya and interaction with some of its actors, I suggest that there are at least three realms of encounters through which we can question the modernist understandings of the social space as “organized around contrasting and incompatible moral
principles that are conventionally linked to either public or private: community vs. individual, rationality vs. sentiment, money vs. love, solidarity vs. self-interest” (Gal 2002:78). I categorize these realms as 1) social intimacy, 2) material culture, and 3) the gendered realm of family and home. Each of these realms has its own distinct characteristics, yet all embody the societal inter-articulation of religious, economic, and political life. In order to understand how the conditions of collective living in Antakya complicate the private-public category distinction, one needs to be familiar with the multi-layered manifestations of historical change, ethno-religious division of labour, and shifting regimes of governing diversity and economics in the souk space.

### 3.2 Situating the Antakya Souk in Space and Time

Once an important node of several overland trade and pilgrimage routes connecting the port of Alexandretta and Asia Minor to the markets in Aleppo and Damascus, Antakya’s souk continued to be the centre of economic and social activity for local Antakyans and the villagers living in Antakya’s hinterland after Hatay’s annexation. Located in the heart of Antakya’s old quarter on the east bank of the Asi River, the souk has more than 2060 shops. These represent distinct commercial trades and workshops for crafts such as knife- and jewelry-making, copper- and ironwork, carpentry and wicker-work, felt-making, tanning, and shoemaking, weaving and tailoring. As such, the area is an amalgamation of smaller bazaars named after the commodity that was historically produced and/or sold there, passageways and caravanserais built between the 16th century and the current era.

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82 From list of registered shop owners in Antakya provided by the Antakya Chamber of Trade and Industry) [http://www.dokumanlar.antakyatso.org.tr/2013TumUyeListesi.pdf](http://www.dokumanlar.antakyatso.org.tr/2013TumUyeListesi.pdf); thus not including unregistered shops, street vendors, etc.
Historically, both the contents and boundaries of the souk have been fluid. Antakya’s demographic changes and socio-economic and political transformations have seen the souk enlarged over time towards nearby residential areas, change character due to general developments in retail trade, become less vibrant with the emergence of competing retail centres, and then again undergo renewal (with the tourist market and regional economic development) and renovation (as indicated, above). Certain trades have moved within as well as out of the souk and some have disappeared; caravanserais have changed complexion, for example, turning into gold or textile bazaars in the 20th century; workshops have moved from central alleys to residential areas or become warehouses with the emergence of industrial manufacturing, accelerated urbanization, and the consequent decline in artisanal and small-scale manufacturing, as in the case of the jewelers’ workshops; standardized goods have become more common, both in the traditional bazaars generally and with new individual shops selling mass-produced and packaged items such as electronics and health and beauty products, with glassware from China, for example, and jewelry from India. Despite all these shifts, the grid system of and around the bazaars has remained more or less constant, maintaining the souk’s spatial continuity with the past.

The souk is busiest on Saturdays and evenings, while most of its stores are closed on Sundays, the official day-off (even though it is common in other districts for shops to open on what is a busy day for retail trade). Although numbers fluctuate widely, the bazaar complex attracts thousands of visitors daily and still employs a substantial number of the city’s labour force—Antakya has a long history as a city of small merchants (in contrast to Iskenderun, Hatay’s highly industrialized port-city). While one can easily come across local, Syrian, and European

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83 Referring to the period of my fieldwork when the border conflict between Turkey and Syria was less severe.
tourists, along with European Antakyans on summer visits to their hometown, the main visitors to the souk are the local inhabitants of Antakya who prefer its lower priced goods over which they can still bargain, to the products of more recent and modern stores, branches of local and national companies, and supermarkets in different parts of the town.

This may be why the merchants in the souk whom I met during my fieldwork were not very worried about the upcoming opening of Antakya’s first shopping mall in October 2011 by a German-Turkish development company. “My customers,” explained one, “they are the type who will go there to walk around and enjoy themselves and then will come back here to bargain and buy.”84 This statement resonated with the way in which Apo, Ismail, and Nalan described the identity of their customers, but was also repeated by people like Ethem who were seeking to expand their appeal to new and unfamiliar customers.

In such accounts, as well as the relationships that I witnessed in my daily visits to the souk, one can find much of what Geertz described as characteristic of the “bazaar economy”:

An extreme division of labour and localization of markets, heterogeneity of products and intensive price bargaining, fractionalization of transactions and stable clientshipp ties between buyers and sellers, itinerant trading and extensive traditionalization of occupation in ascriptive terms—these things do not just co-occur, they imply one another. (Geertz 1978:29–30).

The souk, in this model, was a site of both collectivity and dissimilarity. The division of labour and forms of economic exchange between different occupational, ethnic, religious and kin...
groups were symmetrical, reciprocal and oppositional, rather than hierarchical. In the absence of reliable market information, these groups established continuing and trust-based relationships with each other through repetitive purchase of particular goods and services, and through multidimensional intensive bargaining rather than making searches and price comparisons. As also described by Borneman (2007:109) for the souk of Aleppo, intermediaries, from close kin to unseen local producers, played a key role in the provision and exchange of goods, services, and relationships.

Geertz (1979:152, 168) placed particular emphasis on Jewish and Muslim institutions as intermediaries with differing cultural rather than spiritual effects on earthly economic activity. Muslim institutions not merely sanctioned but historically engaged in trade, through the funding of religious properties, Sufi brotherhoods, and religious elites. Muslims were mostly artisans and valued craft labour, while the Jews were equally divided between commercial and artisanal occupations, and became the intermediaries between the urban and rural Arabic speaking populations. Although Jews mixed with Muslims under uniform rules—or, in Nazaruk’s words, “[danced] together in the market place” (2012:171)—communal interpenetration was limited.

In fact, characterized by hyper-organization, a thoroughgoing plutocracy, and intense piety, and consisting of “a large mass of marginal and semi-marginal operations directly and almost totally dependent on … established financiers,” Jewish paternalism posed a sharp contrast, and almost a response, to the Muslim pattern (Geertz 1979:170). Observed also in many other accounts of the marketplaces in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (Fanselow 1990; Keshavarzian 2007; Östör 1984; Weiss, Westermann, and Balic 1998) and resonating with the romanticized narratives of Antakya’s merchants about “how things were in the past,” this spatio-communal
division of professions and the heterogeneous forms of sociality require, certainly for the current case, a historical explanation further to the structural one provided by Geertz.

When the Antakya souk served as a classical Ottoman market between the 16th and early 20th centuries, its spatial organization reflected different economic niches loosely divided along millet lines in accordance with the Ottoman guild system. The guilds were professional organizations for specific branches of urban economy that fulfilled economic, fiscal, administrative, and social functions under the guidance of their heads (Baer 1970:28; cf. Yildirim 2008). Structured by the exclusiveness of their branches and sub-branches within the boundaries of a specific community, many guilds exercised monopolies and restrictions on specific goods in order to prevent clashes with other guilds and preserve the morals, religion and tradition associated with their members and activities (Baer 1970:151).

While one can draw parallels between this system and the “intermediary networks” that Taylor (2007) attributes to feudal society, these lie less in its ethno-religious division of labour than in the nature of its solidarity networks and religious significance. With occupations and businesses often passed from father to son and dhimmis (non-Muslims) not allowed to perform particular

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85 The spatial localization and specialization of crafts is not peculiarly Ottoman and has been addressed a characteristic of the Muslim Bazaar, for example as observed in the Mamluks (Lapidus 1969). I am hesitant to make such associations for the same reasons that Janet Abu-Lughod (1987) and Andre Raymond (1994) criticize the notion of “Islamic city.” Seeing Islam as the main and essential determinant of a physical space misses historically contingent modes of governance and sociality and too easily complies with the Orientalism of naming in Western knowledge production that simply equates the Middle East with Islam.

86 Baer argues that the Ottoman guilds emerged from the Akhi (religious brotherhood) tradition in the late 15th early 16th centuries as professional organizations, similar to the zawiyas in Geertz’s analysis, and turned into an all-embracing administrative link between the government and the urban population in the 17th and 18th centuries. Although not as professional, comprehensive, and state-regulated, the Akhi organization, which recruited its members from artisans and craftsmen, had existed since the 13th and 14th centuries in Asia Minor, and had similarities to the Islamic Futuwh tradition (Arnakis 1953; Cagatay 1997), was an occupational and moral system based on rules set by Islamic scholars. The association of shoemakers and tanners in Antakya make explicit historical claims to the Akhi tradition. During my fieldwork, for example, I noticed the posters of a conference on the Akhi tradition organized by Antakya’s professional association of artisans and tradesman (Esnaf ve Zanaatkarlar Odasi).
crafts, such as carpet-making, blacksmithing, tanning, and shoemaking (Gibb and Bowen 1963), the guilds of tradesmen (lonca) were often confined to members of the same religious or ethnic community. Moreover, ethnically and religiously homogeneous guilds outnumbered mixed guilds, and for some sectors, there were separate guilds for Muslim and non-Muslim merchants of the same business (Baer 1970:157).

Based on Antakya’s tax registers (tahrir defteri) during the 19th century, the Turkish historian Adem Kara (2005:164–67) provided a detailed list of crafts practiced in Antakya with their distribution according to the different millets. In the tax register of 1829, for instance, there were 27 niches and 733 merchants. All of the 12 jewelers were listed as dhimmi; of 40 bazaar merchants, 18 were listed as Muslim, 12 Christian, and 10 Jewish; of 41 herb and spice sellers, 28 were listed as Muslim, five Christian and eight Jewish; of 30 feltmakers, 20 were Muslim, and 10 Christian; of six tailors, four were dhimmi, two Muslim; 99% of 100 shoemakers were listed as Muslim, along with all of the bakers, tanners, saddlers, butchers, greengrocers, barbers, and coffee-sellers (Kara 2005:170).

Since the Ottoman millet system did not consider Shi’as as a separate millet, these numbers do not show the Sunni and Alawi divisions. Scholars of the region generally consider Alawis to have been mainly agricultural and domestic labourers in the silk and cotton businesses, who, after the settling of Turcoman nomads in the Amouk Valley with the Tanzimat land reforms, became sharecroppers on the lands of newly empowered Turcoman rural elites (Altug 2002; Aswad 1971:19; Satloff 1986:159; Stokes 1998:274). Satloff notes that in 1935 there were no

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87 Another significant administrative feature of the Ottoman guild system is in regards to property rights. Until the 18th century, the pious foundations (waqf) held the proprietorship of the commercial buildings where craftsmen worked. With the increase of governmental debts after this century the Ottoman state started to confiscate foundation properties and appropriate their tax-exempt revenues (Yildirim 2008).
Alawis registered in the entrepreneurial professions, even though they constituted 30 per cent of the French mandated Sanjak of Alexandretta, of which Antakya was the centre. Antakya’s Alawis were also actively involved in retail food production, in particular butchering and baking, while most of the commercial class and high-skilled artisans (e.g., jewelers, masons, and engravers) were dhimmi (Satloff 1986:159, 160).

It may be problematic to assume a perfect correlation between ethnic location and the political and economic models of the Ottoman period. Yet these official numbers do reflect the historical and spiritual structure of the guild system and help us understand the tendency still present among residents of Antakya to be involved in particular trades rather than others. For instance, although Christians are no longer the dominant group in the gold business—comprising only 40 of the 150 registered jewelers, alongside 55 Alawis and 55 Sunnis (the Alawis being the newest to the sector)—still, jewelry remains the main employment/business sector for Christians in the city and continues to be considered as a future career among younger generations, even among those with university degrees in fields such as engineering, archaeology, and medicine.

Manifested spatially and materially in the souk and combined with the general economic prosperity of the region, this ethno-religious division of labour has been addressed as the backbone of what some today refer as Antakya’s “culture of peace” or “tolerance.” Writing against the dominant tendency to view the Middle East as a land of ethnic conflict and religious intolerance, some scholars view this economic structure as the rationale behind the absence of violent conflict among the different communities of Antakya, at least prior to its annexation to Turkey. They state that the region has long been economically self-sufficient (Aswad 1971:10; Dogruel 2010), a self-sufficiency due in part to the impossibility of communal self-sufficiency (Satloff 1998:161). In other words, the ethno-religious division of labour demanded “communal
compromise and cooperation” (Satloff 1998:161) and created economic interdependence for essential goods and services, with commercial activity across as well as within and thus not defined in any way exclusively by ethnic and religious boundaries.  

As far as it applies to the souk, this analysis seems to contrast with Geertz’s argument about client relations of the bazaar economy as being competitive rather than dependency-based, serving “the needs of men at once coupled and opposed” (Geertz 1978:32). Both perspectives, however, present a certain economic determinism that overlooks the significance of the contingent dynamics of governmental regimes of diversity-management as they relate to people’s daily negotiations of difference. The continuities and disjunctions of the traditional modes of stratification in Antakya’s contemporary marketplace render the problems of such negligence even more troubling.

The co-existence and co-implication of past and present forms of socio-economic interaction in Antakya’s souk, the continuing presence of family businesses dominated by particular groups as well as the emergence of new actors in such businesses, the various displacements and replacements, the economic suffering and concomitant moral decline of contemporary times expressed in opposition to a romanticized past, and the new entrances women make into the marketplace—all these and more are informed by political shifts and the changing regimes of governance.

For instance, Hatay’s annexation by Turkey not only separated Antakya from its Syrian hinterland requiring a reorientation of commercial networks on both sides of the new border and

88 Altug (2002:105–106) confirms the presence of trans-ethno-religious coalitions and absence of sectarianism, yet also highlights how such coalitions facilitated intra-communal divisions through inter-generational conflict in big families.
resulting in Antakya’s relative impoverishment (Kasaba 2006:221). It also led to the exodus of its Armenian- and Arabic-speaking non-Muslim populations who had formed the backbone of the city’s commercial class (Pekesen 2006). The statist and exclusionary nationalism of the early Republican era and the state support for the development of a Muslim bourgeoisie with the introduction in 1942 of the Wealth Levy (Varlık Vergisi) that specifically targeted well-off Christians and Jews, the confiscation of the non-Muslim foundation properties, and the legalization of Saturdays as a workday encouraged outmigration by non-Muslims, to Europe in the case of Christians, and to Israel and North America in the case of Jews. Along with the governmental support of industry through import substitution in the 1960s and 1970s, such protectionist measures favoured the state-aligned secular Turkish-Muslim elites and large, family holding-companies, while completely disregarding smaller businesses (Isik 2010; Keyder 1987).

On the other hand, the increased commercialization of resources, mechanization of agricultural techniques, and the government’s relocation of Turkish Sunni populations from northern villages of Turkey to Hatay in the 1960s and 1970 pushed Alawi sharecroppers towards the slums around old Antakya, encouraging some to migrate to the industrial cities of Germany and others to the Arab states of the Persian Gulf as temporary labour migrants (Stokes 1998:281).89 Each Alawi family I met in Antakya had at least one young or middle-aged man who had lived or was still residing in one of these countries and sending money to their families back home, while some Alawi merchants in the souk had opened their businesses with money saved from construction work in Kuwait, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. It was the migrant remittances from Europe and the Middle East to Antakya, in combination with the extensive involvement of younger generations

89 While labour migration to the Arab countries was perceived and lived as temporary, labour and asylum migration of Alawi and Christian families to Western Europe and the Americas (and also Israel by Jews) from the 1970s on tended to be permanent. See Neyzi (2004), on the resulting decline and fragmentation of these communities and ongoing effects of minoritization generally.
of Alawis in the expanded educational and public services of the Turkish state that enabled some Alawi families to emerge from an underclass into a new bourgeoisie in the 1980s, owning the lands they had once worked as sharecroppers in the countryside and joining local landlords and merchants from central Turkey in filling positions in the city—including the souk—opened up by the Christian and Jewish exodus (Aswad 1971:13; Dogruel 2010:635).

The free-market reforms of the post-1980 military coup era marked a neoliberal turn in both the domestic economic policies and electoral policies of Turkey (Tuğal 2009; Walton 2013). The initial reforms included export-oriented growth policies, generous tax rebates and cheap credit to small businesses, rapid privatization of a large number of state industries, and the overturning of import-substitution policies (Isik 2010; Walton 2013). Moreover, as an ideological response to earlier economic policies (above), these reforms tended to benefit small businesses and weaken secular state elites of Sunni background, at least in the short term (Kasaba 2006; Stokes 1998:275).

On the other hand, the small businesses connected to heavy industry and cross-border economies between Turkey and southern neighbours were badly affected by the Iran-Iraq and Gulf Wars and Turkey’s border disputes with Syria (Stokes 1998:266). In addition, the pressure of the market economy and competition with imports from China led to the deterioration and disappearance of local, small-scale traditional manufacturers especially in the textile business (see Ismail’s conflicting narrative about ready-made clothing and the composition of his long-

\[90\] With the modernizing project of the Republican regime that for the most part ignored the souk as a traditional economic system expected to disappear, and made little attempt to invest in or incorporate it in developmentalist agendas, the economic wellbeing of the region became dependent on international political relations and the border economies. A very powerful sector in Antakya (at least until the Syrian uprising), was the cross-border cartage service, with Hatay in the 1990s a vital channel for the export of Turkish manufactured goods and raw materials to Syria/Iraq and passage of Iraqi oil to the West (Stokes 1998:266).
term customers—the disappearance and changing task of jewelry workshops can also be understood in the same context).

One striking outcome of Turkey’s neoliberal turn was the rise of Islamic businessmen in the liberal market economy, who oppose themselves to secularist elites and bureaucrats and support political parties with Islamic agendas (Navaro-Yashin 2002; Özyürek 2006; Pamuk 2008; Tuğal 2009). It would not be wrong to view the election of the AKP in 2002 and its rule of Turkey since as the direct outcome of this successful amalgamation of Islamic ideals with polito-economic neoliberalization (Keyman 2007; Silverstein 2011; Tuğal 2009; White 2012). Further neoliberalization under AKP rule, meanwhile, appealed to “both the emergent Islamic capitalist class through lucrative contracts and business-friendly reforms, and the urban [class] through gracious gestures ingrained in traditional Islamic community values and morality” (Karaman 2013:715). In contrast to the economic liberalization of the 1980s and 90s, it also meant the rapid growth of government investment in construction businesses through its housing development administration (Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı, TOKI), which, while supplying mass apartment/tower block housing, was often oriented towards urban transformation/renewal projects with Islamic characteristics (Demirtas-Milz 2013; Karaman 2013).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the shift in the dominant political discourse during the rule of AKP from an exclusionary nationalism to a pluralist one was inseparable from processes of Islamic neoliberalization. The effect of these processes on Antakya’s cultural, political, and economic environment has been profound.

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91 Studies of neoliberalism show how processes of neoliberalization involve the modeling, regulation, and management of human life and conduct on the basis of principles of market economy (Harvey 2007; Rudnyckyj 2009). An excellent analysis addressing the organic link between ideological and economic neoliberalization by Turkish sociologist Nazan Ustundag (2013) looks at the AKP “democratization package” announced on September 30, 2013, in response to political demands of the Kurds, non-Muslim citizens, Alevi Confederations, and so on. Ustundag brilliantly demonstrates how the very presentation of the package by PM Erdoğan, as well as its content, mimicked that of a fetishized product by a company CEO, with the problems and demands around languages,
landscape was multi-layered. First of all, it meant a reinvigoration and formalization of Antakya’s cross-border commercial ties, with a rapprochement between Turkey and Syria (wherein the 2009 mutual entry visa cancellation, Chapter 1). Although there was never a severe problem for Antakyans in continuing their economic and familial transactions across the border in Syria, people were very happy with this rapprochement in 2010. The increased presence of Syrian tourists in the market was certainly considered beneficial for business. This was still the case until-mid summer of 2011, when most of my interlocutors in Antakya were viewing the Syrian uprisings as a minor tension.

Secondly, there was a representational aspect to this liberalization, evident in the discourse of tolerance, the foundation of the Choir (Chapter 2) and even in the quote I cite above from the promotional video of the souk (“The colours, sounds, smells and lights of Uzun Çarşı represent the diversity of lives as well as of Hatay’s people…”). Yet the impact was also highly material, including not only the increasing presence of shops selling identifiably Islamic goods, such as the tesettür clothing in the souk, but also the municipality- and governorship-sponsored renewal of old Antakya streets and townhouses and the revitalization projects for the historical parts of the souk such as the gold bazaar and Kurşunlu Han. What threatened to dispossess Ismail of his inherited property in Kurşunlu Han did not differentiate along ethno-religious lines, as had been the case with the 1942 Wealth Levy or state sponsored attacks of nationalist mobs against the businesses of non-Muslim merchants in Istanbul and Izmir in 1955. Framed instead as urban

religion, and identities addressed as if these categories were goods competing in the market and valued in accordance to customer satisfaction.
renewal and local development, it was in fact the same process that underlay Ismail’s celebration of ethno-religious identity through the Choir he had belonged to, and whose fame he enjoyed.

Fanselow (1990), drawing on his research in a south Indian town, Kalakkadu, suggests that Geertz’s conception of the bazaar economy, like his predecessors’, glosses over the difference between standardized and substitutable agricultural commodities and those that involve heterogeneous and non-substitutable industrial products. Considering how the Antakya souk mediates multiple networks of interaction between different groups, locations, and temporalities on a regional and global level, I find such omission to be symptomatic of a wider problem: a lack of attention to the heterogeneities and variations on the ground caused by shifts and living traces of political systems and ideologies. The networks in the souk are not only between peddlers, shopkeepers, and peasants or local customers, but also between the different faces, ideologies, and actors of the state.

In his study of Tahran bazaar, Keshavarzian (2007:70) effectively argues that sector-specific bazaar networks are transformed and influenced differently by the configurations of governance and different responses of the state, ranging from neglect and surveillance to regulation and oppression. It is in the institutional settings of networks regarding urban planning, subsidies, import-export rules, and government companies and ideologies that actors emerge and gain or lose power and their actions are enabled or constrained. Taking a cue from Keshavarzian’s approach to the bazaar as a set of “bounded spaces containing a series of ongoing and socially embedded networks that are the mechanism for the exchange of specific commodities” (2007:70), I find it necessary to take a closer look at how these socially embedded networks exist and transform in relation to the old and emergent modes of governing economics and ethno-religious diversities. It is with this impulse that I now turn to the realms of social intimacy,
material culture, and family, and examine how the social identities created through functional and spatial divisions between and within these realms are constantly being negotiated through actual relations at the interpersonal level.

3.3 Souk Relationality

3.3.1 Intimate Interactions

Personal and interpersonal relationships in the souk imply a social realm of intimate encounters. These encounters crosscut communal affiliations and religious identifications yet are not entirely independent of them. Intimacy here is of several kinds, convergent with, divergent from, and at times irrelevant to each other. Physical intimacy is embedded in the proximity of bodies passing by, touching, hearing, gazing, speaking to, and arguing or laughing with one another. It structures the companionship that provides teselli to the long-term occupants of its stores and is reproduced in the moments of intensive bargaining between buyers and sellers.

These intimate interactions are as much social as physical. They render the spatial boundedness of the souk’s small bazaars and the occupational and communal boundedness of particular religious subjects in that space almost non-significant to the flow of daily life. Still located within the confines of the marketplace, in its stores, alleys, passageways, covered and uncovered streets, warehouses, coffee shops, restaurants and mosques, this form of intimate interaction transfigures the space of the souk from the physical to the relational (cf. Keshavarzian 2007). People who are not neighbours in their neighbourhoods become neighbours in the souk, for instance, translating their physical proximity into quasi-genealogical or nisba type ties.

This brings us to familial intimacy, the kind that does not necessarily require the actual bodily presence of family members, although it often does include such. Familial intimacy is embedded in the synonymy of the seller, the buyer, or the competitor with “a family member.” It is
articulated in the metaphors about being “like a family” and performances of and significance placed on being the “big brother,” the consultant to whom others in the souk come for suggestions. It is enlivened in the actual blood ties of the souk’s actors who alternate between the roles of buyer and seller, and is embodied in the very idea and practice of the “family business,” keeping the former owners of the stores alive in the souk’s collective memory. In fact, it is this traditional meaning of a passing from father to son that has historically enabled the recognizable and identifiable boundedness of particular groups to particular businesses, despite politico-economic upheaval.\footnote{In his ethnographic account of the souk of Aleppo, Borneman (2007) pays a particular attention to the kinship networks, father-son relations in particular, as they unfold in the souk.}

In trying to decipher clientelization and bargaining relationships, which are intimate, continuous and at the same time confrontational, Geertz (1978:32) suggests the term “intimate antagonists.” Clientelization, for him, transforms a mixed group of people into a “stable collection of familiar antagonists” (1978:30), who, through repetitive exchange and bargaining, try to gain a slight advantage within the bazaar system. Familial ties make face-to-face interactions in the souk unnecessary; yet create similar tensions and conflicts. A single phone call, for instance, may suffice for a deal or an argument that is later consummated with agreement or confirmed as a rift at a wedding or a neighbourly visit.

In such circumstances, what Geertz describes as intimate antagonism occurs not only because of the nature of the economic transaction or information scarcity but also in relation to the kind of relatedness between the two parties that makes the economic transaction possible in the first place. Furthermore, existing conflicts among different souk actors can easily be reframed and articulated as familial conflicts and judged and valued according to moral codes associated with...
family relations. It is thus more acceptable, for example, for a “stranger” than one’s own cousin to play the role of the “rival” and open two stores in the same passageway where one’s business is located. Or, it is easier to attribute business difficulties to the wrongdoings of a “family member” whose proximity is also always a source of danger than to wider socio-economic transformations.93

If familiality is one significant form of tie that exists and is reproduced in the souk space, familiarity is another. It is not surprising that familiarity is key to the continued relationship that artisans like Apo and Emine establish with the storeowners for whom they provide goods and services, as well as for those who have worked in the souk from a very young age. Yet even the mobile actors of the souk relate to the permanent ones through codes of acquaintanceship, hospitality, and/or fictive kinship if not through blood or marriage ties, best articulated in Nalan’s description of the identity of her shop visitors (“friends and acquaintances, old neighbours, new neighbours, relatives, and whoever else you can think of.”) This holds even for artisans like Emine and Apo, whose individual customers among the regular storeowners are people who “know” and are “known” to them. “Knowing” (tanimak) is key to the establishment and maintenance of the “trust-based networks” and is usually followed by the buyer “getting used to” (alismak) the shop and its owner.

As an example of the link between knowing and habituation, one only needs to remember Ismail’s words, “Our customers come here because they know us and they are used to us.” Knowing, then, is the precondition for having and keeping loyal customers, and provides an

93 The view that one’s own relative can be more dangerous than strangers is very widespread among many people in Turkey as can be identified in idioms like “Akrep (al-aqrab) etmez akrabanın akrabaya ettigini,” meaning, “Even a scorpion does not do as much harm as a relative does.” It is noteworthy that the Turkish term for relative akraba comes from the plural of the Arabic word karib (close). The idiom plays with the similarity of the root of both words.
intimate setting for intensive bargaining, reducing uncertainty about the preferences of others, and diminishing bargaining costs for both sides (see also Keshavarzian 2007). It also gives comfort to the business owners in the face of increasing competition from the modern (and presumed impersonal) forms of economic interaction practiced in the shops outside the souk or in the city’s newly established shopping mall.

This is not to say that changes in the market in response to the neoliberalization of economics in Turkey do not trouble some storeowners. On the contrary, it is the felt risk of losing long-term customers, or the fear, in Ismail’s words, that “things will not stay like [now] in the near future,” that evokes nostalgic narratives of communal and familial solidarity of the souk’s old times and encourages Apo to advise his fellow-worker to make sure to keep a loyal customer. Nevertheless, the spatial and economic changes in the market do not simply weaken the ties and networks of trade, credit, and trust amongst the souk’s cohabitants, nor do they completely dissolve its corporate structure. On many occasions, these ties and networks thrive and circulate in new forms or are incorporated into the new techniques employed by some storeowners, as shown below.

In that sense, Apo’s point that one can no longer afford to lose a loyal customer is not simply advice that is new and peculiar to the contemporary conditions of Antakya’s economy. It is the recirculation of a knowledge that has been acquired through past experience and needs to be remembered in the face of hardships: the knowledge that the traditional economy of the souk makes the evaluation of each single interaction dependent on past performances and determinant of future ones. Uncooperative behaviour today may have costs tomorrow, or the day after. The difference is that in the current economic conditions, these costs seem likely to be much higher than before.
Many in the souk, then, continue to rely on long-term intimate relations that imply multiple types of relationality and solidarity (commercial, social, religious, familial, neighbourly, etc.) beyond purely economic arrangements and in which both buyers and sellers seek to reduce cost and maximize profit in the manner of win-win transactions. This is especially the case for the diminishing communities of Antakya, such as the Orthodox Christians. For instance, the Orthodox storeowners in the gold bazaar tend to hire their own relatives and coreligionists; as vendors they are preferred by people (of different religious backgrounds) with whom they have a long-term relationship, and in order to keep their customers satisfied may at times ask one of their employees to bring pieces from another jeweler “in the gold bazaar,” to whom they later return payment if the transaction is consummated. Selling and profiting from one’s own product is less important than maintaining the customer’s habituation. Furthermore, as we have seen in the case of Ethem, the successful business owners are those who do not completely abandon old networks but rather integrate communalism with the requirements of the new markets at the national and global level. The model of *Al, sat, para kazan! [Buy, sell, earn money!]*, is possible and more profitable in his case because his family has already earned the “reputation.”

The familial, familiar and intimate circles of the souk’s actors have not only survived the neoliberalization of economics, but in fact gain more significance as a way to cut labour costs and/or save money. This is precisely the case with the Christian and Jewish women’s entrance to the souk as wives (below). These old networks also set the ground for new strategies and solutions that the storeowners develop to deal with economic hardships. One extreme example is the recently developed practice of “renting” gold jewelry, a service provided by some jewelers to their loyal customers who no longer can afford to buy a gold set for the marriage of their children, and instead rent one as a performative representation of wealth to their wedding guests.
Another significant example is the infiltration of the souk’s collective space of a particular economy of collective accumulation and an intimate system of saving money associated in Turkey with women’s reception days (gün) in domestic space (see also Chapter 5). As indicated by the popularization of its alternative name, “gold day” (altın günümüz), this economy requires each guest to give a golden coin (or US dollars or Euros in some cases) to the host of the gathering, a practice that repeats until each committed participant of the economy becomes the host and receives the total number of coins that she has provided to the other participants over a certain period of time.

I became aware of the involvement of some souk actors in a similar practice while interviewing Nalan in her tesettür clothing store. Our conversation on Nalan’s past work experiences was interrupted by the appearance of an apprentice boy from a nearby shop who had come to let Nalan know of the number drawn that would determine her turn to receive the collected money. After the boy left, I asked her about the details of the practice. “It’s the gün, but done by esnaf (tradesmen), I mean, of course, by tradesmen who know each other,” she replied. “So if we are forty, each of us give 100 lira (approximately $50) from what we earn that day to one of us in the sequence of the drawn number and in a month everybody ends up saving 2000 liras.”

After finding out that this practice was more common in peripheral parts of the souk for the owners of smaller and poorer businesses than in the gold or shoe bazaars, and that this particular practice (there were/had been others) was relatively new (less than ten years old), I asked Nalan about whether every person could afford to make the day’s contribution. Her response pointed to the multilayered nature of this intimate economy. She said that there have been times in which two or three people who felt closer to each other would join to contribute the amount per person and divide it amongst themselves once they received their share. And I also learned later that the
participants included Sunni and Alawi business owners, but not Jews or Christians, who were not represented in that section of the souk.

Religious difference and tensions around such difference in the souk have been various and complex, gaining new characteristics in response to the shifts in political and economic manifestations of secularism in Turkey. The daily management of “religious difference” is less related to accommodating the dietary, worship, and educational necessities of religious subjects than it once was, given the diminished number of particular groups and the decreasing significance of these groups in shaping everyday activities in the souk. But old tensions (and compromises) appear in new forms and contribute to the heterogeneity of the souk’s relational space.

For instance, the spoken concerns of the two Alawi women, Emine and Leyla, about Turkey’s future encapsulate the way in which denominational difference (Alawi-Sunni) has been converted into competing political identities (secularist-Islamist) in accordance with Turkey’s political atmosphere since the 1980s. Yet, at the same time, we see how the relationship of these Alawi women to their pious Sunni souk neighbour (whose entry into the market space as a business owner has been enabled by the rise of political Islam), is structured by proximity and the intimacy of gossip, laughter, and mundane dissents that do not neatly fit into the mutually

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94 Although Islam had been a political force since Ottoman times and Islamist groups formed covert and overt alliances with right-wing parties after Turkey’s transition to a multi-party system in 1950, the hegemonic ideals of state secularism established through the modernizing reforms of the early Republican era remained mostly unchallenged until the 1980 military coup (See Chapter 1). With the rise of neoliberalism and political Islam in the post-1980 military coup era, and especially following the success of the Islamist Welfare Party in the municipal elections of 1994 in Istanbul and Ankara for the first time in Turkey’s history, the struggle between “secularists” and “Islamists” exacerbated and dominated the public realms of the market, the universities, the media, and the parliament (Cinar 2005; Gole 1996; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Özyürek 2006; Saktanber 2002) While the AKP’s emphasis on pluralism initially helped mitigate this dichotomy, the state actors both from the government and the opposition often resort to this dichotomy in times of crisis, the most recent example of which being Gezi resistance.
exclusive positions of the secularist-Islamist dichotomy, even though these women are heavily
invested in opposite poles of this.

3.3.2 Material Culture

Material culture is another realm in which historical religious markers and diversifications are
revitalizing the souk’s publics, troubling the secularist understandings of religion as “private”
(belonging to the home space and individual conscience). The materiality of religion here
includes the presence of places of worship at central intersections of the souk; it also includes the
sound of the call to prayer that punctuates the soundscape of the souk through the day; and also
the pictures of religious and/or political figures and symbols appearing in visible or less visible
parts of the stores, and oftentimes also as commodities.\(^95\)

The pictures of Ali and Atatürk, the icons of Mary and Jesus, the Bismillah stickers, the evil-eye
beads, and Jewish *hamsas* (a symbol of the hand of God) hung on store walls, hidden behind the
counters, or placed next to Turkish flags; pendants in the shape of the cross or Zülfikar sword on
shop windows, but also on the chests of believers including those in charge of their sale, and the
smell of the incense coming from the old man’s censer: each of these signifies a different mode
of relationality between economic value and expressions of piety. All imply the multivalence of
the souk space that sensorially, imaginatively, and emotionally binds subjects (as spectators,
users, and interpreters) to objects of religious significance, and in doing so teases at any
assumption of a rigid partition between the sacred and the profane.

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\(^95\) There are a few tomb-shrines (*ziyaret*) and around 10 mosques and masjids (mosques without minarets) in the
souk today. Early conceptualizations of the Middle Eastern bazaar associate it with Islam and understand its
incorporation in religious terms through alliance with the mosque (Ashraf 1988; Spooner 1986)—a view, however,
that has been criticized by later work (Abu-Lughod 1987; Raymond 1994). Rather than suggesting that Islam
ideologically and spiritually determines the actions in the bazaar, or even that there is a mutual cooperation and
interest between the two, my point in highlighting the presence of religious sites in Antakya’s souk is merely to
demonstrate the interactions between these domains.
A number of scholars have approached the relationship between the public and the private through the visual and sensory regimes of the secular as they concern the sacred images, icons, objects, and structures such as those listed above. Some of these works locate their critique of secular power within the human-centered interpretations and aestheticization of sacred entities (Asad 2009; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2009). Analyses concerning their commodification (Jain 2007; Özyürek 2006) or direct association with ostentatiously secularist, religious, and nationalist identities (Navaro-Yashin 2002; Zitzewitz 2008) are more pertinent here, however.

In their ethnographic accounts of state secularism in Turkey, Özyürek (2006) and Navaro-Yashin (2002) claim that the privatization of the production, circulation, and consumption of Atatürk’s images in the 1990s was a secularist performance against the rise of political Islam, and in particular, the emergence of Islamic symbols in the public political market. “Privatization,” here, is addressed primarily in spatial terms, and operates in two opposite directions. It refers, on the one hand, to the entrance of intimate and familial images of the early Republican years and Turkey’s secularist leader Atatürk into public arenas, where generic monumental images had been the norm. This is akin to the Habermasian notion of “intimacy oriented toward a public” (1989:43-44). To demonstrate this, Özyürek examines the activities and exhibitions arranged for the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Turkish Republic during which the personal life stories of elderly citizens and the transformations of marriage practices were narrated and displayed for public consumption.

These, she argues, were followed by another kind of “privatization,” that is, the permeation of miniaturized versions of these publicly redefined Republican images (i.e. Atatürk’s representations) into the private realms of the market as commodities, and into home settings and family albums as markers of the citizens’ “voluntary support” for secularism. Under the market
symbolism that prioritizes consumer choice over state distribution, both processes represent “personalized expressions of politics” as the new basis of national citizenship. They show “how the different ‘privates’ of economic, civil, domestic, or personal life are actually connected to and shape each other” (Özyürek 2006:6, 7, see also Gal 2002).

Some of the ways in which religious symbols appear in Antakya’s souk verify this analysis (e.g., Turkish flags and pictures of Atatürk placed in visible and nonvisible parts of the stores). These symbols that function as markers of religious identity, loyalty, and difference in certain contexts are also commoditized as icons of neoliberal privatization in tandem with the liberal rhetoric of religious pluralism in Antakya (e.g., in the entwined images of the cross, crescent, and star of David). Yet, as Ibrahim’s reluctance to consider selling the necklaces of “tolerance” reveals, the miniaturized and commoditized versions of religious co-existence may stand in tension with people’s personal and communal attachments to particular religions. Addressing a gap between the “privatization” of Antakya’s recent public portrayals and the multiple, shifting and context-specific meanings of the symbols that are mobilized for this portrayal, this tension also points towards the incommensurabilities between different publics and privates.

Hence, if we take the souk in toto as a “representational” space that is “directly lived through its associated images and symbols” by its users (Lefebvre 1974:39), we can argue that this space is characterized not simply by the secularity or religiosity of the symbols it sells, or solely by its appearance as a “market for identities” (Navaro-Yashin 2002:78). Rather the very heterogeneity and instability of the economic and moral values such symbols condense position them within a complex web of sensorial, worldly, and sacred attachments at the junction of past and present modes of governance and sociability. In fact, it is this heterogeneity and instability that render
such symbols historically potent and politically attractive for appropriation by nationalist and neoliberal markets.\textsuperscript{96}

In her ethnography of Indian calendar art, Jain (2007) shows how the distribution of mass-produced images of Hindu gods and goddesses takes place within the “bazaar” system, which she defines as a moral and material commodity market that effectively connects all regions, religions and ethnically different communities in India. She suggests that different actors in this bazaar system negotiate and combine seemingly paradoxical, “epistemically disjunct yet performatively networked worlds… of bourgeois-liberal and neoliberal modernism on the one hand and the world of those vernacular practices and discourses on the other” (2007:14). I would suggest that both the commoditized religious symbols in the souk, and the pictures of sacred and/or religious figures on the walls imply a similar realm of inter-articulation and exchange, at once commercial, religious, and social. They mediate multiple moral regimes that are embedded in but also transcendent of the modern divisions between the public and the private in their association with Turkish nationalism, identity politics, secular and religious devotion, practices of consumerism and neoliberal discourses of pluralism.

The objectification, reproduction, and reconfiguration of religious symbols as constituents of these multiple regimes are not peculiar to the souk space in and of itself. They also take place in social spaces and economic activities that are connected to but remain outside the souk, making

\textsuperscript{96} Here, I take a cue from Susan Gal’s semiotic approach to the public-private distinction. Gal (2002:85) argues that the ambiguity and incompatibility between private property and private (non-economic) relations is in fact “a predictable and unambiguous result of ideological communication in which social organizations are imagined in nested ways.” It shows how public and private operate as indexical signs that are always relative, relational, and context-dependent.
it impossible to approach the souk independent of the houses, streets, and neighbourhoods in which its actors live, produce, and construe their relationships to each other and to the places they inhabit, as well as to the nation-state. This is the case both for the religious signs on the doors and archways of old Antakya townhouses, remnants of a history in which religious difference was spatially marked, and for the new locations these signs occupy and new forms they acquire as commoditized markers of identity (Figures 9 and 10).

Figure 9. On the way from the Alawi-dominated Harbiye district to Latakia, at an excursion spot for Antakyans, famous for its waterfalls and restaurants, the gift shops on the main street sell wall carpets with the designs of Turkish flag, Atatürk, Turkish Arabesque singers and filmmakers, political figures of the Turkish left, Prime Minister Erdoğan, the leader of the main opposition party in the Parliament associated with Atatürk’s ideals, Bashar al-Assad, as well as the Caliph Ali and Virgin Mary.
Figure 10. Residential apartment building in Armutlu, a neighbourhood populated predominantly by Alawi immigrants from Antakya’s hinterland villages, a mosaic of Atatürk integrated on the façade of the building below a Turkish flag with evil-eye bead attached.

In this context, we may find it useful to shift our gaze from the souk to another site that interweaves the economic, religious, and familial through the labour of women: the home. As we have seen, the economic and political shifts in Turkey transformed the division of labour not only along ethnic and religious categorizations, but also between men and women. In the context of the souk, we observe a wider presence of women in the workforce, and more importantly their entrance into “family businesses” as wives, that is, as free labour rather than as inheritors. Outside the souk and in the space of the home, the picture becomes even more complicated, encouraging us to attend to the contexts in which women’s labour becomes part of emergent market relations.

97 The female jeweler in the gold bazaar (above) was a singular exception and only possible because of the absence of a male to inherit the business.
3.4 Home, inside out

On a Tuesday afternoon, I accepted an invitation to attend a religious ritual in a Christian shrine, Meryem Ana Evi (the House of Mother Mary). Although it was near to the end of my fieldwork and the shrine was located just a five-minute walk from the guesthouse, I had never heard of this place before. It was Ayşe who had invited me to the ritual, and as we walked up the hill from her silver shop, she explained to me that the shrine was sacred because some fifty years ago they had found an icon of Mary buried there. The icon had never stopped crying since, that is, transpiring an oil-like liquid.

This “miracle”—that even scientists could not explain, Ayşe emphasized—brought together some Orthodox Christians, mostly women from the neighbourhood, on Tuesday afternoons for collective prayer under the guidance of a respected pious Christian from the community. Ayşe was a regular attendee of these prayers and believed them to have a different significance than the Sunday mass at church. As we entered the small cul-de-sac where the shrine was located, she explained the difference to me: “As a Christian, you should go to the Church every Sunday. It is obligatory. You come here voluntarily, especially if you have a wish to make, a votive offering, or have a problem that needs to be solved.” I knew that Ayşe’s main motivation that day was to pray for the betterment of their business in the souk, so that they could send some money to their daughter in Antep for her university education.

When we arrived at the shrine, I learned that it was in fact an old Antakya townhouse where a Christian family, also from Samandağ, lived. The ritual was canceled that day because the person who was going to conduct the prayer had another engagement. I had therefore arrived only to see the icon, which was located in an old wooden cabinet next to a few white candles in the family
living room. It did not seem any different from the little icons and figurines that decorate most Christian living rooms in Antakya—except for the oily feeling that it left on my fingers.

After donating some coins for the continuation of their weekly rituals, our hostess gave me some of the icon oil on a piece of cotton to carry with me for good luck, health and money. I then sat with these two women in the courtyard for about an hour mostly listening to their discussion about how they manage familial resources to make ends meet. This was when I realized that more than half of the courtyard, to which roofing had been added to extend the house, was filled with large tins of olive oil. There were also bottles of pomegranate sauce, red pepper paste, walnut jams, and olive oil soaps behind these. The family stored the products here that our hostess’s husband sold in a rented store in the souk.

I was told that in addition to what the husband sold in their store, the family also benefited from sales the wife made to her neighbours and to visitors of the shrine. This was why, when Ayşe and I were served the walnut jam that our hostess had prepared for her customers while discussing the difficulty of making jam from raw walnuts, I could not help but feel that this service was more than a welcoming gesture to an unexpected guest and could also be a market strategy. After the time spent in the souk, I had learned to recognize situations in which my researcher-guest role blurred into that of a customer.

Deeply embedded in everyday habitual acts and interpersonal relations, the forms of exchange in the home-shrine exposed the artificiality of distinctions between the economic and the domestic that are crucial to the liberal-secular understandings of political and economic culture. Goods and services produced by the household were at once market value commodities to be sold and purchased inside and outside home and tokens of virtue within a moral system in which offerings and displays of hospitality, generosity, and piety cannot be measured in cash.
As Webb Keane suggests in his analysis of the use of money in ceremonial exchange in Sumba, the economic, personal, and religious values of “things” may be neither easily distinguishable nor entirely stable (2007:273). Instead, they are negotiable at the level of interpersonal relations. The dish offered as an obligatory token in contexts of hospitality, the donation to the shrine as a symbolic token, and the piece of cotton with “Mary’s tears” all belonged to different moral regimes of value, yet also had the potential to be converted into one another and facilitate other monetary and moral transactions.

The “home-shrine” was extraordinary in terms of the way it encompassed religious, social, and economic modes of sociability. The selling of items produced through women’s labour in home settings, however, was highly common in Antakya, especially among lower class women from rural backgrounds. The items sold included pomegranate sauce, tomato or red chili pepper paste, homemade jams, spices, cheese, olive oil, daphne soaps, wickerwork, and, sometimes, cooked food. For wage-earning women as well as housewives, sales of this sort became an additional source of income to be spent mostly on family household needs. The (kitchen) white goods in the real estate agent Muhammet’s house, for instance, were bought with money his wife Rabia had saved from making and selling lacework to neighbours and relatives. The TV in their living room displayed one of these laceworks, symbolically marking the labour that had enabled its purchase in the first place.  

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98 Putting lacework on furniture in the guestrooms, such as coffee tables, dining tables, shelves of curio cabinets and the counter of mirrored buffets is a very widespread practice among Turkish families and constitutes part of the stagecraft for the guest (Chapter 5). When TVs entered the guestrooms in the 1970s not only as objects of entertainment but also symbols of status, they were treated as another component of the stagecraft and were similarly covered by the lacework, a practice that some might call a domestication of modernity. Over 40 years, TVs have changed in shape and size, yet retained their place in the centre of most guestrooms. The practice of putting lacework on them is ridiculed and seen as a sign of lower class by elites, yet still remains a common practice in many houses in Turkey.
Women who had enough resources and the support of their husbands turned these kinds of initiatives into more systematized efforts and opened their own stores in the city. The souvenir store at the exit of the souk was the enterprise of a retired teacher who had decided to sell the souvenirs and lacework she made to people other than her neighbours. After opening the store, she started trading in products bought from women in the nearby villages. What motivated Emine to use her domestic tailoring experience to open a commercial tailoring business, on the other hand, was the absence of a male breadwinner figure in the family (as was also the case with Nalan).  

Feminist scholars have extensively documented how the neoliberalization of economics meant the expansion of small-scale industries, domestic industries, and handicrafts, and relied heavily on an informal labour pool in which women played a central role (Benería and Floro 2005; Jacka 2005; Mies 1981). They have shown how such expansion allowed male entrepreneurs to take advantage of unpaid or underpaid female labour (Berik 1987; Mies 1981; White 1996), and how women, especially in rural areas, found themselves producing domestic goods to be marketed in urban centres or the international market (Freeman 2007; Hoodfar 1997; Lowe and Lloyd 1997; Mies 1981; see also Sacks 1989). This literature helps us understand how household relations are not distinct from, but constitutive of capitalist production and reproduction for the market under neoliberalization.

Nevertheless, viewing the merging of household and market economies in Antakya solely as an effect in the context of contemporary economics would overlook the fact that women of all backgrounds have long been crocheting, tailoring, weaving wicker, and processing food and

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99 I also met a few women who opened their own restaurants after years of preparing and selling food from their own kitchens to event-organizers and hotels. It was often difficult for these women to take up the additional infrastructural costs and most of them ended up having to close their businesses.
homemade industrial products in Antakya, and that some of these products had long since made their way into the souk’s stores. What changed for women under neoliberalization was less their role as producers than their position in the commercial exchange of these products. Women’s productivity did not necessarily remain confined to the home as suggested by some feminist critiques of neoliberalism (Mies 1981; White 1996), but women’s role as “dependent” housewives often survived even after they became the “direct recipients of money” in the souk or in their own homes and neighbourhoods.

The entrance of women to the workforce in family businesses coincided with the economic crises in Turkey in the 1990s and early 2000s, and was mostly oriented towards cutting or reducing labour costs. These women were not paid for their labour directly; rather, the gain was considered part of the family budget. Yet they were still expected to fulfill the duties of a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law at home. Salma, for instance, often complained that her unpaid labour in their housewares shop in the souk was taken for granted by her husband. In her case, there were also times when her responsibilities at work conflicted with her religious obligations:

Salma: Instead of hiring someone else, he asked me to go and help him. Then he got used to it, and gets angry if I do not go. It was a real struggle for me to make him accept that I don’t work on Saturdays. He’s a Jew too, but most Jews here have forgotten their religion.

Seçil: So you do not go to work on Saturdays?

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100 This was especially the case for non-Muslim families who had specialized in small-scale commerce and artisanship due to the limited opportunities available in the state sector, and who therefore were more vulnerable to sudden economic fluctuations than those with guaranteed salaries.
Salma: No, I do go; but I do not do any work. I do not cook; I can talk to customers but do not do the transactions. I only go to please him and help him in ways that do not breach the rules of my religion.

The double burden of being a housewife and an employee endured by Salma formed the basis of the comparison she made between herself and her “non-religious” husband. Work and religion, however, did not belong to separate spheres of life for her. What she described here was an accommodation of the rules of her religion to her work; obeying these rules would bear an economic profit that was just and ethical. Salma often communicated her belief that the little prayer book she carried everywhere and read in her every spare moment helped their businesses do better. The problem was the struggle she had to go through to make her husband acknowledge and appreciate her work in this process, work that was both economic and religious and that took place both at home and outside home. “When I complain that I work a lot, he says, ‘We all work hard,’ but he doesn’t see that I also work at home and his mother’s house and pray day and night for the success and health of our family.”

What causes resentment for Salma here is not only the invisibility of her labour to her husband, but also his failure to recognize the mutually constitutive nature of the domestic, religious, and economic characteristics of this labour. What is denied recognition in Salma’s case also shapes women’s engagements with places like the home-shrine, as well as the tombs of Alawi and/or Christian saints. While women’s bodies, labour, and time symbolically, materially, and morally draw and guard the boundaries between the public and the private, their familial, religious, and economic practices nest these domains into each other.

### 3.5 Conclusion

It is a well-acknowledged, although never banal fact that “public” and “private” domains have
unstable boundaries and involve multiple, related, overlapping, and often shifting meanings (Benhabib 1992; Hirschman 2002; Landes 1998; Scott 1999). What I have highlighted in this chapter, however, are not the ambiguities and instabilities of a somehow pre-existing spatial and functional dichotomy. Instead, I have examined how the public-private dichotomy has been historically produced and spatially configured through interconnected processes of governing diversity and economic relations. Yet even this fails to capture the imbrication of economic and social interaction on the ground, as, that is, in the domestic of the souk and the shrine in the home, on the street and on the body.

Forms of social, commercial and religious exchange as well as the division of labour in the souk rely heavily on familial, religious, and gendered requirements of collective living in Antakya. As such, the souk embeds the domestic in its collective domains in ways that are not easily translatable to secular understandings of “public” (or private) and associated conceptions of individuality and impersonal collectivity. The failure of the public-private distinction to capture such phenomena is not simply caused by the presence of personal relationships and their religious configurations in the market space, however. As economic anthropology has recently shown, personal and religious interactions take place even within the most capitalist market economies (Elyachar 2005; Muehlebach 2012; Narotzky and Smith 2006; Roy 2012). The Antakya souk, however, provides us with a particular case in which these relations weave together the traditional mechanisms of religious co-existence on the basis of a spatio-communal division of labour, identity politics that derive from the nation-state’s secularist tendency to objectify and solidify differences, and, indeed, capitalist relations in which “business recognizes no religion.”

Geertz addresses the particularity of the souk relationality as a mode of in-betweenness, with the
bazaar economy situated between the gift economy and the market economy. Embodying “the image of life as it is lived in that part of the world” (1979:28), the souk also represents a Mediterranean style of relationality that is neither wholly individualistic nor corporate. This is an idea shared by Geertz’s contemporaries who have written on the region. Lawrence Rosen (1979), for instance, understands Moroccan social organization to be centered on a chain of consociation, which gives individuals more freedom and flexibility than corporate organizations and to which intermediary networks and obligations of reciprocation are pivotal. Vincent Crapanzano (1985) extends this line of thinking in his conceptualization of the cognitive and affective relations between saints, demons, and human beings. He argues that the particularistic mode of life in Morocco requires individuals to be in flexible relations of both dependence and dominance, and renders the exchange between companions, associates, and friends highly precarious, competitive, and under constant threat of dissolution.

The highly personalized and intimate network of associations in Antakya’s souk can be understood in a similar vein, but also raise questions about the temporality of this model. What we see in Antakya’s souk space is not simply the survival of an archaic bazaar economy with its religious characteristics, semi-corporate organization, and an unchanging ethno-religious and gendered division of labour. The souk does not simply stand in between different models of economy or relationality, but combines them in multiple and heterogeneous ways as it adapts to the changing conditions of life and politics. It is necessary to attend to the religious and gendered underpinnings of this process in order to capture the variety of encounters that take place in Antakya’s souk and that characterize the daily ways in which religious difference is lived, managed, and negotiated in Antakya.
4  “God is the Name of Diversity”: Inhabiting a Multi-Religious Milieu and Cosmopolitan Rhetoric in Antakya

Netice itibariyle hepimiz aynı Allah’ın kuluyuz

[Ultimately, we all are the subjects of the same God].

Commonly used phrase in Antakya

There certainly should be more than one path to God. If we accept that God is incomprehensibly complex, wouldn’t it be too simplistic to think that humans can reach God only through one path? In Islam there are 99 names for Allah. Many of these names signify the qualities that lead towards righteous living for the subjects of God: justice, kindness, beauty, honesty, peacefulness, knowledge, forgiveness, honour, gratefulness, generosity, wisdom, and so on. If you have faith in even one of these values, it does not matter how you express your faith, you are still worshipping God. It is not a problem that there are so many religions in the world when you look at it this way. God is the name of diversity.

Interview with Şaul, 28, Jewish

I am in a café on top of the Habibi Neccar Mountain drinking tea with Jozef, an Orthodox Christian man in his early twenties. When we look out of the window, we notice a man prostrating on the ground for namaz (Islamic prayer, Arabic: “salat”). I am surprised that this person chooses to pray outside on top of a mountain rather than in his home, in a masjid, or inside or in front of a mosque as is more commonly practiced in Turkey. When I share my thoughts with Jozef, he asks me if I know how to do the namaz. I mention that I learned it in school but no longer remember the specifics. He responds that the specifics don’t matter and adds, “It’s the intention that defines what counts as

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101 Although the term “masjid” is the Arabic term for mosque, in Turkey it refers to smaller mosques with no minarets as well as the prayer rooms found in public buildings such as shopping malls, airports, and schools. Mosques with minarets are called “cami” (Arabic: “jamiah”).
praying.” Then he moves the water glass on the table with his two fingers for an inch, saying, “If I do this act for God, with God’s love in my heart, this also is praying.” I pause for a few seconds finding it hard to respond. He takes my pause as a sign of my doubtfulness and uses this opportunity to ask me what he has long sensed about my take on religion: “Do you have inanç (faith)?” I repeat my standard response to these kinds of questions in Antakya, “I come from a Muslim family but I am not dindar (religious).”

“This is not what I ask,” he interrupts and rephrases his question: “Do you believe in God?”

From my field notes

What is the relationship between being religious and being cosmopolitan in the modern secular world? These three examples represent different but interrelated approaches to this question and its implications for religious co-existence in Antakya: a banal expression of commonality on the basis of a shared God, a reasoned attempt to construe religious diversity as the immanence of God, and an ethos of individual engagement, imaginative investment and intentional action. All of these understandings contain “a cosmopolitan moment” of positing oneself as part of the world across religious boundaries, along with “a sense of there being a wider array of paths, possibilities, styles and aims ‘out there’” (Schiellke 2012:30). Although they place “belief in God” over self-identification with a particular religion, each has a different interpretation of what belief in God entails, what work it does in the everyday world of limited means, and how significant it is for conceptualizations of the self and the other in this-world as well as the next.

In this chapter, I examine how, when and why religious subjects make use of a particular

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102 Although the Turkish term “dindar(lık)” can also be translated into English as piety or devoutness, I use the term “religious” since the root of “dindar” is “din,” religion. Although “dindar” is used also to emphasize the true and authentic religiosity as opposed to “dinci,” for religionist, who is often associated with excessive and politically tainted religious zeal, the reference of “dindar” to religion still has troubling connotations for the secularist sensibilities in Turkey.
discourse of “religion” in which all paths lead to God, and what kind of relationships, daily concerns, political struggles, theological positions, and future-imaginations this discourse registers. Drawing on Asad’s emphasis on the social and political embeddedness of “belief” (2011), I argue that the different ways in which belief in God is expressed by people in Antakya do not simply represent an individualized relationship to Him—or It (Allah is not gendered in the same way as God)—even if personal experience and individualized faith are explicitly emphasized in some of these expressions. Nor do these always represent an ethical commitment to a “worldwide community of believers.” Instead, they lie at the centre of social relationships characterized by the workings of power and hierarchies, and imply an ethical and political way of relating to others, to the conditions of Otherness, and religious difference in general.

These relationships (whether they be characterized by conflict, sharing, conversing, or practicing) are at once interpersonal and identitarian: they concern not only how religious subjects reconcile the physical and theological proximity of people from other religions in their daily conduct, but also how non-Sunni citizens of Antakya come to terms with their “religious difference” vis-à-vis the dominant identity categories, religious norms, and conditions set by state regimes in Turkey. At the same time, they are inflected by theological concerns that arise from physical and social proximity, religion’s place vis-à-vis society, and the ambiguous boundaries between immanence and transcendence.

This chapter is informed by and contributes to the literature on cosmopolitanism and secularism in the context of anthropological debates on the role of “belief” in shaping our understandings of religion and religious diversity. Bringing the “afterworld” into “this-world,” religiously grounded cosmopolitanisms disrupt the secular bias in the literature that views secular modernity as the ultimate condition of cosmopolitan links and identities (eg. Held 2002; Cheah, Robbins, and
Collective 1998). The deployment of the concepts of *inanç* (faith), *iman* (belief) and *dindar[lik]* (religious[ness]) as ways of engaging with and surpassing religious boundaries unsettle the secular-religious divide, as such concepts are often informed by (but not reducible to) modern notions of an introspective self, humanism, and religious pluralism. Last, the social practice of imagining and aspiring to an abstract world composed of different religious and non-religious paths does not stand apart from the actual experiences of political, religious, and economic hierarchies on the ground that relate to state policies, majority rule, and transnational religious movements. In certain circumstances, the performance of cosmopolitan links and identities becomes a way for Antakyans to realize their national citizenship, revealing both the conditions and limits of pluralist politics in Turkey.

In order to situate the cosmopolitan declarations of belief in God within a more general discussion on religious difference, I first examine the place of religion in theories of cosmopolitanism. This examination seeks to understand how a particular and nonsocial understanding of “individuality” has gained dominance in secular theories of cosmopolitanism informing also the language of recent attempts to reincorporate religion into these theories.

Next, I turn towards the different and at times competing narratives of religious cosmopolitanism represented by the quotation and recordings that open the chapter. In this section, I describe how these narratives register different theological and political encounters between and within different religious communities, the shifting meanings of religiosity as well as generational and class-related tensions that inform such shifts. I also reflect on the distinctions and overlaps between the concepts of *inanç*, *iman*, and *dindar* as they inform and limit people’s understandings of religious diversity. While such concepts invoke Sufi ideas of inclusivity regardless of the religious affiliation of their users, “the convert,” “the atheist,” and “the Islamic
Finally, I consider a different type of cosmopolitanism materialized in the daily prayers and inter-religious dialogue activities of a German nun. Conducted in her guesthouse (complex) where I stayed during my fieldwork, this project finds a place within the religious landscape of Antakya to the extent that it incorporates the tacit codes of coexistence and the conditions of Otherness that its pioneer herself learned as a long-term guest in the city. The temporariness and flexibility of the relationships that characterize this particular project pose a stark contrast to other and more continuous forms of relationality that make it possible for the inhabitants of Antakya to imagine a social body as large and inclusive as “the community of believers.” Sparsely attended by locals, Maria’s activities raise questions as to how possible it is to put an abstract ideal of cosmopolitan ethics into practice. Attending to this contrast also allows us to keep sight of the performative, pragmatic, and cynical dimensions of this all-inclusive rhetoric of religion while addressing the forms of being (and being-with) it communicates.

4.1 Cosmopolitanism and Religion

The term “cosmopolitan,” from the Greek “kosmopolites” (citizen of the world), has been used to describe a wide variety of views in social and political theory with a genealogy that goes back to the Greek Stoics. As the editors of a recent volume note in their introduction,

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103 See Özyürek (2009b) for a detailed and comparative analysis of the anxieties and challenges posed by converts to minority religions in contemporary Germany and Turkey. She argues that religious minorities threaten the assumed cultural and religious unity of the nations because of their potential to convert the members of the majority, a situation that is less likely in the case of ethnic minorities.

104 Diogenes of Greece is credited with being the first philosopher to have given an explicit expression to cosmopolitanism by responding to the question of where he came from with, “I am a citizen of the world” (Diogenes Laertius VI 63). As a cynical expression renouncing his local allegiances to his birth city Sinop, his claim to world-citizenship was attributed a negative content for a long time and still carries some derogatory connotations as in the anti-Semitic phrase “rootless cosmopolitan Jews” (Calhoun 2002). The Stoics of the third century CE are known to be the first to have expressed an explicitly positive commitment to philosophical cosmopolitanism and add social relationships to the place-based imaginations of terms such as home, boundary, territory, roots, and travelling. The
cosmopolitanism denotes less a “known entity existing in the world” than “a practice that is yet to come” and “a project whose conceptual content and pragmatic character are not only as yet unspecified but also must always escape positive and definite specification, precisely because specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an uncosmopolitan thing to do” (Breckendridge et al. 2002:1).

My analysis of the term and its relationship to religious difference is not in itself part of a moral or political project of cosmopolitanism, as is the case in many writings on the subject (Appiah 2006; Benhabib et al. 2006; Breckenridge et al. 2002; Neuman 2011; Nussbaum 1994), but rather seeks to address the concrete ways in which cosmopolitan desires and knowledge shape religious sensibilities within a particular location for different groups of people. I nevertheless find this (counter-)definitional emphasis on the term’s indeterminacy useful to account for the historical shifts in cosmopolitanism’s content, ethical value, and ideological antitheses, as well as for its future-orientedness, as encapsulated by Jozef’s emphasis on inanç.

Cosmopolitanism as an ethical allegiance to the “worldwide community of beings” has been pertinent to the dichotomous paradigms that continue to occupy a central role in the social sciences today, including universalism versus cultural relativism (Chernilo 2007; Rapport and Stade 2007; Werbner 2008), global versus local (Breckenridge et al. 2002; Held 2010; Turner 2001), transnationalism versus nationalism (Brett and Moran 2011; Nussbaum 1994), and human rights versus national or civic rights (Asad 2003; Benhabib et al. 2006; Benhabib 2004).

Stoics’ employment of cosmopolitanism, not only in a negative relationship to local modes of belonging (including religious convictions) but also with an emphasis on the relationship with other human beings beyond one’s own polis (e.g., moving away in order to serve others in different capacities), had significant impacts on the way cosmopolitanism was addressed in modern philosophy with respect to alterity, hospitality, and universality.
Although the contents of cosmopolitan projects change in each of these paradigms, the projects almost always understand cosmopolitanism within a secular framework, that is, as an ethical domain of worldliness that “human beings define by means of their action in their finite life” (Gourgouris 2008:444). This is partly due to the impact of Enlightenment thinking and in particular the legacy of Kant’s ethical writings in shaping the cosmopolitan responses to the social and political dilemmas of modern times (Benhabib 2004; Derrida 2003; Fine and Boon 2007; Kleingeld 1999; Nussbaum 1994).

In his famous essay, “Perpetual Peace,” Kant (1957[1795]) proposes a cosmopolitan order in which perpetual peace in the world can be established by the voluntary submission of sovereign states to an international legal authority (political cosmopolitanism) and the complementation of this authority by a universal civic community (ethical cosmopolitanism). Although his model of political cosmopolitanism has been central to critiques of patriotism and their attempts to decenter the violence of the nation-state from its normative and analytical orientations (Benhabib 2004; Habermas 1997; Nussbaum 1994), it is the second aspect of Kant’s argument that attains relevance in addressing the relationship of religious difference to common humanity.

The establishment of a universal community committed to perpetual peace inevitably entails the question of how to come to terms with difference within that community. Writing at a time when the problem of understanding the presence of cultures and traditions lying outside the sphere of the Chosen People, the Household of Faith or the Church, was shaped by colonial and missionary encounters, Kant takes an interest in the question of Otherness of—and not for—the traveller. The third definitive article of Perpetual Peace, “The Law of World Citizenship Shall be Limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality,” suggests the right of hospitality for a stranger arriving on foreign soil. Different from “a question of philanthropy,” as Kant puts it, the
right given to the outsider is one that allows him “to become a fellow inhabitant for a certain
length of time” or be granted “a right of temporary sojourn” by virtue of men’s “common
possession of the surface of the earth.” His conclusion that men “must finally tolerate the
presence of each other” is motivated by an understanding of the traveled earth as finite
(1957[1795]:20–21).

The place of religion for the cosmopolitan desire to engage diversity seems ambivalent in Kant’s
writings. On the one hand, he sees differences of religion as one of the two means employed by
nature “to separate peoples and to prevent them from mixing” (the second being linguistic
difference) (1957[1795]:31). On the other hand, religiosity seems irrelevant to cosmopolitan
engagement, as its apparent specificities are “accidents of contingency” and not essential
differences. “There may be different religious texts” Kant notes, “but such differences do not
exist in religion, there being only one religion valid for all men and in all ages. These can,
therefore, be nothing else than accidental vehicles of religion, thus changing with times and
places” (1957[1795]:31). If religion is not a fundamental source of differentiation, the argument
goes, the cosmopolitan order requires a political rather than a religious adjudication. Although
his conceptualization of toleration and hospitality includes references to Christian Scriptures and
can be associated with his account of “divine mercy,” a core doctrine of German Protestantism
(Frierson 2007), Kant insists that ethical cosmopolitanism does not rely on divine revelation or
the specific features of any one religion.

The attribution of a universal grammar to religion in Kant’s thinking, however, resonates with
particular religions’ cosmopolitan commitments, which take the form of an ecumenical or
evangelical orientation to the world. Tomoko Masuzawa (2005) highlights the link between the rise of the discourse of “world religions” in the 19th century and the formation of European universalism, a link that resides in the othering of “primitive” religions (through anthropology) and “Eastern” religions (through Orientalism). This link is a key to deciphering the common roots of Kantian understandings of ethical cosmopolitanism and contemporary discourses of (religious) pluralism.

Abrahamic religions, which have come to be regarded as “world religions,” often presuppose a global whole and a universal community for potential converts (except for Judaism) (Csordas 2007; Keane 2007; Klassen 2011; Velho 2007). From their inception, these literate, monotheistic, and proselytizing religions have developed a constitutive outside, “an outside world of unbelief, of difference and of ‘other religions’” (Turner 2001:134) that relies on a differentiation between good and bad believers as well as between believers and nonbelievers. Theologically speaking, the putative universality of Abrahamic religions indicates a negative engagement with religious difference that aims at its eventual elimination rather than a peaceful mediation on equal grounds. In practice, however, this elimination has often targeted “religions of immanence” in which “spirits or spiritual forces pervade the world” (Lambek 2013:15), with the Abrahamic traditions themselves tending to converge and accommodate as much as contradict and deny one another, under the idea of a transcendent divinity—as we observe in Antakya (below).

105 The naming of these religions’ universal orientations as a form of cosmopolitanism resonates with Durkheim’s discussion on individuality and religion. In the Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Durkheim makes a distinction between “individual religion” such as the “soul,” the individual totem, protector ancestor, or an equivalent, and “religious cosmopolitanism,” which implies the detachment of individual religions from the individualized societies in which they were born “to the point of being conceived as something common to all humanity” (Durkheim 2001[1912]:424).
The subordination of religious difference to one true faith for all humans in evangelical and ecumenical thinking gives way to a new humanism based on the universal idea of an abstract “human” and “human rights” in secularized theories of cosmopolitanism (Benhabib 1996; Derrida 2003). By replacing God with nature as the author of humans and time (cf. Das 2006), cosmopolitan ethics not only builds on the “transcendence” of Abrahamic religions but also strips that transcendence of divinity. As such, it becomes more attached to the two new sovereign subjects: 1) the individual “withdrawn to himself” (Marx 1978[1844]) and facing the task of controlling his own desires and becoming the redeemer of himself, and 2) the internally organized nation-state tied to a supranational legal system and the emerging global human rights regime (Asad 2003; Benhabib 2006; Nussbaum 1994). The concept of an abstracted and introverted individual informs not only the secular theories of cosmopolitanism but also the religiously motivated statements about “personal faith,” such as those that open this chapter.

In more secular contexts, religion enters into the new humanist (and non-theological) ethics mainly as a matter of the universal right to belief, referred also as “freedom of religion” or “religious liberty” (Taylor 2007) and understood as “conscience” in compliance with the internal-external or inner-outer dynamic that underpins the secular understandings of self and belief (Fernando 2010). Complicit with the liberal narrative of secularism that highlights “the correct response of the democratic state to diversity” (Taylor 2010:25), this ethics tends to view

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106 The theologian Meyerdroff (1978:131) refers to this shift as one from “theology” to “anthropology” in his exploration of ecumenism and the Orthodox understanding of Tradition. In a recent work, Klassen (2011:33) speaks of a historical differentiation between theological anthropology or “scientific theology” that goes back to the 17th century and studies the relationship of human nature to God, and its more secular and “enlightened” counterpart, which emerged in the 19th century and has informed the current understanding of anthropology as an intrinsically secular discipline. The secularized understanding of anthropology as the study of man outside of the divine agency speaks also to Kant’s description of anthropology as “the study of the empirical principles of human nature as a universal condition and as a pragmatic disquisition on how best to cultivate a universally grounded cosmopolitan “virtue ethics” (Klassen 2011:34).
religious difference as comparable to and commensurable with other categories of diversity (class, ethnicity, gender, race, etc.) (Chapter 2).

While one implication of this perspective is to understand religion as ultimately a personal preference and choice to which one gives consent (Berger 1979), another is the modern understanding of pluralism “denoting a normative or ideological view holding that diversity of religious outlooks and collectivities is, within limits, beneficial and that peaceful coexistence between religious collectivities is desirable” (Beckford 2003:81). In either case, whether the right to hospitality can be bestowed to the religious “other” or not relies on these subjects’ ability to speak the same language of rights, liberties, and obligations in the form of an identity politics and render difference reducible to a unified and harmonious whole.107

Newer formulations of religious cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, understand individual engagements with religion as antithetical to the communal ones. The sociologist Bryan Turner, for instance, offers a new understanding of “cosmopolitan virtue” as an obligation towards more tolerant patterns of inter-civilizational contact. For him, this obligation includes, among such components as irony, reflexivity, and skepticism, “an ecumenical commitment to dialogue with other cultures, especially religious cultures” (2001:150). Yet this commitment still relies on an understanding of religion that is ultimately about “the private world of values and activities” (133). Ulrich Beck on the other hand revises his earlier works on cosmopolitanism so as to include the notion of a “God of one’s own,” which for him serves to explain how people in the

107 Kant’s secular framework haunts even the attempts to reconceptualise cosmopolitanism beyond liberal, positivist, and juridical notions of universal reason and the particularizing relativism of multiculturalist identity politics. These critical reformulations continue to approach cosmopolitanism primarily as a matter of political engagement between or beyond sovereign states and global capital (Appiah 2006; Bhabha 1996; Calhoun 2002; Clifford 1997). Religious conceptions such as the “community of believers” are not seen as compatible with such engagement as they continue to insist on “one right way for all human beings to live” (Appiah 2006:143) even when such conceptions admit local variations within particular religious traditions.
modern world “wish to chain [their] personal God to [their] own desires, traumas, hysterias, fears and hopes and at the same time, they want to keep these chains in [their] own hands” (Beck 2010:13). According to Beck’s model, statements that express a more flexible and personal attachment to the notion of God and “faith”—such as those of Jozef and Şaul—represent a change in the conception of God from the omnipotent transcendent to something personal, something made compatible with modern man’s “individualized experiences and ambivalent feelings” (2010:15).

Although Beck’s argument approaches personal engagements with God from a secularist point of view—almost as a kind of false-consciousness confined to human minds—it nevertheless gives some insight into the dominant understanding of “individuality” that runs through the newer conceptualizations of “religious” cosmopolitanism (Neuman 2011). Building on Asad’s critique of belief (2011), however, I argue that the emphasis placed on individual faith in describing a more inclusive and flexible attachment to God is never simply about the personal experience of the believer. It registers a set of social relationships that is informed by the social identities, communal sensibilities, collective practices, and power structures in which the individual believers are embedded. The nature and conditions of these relationships determine both individual desires to move beyond one’s own religious boundaries through an engagement with other religions and the kinds of religious alliances established by members of different religions.

To what extent does the desire to engage diversity provide the means for individuals to cultivate larger loyalties and transcend the borders of their own religion as believers? What kinds of socialities and alliances are produced around this desire, especially in a context where Jewish and Christian citizens share the similar condition of being the other of the dominant religious and secular(ist) forces (Neyzi 2002; Özyürek 2009a)? What are the material means and practices that
work with and through this cosmopolitan imagination? The following material presents a complicated picture in which competing narratives of religious cosmopolitanism both challenge and absorb the secular understandings of “belief,” “nation,” and “universal community.”

On the one hand, we observe a commonsensical acceptance of religious difference—as in the idea of being the subjects of the same God, which views religions as given by birth. These represent traditional ways of accommodating religious difference that are not intelligible to the evangelical or ecumenical understandings of “world religions.” On the other hand, there is a new cosmopolitan desire to expand the boundaries of religiosity and “belief”—to wit, the attitudes of Jozef and Şaul. These reflect transformations in the very idea of religiosity and religious belonging, in line with recent theorizations on globalization and religion, as well as those on the globalization of religion. As I will show in the following pages, both take place under and are limited by the conditions put in place by state regimes.

### 4.2 “We are the subjects of the same God”

I first heard the phrase, “Netice itibariyle hepimiz aynı Allah’ın kuluyuz” as the slogan of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations. The choir’s conductor Yılmaz mentioned it in every concert and the choir members repeated it to me and others in our daily conversations as well as in interviews. At first I took the phrase solely as an invented statement for the performative representation of harmonious coexistence in Antakya. Over time, I realized that it also had some resonance and function in daily life, which had probably paved the way for its adoption by the Choir in the first place.

I heard the statement innumerable times, for instance, as part of the efforts of Antakya’s elderly people to arbitrate mundane arguments between neighbours, friends, and kin. Said nonchalantly as a way to put an end to these arguments, references to a unifying God figure called for a
closure to rather than an opening of conversations between conflicting parties. The mention of Allah and his doings sufficed to make it clear that further questions and disagreements were pointless. It was not a religious statement per se, but a social one, a speech act using religious unity to frame a bid to end dispute, a communicative device framing religious difference as something banal or coincidental rather than deserving of celebration, emphasis, or further consideration.

When I asked Davud, a Jewish acquaintance in his late 50s, to elaborate further on why he used the phrase so often, he pointed at the public hospital in the old city:

You see that hospital? There is a newborn unit there. Every day a new person is born in Antakya and is called “Christian,” “Jewish” or “Muslim” because their parents were also born like that. What would happen if they switched a Jewish baby with a Muslim one there accidently? Let me tell you—nothing! It’s just a coincidence that I was born Jewish and you Muslim. It’s God’s work and there’s nothing to argue about.

In a similar comment made by another interlocutor (on another occasion), religious difference appeared equivalent to linguistic difference:

I call God “Rab,” you say “Allah,” another says “Tanrı.” They all refer to the same thing but use different terms. Same goes for this [pointing at the water in our table], you call it “su” [Turkish], I call it “mai” [Arabic], another calls it “water.” The difference is in the language, not what it means. So why fight over it?”

In such accounts, religion seemed to be a nuance, a coincidental difference in style, language, or

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108 The local sociologist Fulya Doğruel (2005) captures this attitude in the title of her study with reference to a comment that she often heard in the field: “Kitapları farklı, insaniyetleri benzer” “The books are different, but people are the same.”

109 “Rab” Turkified “rabb” (Arabic); “Tanrı” from “tan” (Turkic); both are used in everyday Turkish, principally for a unitary God(head), but the latter is also understood as referencing polytheistic (shamanic) deities, leading to debates in some Turkish Islamic circles over whether it should be used for Allah.
path that was in itself the willful doing of the one God (or Allah or whichever other approximate synonym happened to be preferred). Although reminiscent of Kant’s reference to religious difference as “accidents of contingency” comparable to linguistic difference, however, such statements did not necessarily affirm different views, practices or languages to be fully commensurable with each other and certainly did not assume them to be in need of merging into a coherent new composite such as the nation, humanity and/or “the community of believers.” Rather, they were positivistic formations of essentially negative statements: any difference is not enough to worry about.

In her analysis of different perspectives and religious positions regarding a burial ritual in the highlands of Madagascar, Eva Spies (2013) suggests that religious coexistence does not necessarily imply a full commensurability and/or intersection between different positions. I would argue, in a similar vein, that the mundane references to a common God in Antakya called for a mode of coexistence in which people “did not necessarily measure traditions against each other or look for equivalents” (2013:123), but simply accepted and lived with differences, which they often took to be “given” by birth and not easily changeable afterwards. This attitude differed from the modern(istic) secular frameworks of pluralism and tolerance prevalent in the city, which considered religious traditions as clearly divided, commensurate, and representable components of another entity or “unity.”

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110 This discussion relates also to the distinction between “singing” and “listening” examined in Chapter 2, as two different forms of togetherness in the Choir. One may consider the standardization of the Choir in which each member had to sing every song as representative of the state’s liberal calls for pluralism. The earlier members’ insistence on seeing tolerance as “being able to listen to the other religions’ hymns without having to sing them” resonates with the mundane references to a common God in Antakya. This similarity is no coincidence, since the Choir was initially formed as a local ensemble in which ordinary citizens and religious communities of Antakya had a greater say than in its later, more “sanctified” and state-scripted form.
In the case of the Christian, Jewish, and Alawi inhabitants of Antakya, mundane statements of cosmopolitanism had another subtext that had less to do with interpersonal and inter-religious tensions than with the relative position of different religious “identities” with regard to the religion of the majority in Turkey, Islam. As Lawrence Rosen (1984:42) observed in a dispute between a mother and a religious authority about the marriage of a young girl in Morocco, the mention of Allah was also a mechanism of the politically weak and a reminder to the powerful of the limits of their power in the process of “bargaining for reality.” Drawing on Scheff (1968), Rosen defines “reality bargaining” as an ongoing process by which various actors attempt to make their own views and experiences of the world prevail over others in accordance with the relative power they have in that particular situation. While in the example Rosen analyzed the power dynamics are characterized by gender hierarchies between men and women, deflecting inter-religious tensions to the hands of a common God in Antakya is a strategy employed by Antakya’s minority religions, in engaging the hegemonic power of (Sunni) Islam.

This became clearest to me during a conversation I had with an old Christian man in front of the Orthodox Church of Antakya in the early days of my fieldwork. On weekdays, the church was temporarily closed for the visits of outsiders, and I had heard from some of my Christian interlocutors that this was a security measure related to the assassination of Luigi Padovese (an Italian bishop and vicar apostolic of Anatolia) in Iskenderun by his Turkish driver.

The incident had occurred a month before I (first) arrived in the city. As I was looking at the sign at the entrance of the church courtyard announcing this temporary interruption (without mention of the assassination), I heard someone asking if I was a Christian. I turned my head towards the voice, which I realized belonged to one of the two old men sitting on a bench in front of the gate. “No,” I said, “why?” He responded that I would be welcome to the Sunday mass, to pray and see
the interior of the church. When I asked if it would be alright for a Muslim to attend the mass, he replied, “Yes of course, aren’t we all Muslims in the end? We believe in the same God.”

The alleged Muslimness of an Orthodox Christian comprised a rhetorical move to transcend not simply the specificities of individual religion in order to cultivate a common ground with other people (i.e., from other religions), but also the conditions that confined particular groups and individuals to the position of a “religious minority.” In this context, knowing and citing other religions, and especially those at the centre, opened a space in which those who were “different” could claim sameness. Saul’s narrative used to open this chapter and his references to Islam as a justification for his point about religious diversity exemplify this also.

In fact, it was not uncommon in Antakya to hear Jews and Christians referring to Islam or citing the Koran while discussing issues concerning religious coexistence. One particular section of the Koran that was often recited to me in these circumstances was the Surat al Baqara: “Indeed those who believed, and those who were Jews, or Christians or Sabeans—those among them who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness will have their reward with the Lord and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve” (Saheeh International 1997:9).

These recitations appear as one form of response to the theological puzzles that Veena Das (2013) identifies in her conceptualization of religious diversity, which, in the case of Islam, concern whether the good deeds of non-Muslims who have lived decent lives are accepted by God, and on what terms. Das underlines that the pressure of these questions comes not simply

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111 Although people were always welcoming in my occasional visits to the church, I needed the company of an old Christian couple, Hamid and Dima, in the following weeks in order to render my visits regular. This was not because I was a Muslim, but because I was not a member of the Orthodox Christian community, and felt a sense of alienation that a Protestant German who had bought a house and lived in Antakya for over eight years explained thus: “I go to church every Sunday. Abuna, our priest accepted me by giving me communion, but the community did not. Every time I try to mingle in the courtyard after the mass, I find myself all alone after two minutes.”
from the words and teachings of religious authorities but “from the issues raised by ordinary Muslims who have experienced the goodness of others in the course of their lives” (2013:71). This was exactly the case, for instance, in the way Jozef’s best friend at the university, a pious Sunni Muslim from Hatay’s Reyhanlı region, reconciled Jozef’s identity as an Orthodox Christian, discussed below.

Jozef’s best friend, I learned, asked Jozef on three different occasions whether he would like to convert to Islam. His father, an imam at a mosque in Reyhanlı, had told him that if he really loved and valued someone who was not a Muslim, he was obliged to try at least three times to make that person a Muslim. Troubled also by the possibility of his best friend being punished and with the motivation to save someone he dearly loved, he approached Jozef and told him that if he became a Muslim he would enter the heaven directly and be rewarded even more than a born Muslim. When I asked Jozef how he responded to that, “Of course, I said ‘No’,” he said, laughing. “All my other friends will be in Hell, it wouldn’t be right to leave them all alone there!” Then, seriously, Jozef told me that he was happy for his friend as the attempt had released him of a burden. He had done his duty and was no longer responsible for Jozef’s suffering in the afterlife.¹¹²

In this example, we see how the identity categories constructed through the concepts of origin, locality, and religion are fraught with ambiguity and therefore negotiable in the actual relations that exist. In Rosen’s words, “not only do interpersonal ties crosscut group affiliations, but even

¹¹² The fact that it was Jozef’s friend in the dominant role of the active (i.e., proselytizing) party does, of course, reflect the communities’ structural inequality. The following exchange was similarly indicative. When I asked Jozef how he defined “best friendship,” he said, “I share almost everything with him, even things that I don’t tell my family. He can come to my place without feeling like he has to call first, for instance, he’s always welcome. This is what best friendship means for me.” I then asked him if this best friend would do the same for him or thought the same way. “I’ve never been to his place, before,” he replied.
within any given unit relationships are constantly being negotiated” (1979:105). These negotiations are nevertheless characterized by the power dynamics of the contexts in which they occur. The social and religious identities that arise from such dynamics are not exclusive of, but concurrent, and indeed interdependent, with personal and interpersonal relations. This can be identified in the different approaches of Muslims and non-Muslims towards religious difference.

Non-Muslims citing al Baqara or rhetorically claiming Muslimness, for example, are also examples of how physical (and sometimes emotional) proximity generates mundane solutions that allow relationships across religions to be maintained. Yet while the problem for pious Muslims like Jozef’s best friend is how to maintain the superiority of Islam’s path while leaving the judgment on non-Muslims in the hands of God (Das 2013:71), for non-Muslims in Antakya it often is how to validate their own religious position and make it intelligible to those in control of the terms of what religion means and how it is practiced. The theological quandaries about cohabiting a multi-religious milieu are not separable from the power relations concerning minority-majority relations in Turkey nor from the state discourses and practices that reinforce the norms of the majority religion as part of the secular governance of the state. In this context, the cosmopolitan gestures of non-Muslim subjects can even take official forms. For example, during the month of Ramadan, the Orthodox and Catholic Churches as well as the synagogue of Antakya hang banners in their streets that celebrate the arrival of Ramadan (fast) and/or the Eid (feast) (Figures 11, 12).

Banners acknowledging another religion’s holy markers (celebrations, etc.) together with the plaques of the Turkish flag celebrating the anniversary of the Turkish Republic (Figure 13), become visible in the context of their absence at the entrance of the mosques, the minarets of
which predominantly shape the skyline of the city. It is no coincidence that the declarations of national loyalty take the same form of cosmopolitan gesture towards the Muslim world in these examples. The absence and presence of these public messages speak to the felt need on the part of particular groups and institutions to make such declarations; for the minority religions they signify acknowledgement of Turkish and Muslim hegemony.

Figure 11. Antakya Jewish Foundation banner on the street of the synagogue: “May Ramadan, Sultan of the [other] 11 months, bring goodness, beneficence, prosperity.”

Although the religious holidays of Christian and Jewish communities had recently become media occasions in which the mayor and the governor in Antakya pay a visit to the church and the synagogue as an official performance of tolerance (Chapter 2), the power asymmetry in such visits and their condescending air, compared to these gestures, were highly noticeable. During the national holidays, for instance, the representatives of Jewish, Catholic, and Orthodox Foundations would line up to pay their respect and celebration to the governor of Hatay but would be received the last by the governor in his office, after all other bureaucratic leaders residing in Antakya.
Figure 12. Orthodox Church of Antakya banner: “May the month of Ramadan month bring goodness to the whole Muslim world.”

Figure 13. a) Entrance of Antakya synagogue: permanent plaque celebrates the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic. b) Orthodox Church of Iskenderun, Hatay: banners in 2012 celebrate the coinciding holidays of Republic Day (October 29) and the Eid al Adha.

This acknowledgment encourages us to view such practices as survival strategies rather than a commitment to religious cosmopolitanism. They are linked to the power, specter of violence and culture of fear that surround Christian and Jewish citizens of Turkey and produce silences such as those around the assassination of Luigi Padovese. These are surrender banners of peace offered and presented as much as proclaimed by the religious hierarchies. Not all such moves are as intentional, conscious, or carefully considered, of course. Embodied forms are ingrained in the
habits of living as a “religious minority” in a multi-religious setting that is nevertheless dominated by the signs and sounds of Sunni Islam.\textsuperscript{114}

I remember a moment when a Jewish interlocutor from the Choir, Amit, intuitively responded to the interrupting sound of ezan while we were in conversation at a café in Antakya Park. With us at the table were an Alawi member of the Choir and an old friend of Amit, who had done some business with him in the past. Amit had been telling us about the financial difficulties he had to endure after he went bankrupt when the ezan started. He paused, and said, “Azeez Allah, I hope I did not speak a lie,” meaning, “Dear God, I hope I have not misremembered some of the details of his narrative and unconsciously committed a sin.”

It is common amongst some pious Muslims to verbally respond to the ezan with similar words or invocations. This habit conventionally states that the ezan is heard and acknowledged, and not lost in the busyness of everyday life. A Jew’s adoption of this response, on the other hand, can be interpreted in a number of other ways, such as signifying assimilation or a strategic attempt to validate his narrative. Drawing on my interaction with Amit and others like him, however, I view such acts instead as an embodied manifestation of the “Muslimness” of the inter-religious or cosmopolitan world that Jews, Christians and Alawis cohabit in Antakya, as is also implied in the banner of the Jewish Foundation that addresses Ramadan from a Sunni Muslim perspective, “the Sultan of the 11 [other] months.” It is noteworthy that the Jewish Foundation banner does not specify that the Ramadan message is for Muslims as does the Christian one. In the Jewish message, the identity of the celebrator is rhetorically hidden, implying that the goodness Ramadan will bring is for all Antakyans and not only for the Muslims.

\textsuperscript{114} Andre Levy (2003) provides a similar account on the Jewish-Muslim relations in Morocco, looking at two ritualized areas of interaction, pilgrimage to holy sites and soccer games, both of which combine tension with playfulness and yet also reflect the vulnerability of Morocco’s diminishing Jewish population.
Thus far, I have shown how religious difference is perceived, accepted, and negotiated as given, challenging the view of cosmopolitanism as an individual and active pursuit of difference (e.g., Hannerz 2007). Here, cosmopolitanism appears as a collective experience and knowledge of how to interpret and manage religious difference, which is ascribed rather than achieved.\(^{115}\) In the following sections, I examine what happens when ideas of “individual engagement” and “belief” enter the picture and reinscribe difference as not only coincidental but desirable.

### 4.3 Diversity as the Immanence of God: Faith, Belief and Religiosity

Şaul’s point on religious diversity made with the example of Allah’s 99 names is situated in the same political context that encourages the habitual utterance of the phrase “We are the subjects of the same God.” Yet it also allows us to identify the wider theological positionings that go beyond the political hierarchies structuring how religious diversity is lived and communicated in Antakya and Turkey. Similar to the comments of the elderly on Allah’s doing, Şaul suggests that God is beyond human perception and understanding. Yet this conception is a starting rather than an ending point for his reasoning. What Davud and others see as “coincidence” is a purposeful act/doing according to Şaul.\(^{116}\)

The purpose in coincidence may not be apparent to humans, but does need to be addressed to make sense of the world as a complex yet inherently coherent system. This vision implies that

\(^{115}\) Brink-Danan (2012) makes a similar argument for the Jews of Istanbul, yet views the ascribed status of Jewish difference, and the lack of the element of “choice” in their cosmopolitan identity, as the absence of an ethical orientation. As my ethnographic examples clearly show, even the most pragmatic gestures of cosmopolitanism on the part of non-Muslims are not devoid of ethical questions about how to live with religious others.

\(^{116}\) Coincidence and a divine purpose do not necessarily represent two opposite poles. Coincidence, here, seems to suggest more than “the reasoned-coincidence” that Evans-Pritchard attributes to “Western thinking” and juxtaposes to witchcraft among the Zande in his famous account on the collapse of the old granary (1937:70). Rather than suggesting an opposition between the mystical and empirical, Davud’s comment on the coincidental nature of religious difference understands coincidence as having an air of divine design. The difference between the perspectives of Şaul and Davud is not so much in the meaning of the fact as it is in what to do with it.
religious difference is part of this complexity rather than a failure on the part of humans to find the right path to God or of God to show the right path to humans. It is the very indicator of God’s presence within the universe and the normal fabric of life. Furthermore, the complexity of this presence includes moral values that are no longer seen as necessarily or essentially religious.

“Belief in God” becomes a cosmology beyond conventional religious convictions, although it also implies them. It includes the political, worldly, and mundane struggles for justice, honour, and peace as well as individual efforts to acquire knowledge, beauty and wisdom. From Şaul’s perspective, even atheism can find a place in this logic as long as the atheist still has faith in one or more of these ethical struggles, as he explicitly told me during this conversation. In short, having faith of any kind can also mean believing in God within a cosmopolitan understanding. They mutually denote each other.

In this context, Şaul’s mention of Islam, as well as his references to secularized virtues such as justice, freedom, or equality, no longer stand in contradiction to his pious Jewish identity. Instead, they all appear as manifestations of a worldview that “contextualizes the material world in terms of something other or beyond it” (Lambek 2013:16). While Şaul names the “incomprehensibly complex” transcendent explicitly as God, his reasoning draws from the philosophical discourses of the relationship between immanence and transcendence. The unknown appears in the known in the form of diversity, the diversity of races, languages, plants, personalities, ideals, and everything else that exists in this world. Religion is no exception and represents the multiplicity of the paths that humans take to reach transcendence.

This reasoning evokes the ideas of inclusivity and openness in Sufism for which Şaul has an

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117 This, however, was not a popular view among most of my interlocutors, as I will discuss shortly.
appreciation. In fact, one can easily see the parallels between his comments on diversity and the following quote from public scholar Tariq Ramadan’s recent blog post on pluralism and fundamentalism:

Pluralism is a condition of humility and a protection against potential excess. Islam confirms this transversal teaching by synthesizing the two dimensions…The verse Had God so willed, He would have made you a single community is echoed by others which reveal the essence and finality of this diversity: ‘Had not God checked some groups of people [nations, societies, religions] by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted and monasteries would have been pulled down as well as synagogues, churches and mosques.’ Diversity, balance of powers, indeed involve a risk of conflicts and strife. Yet, it is for all men a condition of survival and an education to measure and humility. Thus looking out to consider the world and societies as they are brings the conscience back into itself and compels it to reassess its own tendency to believe that its own truth alone is true (Ramadan 2013).

While Ramadan’s reframing of Islam as pluralistic is very much informed by and speaks to his situatedness in a world dominated by liberal values, Şaul’s invocation of Islam confirms how the exchange of theological perspectives across religions is multidirectional, both geographically and epistemologically.

Şaul’s take on religious diversity does not represent the dominant attitude in Antakya towards other religions—in fact, it is rather striking. Nevertheless, it does not contradict the way many people in Antakya engage with religions or the very idea of “religion.” Resonating mostly with the narratives of younger generations that emphasize devotion to God but express skepticism towards religious tenets, Şaul’s position speaks to the shifting meanings of religiosity due to the missionary work of Catholic and Protestant churches, new religious trends within Islam and its liberalization, and secularizing reforms and political transformations in Turkey (below).
The religious conflict that needs resolving is not simply between different religious identities cohabiting the same space and managed daily through different forms of exchange and relationality. It also concerns how to relate to and belong in a religion, through birth as has traditionally been the case with Orthodox Christians, Jews and Alawis in Antakya, through marriage as is both widely practiced and objected to by Antakyans, or through “belief,” individual will, and conscience along the lines of the (Christian) liberal secular understandings of religion and conversion.

In this context, Jozef’s equation of having faith (inanc sahibi olmak) with belief in God and his differentiation between faith and religiousness (dindarlık) need some attention. Although Jozef, like Şaul, finds the particularities of different religious practices less significant than a general belief in God, he also places an emphasis on action, and in particular intentional action, as the manifestation of this belief. What one believes is inseparable from what one does and why one does it. Praying is necessary, but its specifics do not matter. In fact, people should be free to use their imaginative capacities and individual creativity in praying in order to deepen their faith.

The multiplicity of the paths to God, which in Şaul’s account refers to the multiplicity of religions and the seemingly secular virtues of today’s world, includes also the multiplicity of practices that extend beyond the religious traditions in which they emerge. The specificities of these practices should remain open to reinterpretation, transformation, and appropriation. This is an openness captured by the use of the more circumscribed concept of iman (belief) analogously with the generalized inanc (faith), as unbounded by the particularities and parochialism of a given religion.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{118} Both iman and inanc imply “devotion from the heart” with an emphasis on sincerity, love, fear, and certainty (as opposed to doubtfulness), but while the devotion of inanc can be to a thought, to a person or to God, iman has strong
The differentiation between “religion as a social system” and “faith as an authentic and personal response to divinity” (Turner 2001:133) has been addressed by scholars as being central to the theological thinking of certain versions of Latin Christianity, paving the ground for the privatization and specialization of religion under secular regimes (Casanova 2006; 2009; Keane 2007; Taylor 2007; Turner 2001; Weber 1905). Such differentiation is relevant also to anthropological debates on “belief” concerning its equation to “the inner conscience of the individual” (Durkheim 2001[1912]:424), its appearance as the core of religion in mediating people’s understandings of the world, and the indiscriminate use of the term underscoring the impact of its Christian origins on today’s secular perspectives on religion (Asad 2011; Cannell 2005; Rappaport 1999; Ruel 1982).

The invocations of a model of private and individualistic belief in Jozef and Şaul’s approaches resonate with the secular understandings of the relationship between belief and practice, possibly reflecting the success of the secular reforms in shaping the educational, social and political life in Turkey (Berkes 1964; Cinar 2005). Yet these invocations also represent the contemporary endeavors of non-Sunni individuals in Antakya to reincorporate a new religious consciousness into the secularized realms of social life through reasoning, action, and imagination, situating “individual belief” within the social and inter-subjective realms of politics and religion.

Islamic connotations in the way it is used in Turkey (in addition to the five pillars of Islam—fasting, namaz, zekat, haj, and the shahada [declaration of the belief in the oneness of God and acceptance of Muhammad as God’s Prophet]), there are the six requirements of iman (belief in God, belief in God’s angels and books, belief in fate, belief in the day of Judgment and belief in the sacred people named in the Koran).

119 Durkheim’s understanding of religion, however, is not individualistic. He views modern religious forces as the individualized forms of “collective” forces, noting that “even when religion seems to be entirely within the individual conscience, it is still in society that it finds the living source from which it is nourished” (2001[1912]:425).
Such endeavors acknowledge the problem-space occupied by “religion” in secular thinking and by particular religions within the Turkish secular nationalism. They seek to transcend this space by addressing religion in the plural (or beyond itself), as a way of relating to other religions or alternative religious positionalities. This focus on plurality addresses fundamentalism, and in particular fundamentalist Islam, as its ultimate other, echoing Tariq Ramadan’s comments on excess. For instance when I asked Jozef to explain what he meant by the difference between inanç and dindarlık after the moment described above, he told me that even though he is a devout Christian, he would not call himself dindar because it suggests a more dogmatic relationship to God that forecloses the possibilities of connection through other means, which humanity is yet to discover.

The distinctions and convergences between iman, inanç and dindarlık have significant implications for how religious difference is mediated in Antakya by the very people who inhabit the space of difference, as well as for how this mediation becomes, or fails to become, part of the future-oriented project of religious cosmopolitanism. Most people I knew in Antakya believed religion to be a necessary part of life. Even those who did not consider themselves religious told me that they had respect for “true” believers and would want their own children to have some sort of religious education. Yet they often framed this education in terms of an acquisition of common knowledge about life and culture, and a way of overcoming the prejudices against others caused by ignorance. Maria’s helper Meryem, for instance, explored with me her Sunni neighbours’ reluctance to receive the decorated Easter eggs she brought to them (on the grounds that they were sanctified in a Christian way) as follows:

I always bring a piece of what I cook to my neighbours because it’s bad if it’s only the smell of what you make that goes to your neighbour’s house. But during the Ramadan, they didn’t bring me the food they made because I am not fasting. I know that they shared
their food with their other Sunni neighbours.

Here, the emphasized moral difference is not simply between Islam and Christianity but between those who can integrate their religious duties into the etiquette of neighbourly relations in ways that surpass religious boundaries, and those who fail or refuse to do so.

Also common was the idea that religions are prone to corruption and praying should not take control of everyday life. Not surprisingly, the reference point of non-Sunnis and secular Muslims for such corruption was religious fundamentalism associated with Sunni Islam. This can be identified clearly in the perspective of an Alawi sheikh on religious difference, expressed in one of his sermons:

> There are differences in the way people pray. Praying is a key aspect of all religions. It’s indispensable. Yet it should comply with the requirements of our times as well. You cannot question the Book, but you can question the mind. For instance, Sunnis say a person should pray five times a day, fast, and so on. But if you do this all, there’s no time for you to do anything else. If you live your whole life based on the afterlife, then what’s the point of being in this world? There has to be a balance. Too much praying is as harmful as not enough praying. Too much praying creates dogmatic regimes as in Saudi Arabia.

A similar idea was recounted to me by a Sunni Muslim woman, Halise, during a mawlid that took place in her father’s house.\(^{120}\) Her father was a well-known and respected hajji in his 80s and was going to read passages from the Koran to men and women from Halise’s extended family and her father’s neighbours who crowded the living room of the house. There was a computer placed on the coffee table in the middle of the room arranged for the Skype attendance

\(^{120}\) Mawlid: observance of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. In Turkey it is used more generally, to refer to the ceremony that takes place in mosques and private homes to celebrate sacred days in Islam, including the birth of the Prophet through the reading of religious passages from the Koran and the Hadith.
of Halise’s brother, who at the time was in Cyprus for business. During our conversation in between the service of coffee and the start of khutba, Halise told me that she has made two 
*umrah* visits in her life and was really disturbed by the level of religiosity that she witnessed in Mecca.\(^{121}\)

Religion rules everything there. Even which hand you use while you eat, which step you take entering the house or the bathroom. I don’t want a life in which religion takes you as captive. Yes, maybe it’s written in the Book, but we are no longer living in those times. Religion is part of life but it’s also a psychological thing. I don’t think we should organize our lives completely in accordance with religious tenets.

Yet even for those who did not want to commit themselves to a completely religious life, there remained the problem of how to maintain the superiority of their own religion while reconciling, either rhetorically or in practice, the presence of other religions. One tendency I noticed during my fieldwork in response to this problem was to praise religious diversity through an implicit or explicit representation of one’s own religion as “all encompassing,” or, in other words, “truly cosmopolitan.” Consider, for instance, the following narrative by Emine, an Alawi housewife in her 50s, as to how she came to understand her own religion and its relationship to other religions:

> Throughout my whole life, I always felt the pressure of being an Alawi, and having to explain it to others [non-Alawis]. I found out about my religion on my own. I thought about it day and night. I asked myself, “What is Alawism?”, “Who is an Alawi?”, “Who am I?” There are many religions on Earth, right? Each of these religions has different denominations, orders, and sects. Put aside the personal power struggles that are involved in these distinctions, all that’s left is God, the Prophets and the Scripture. *İnanç* should only be about these. The rest is all about oppression and the imposition of some people’s tenets on others. They say Alawism is not a religion or a denomination. True! But what is

\(^{121}\) *Umrah* is pilgrimage to the Kaaba at any time of the year.
it then? We say we are the adherents of Ali. Who is Ali? A Caliph. He’s a human being like us; he got married and had kids, Hasan, Hussain. But how do I reach God through another human? If you want to reach God, your inanç should be consolidated (birlesmeli) somewhere. Beyond David, beyond Moses, beyond Jesus and beyond Muhammad…

What is Alawism? My answer is it’s God’s path. It’s the path that consolidates different religions. You may have noticed that Alawis here have a lot of bayrams. Almost every week of the year there’s a bayram. This is because we celebrate the bayrams of Sunnis, Jews, and Christians. We have a bayram to praise Mary, one for Jesus and another for Moses. But if you say this in public, people wouldn’t accept it. They would think you’re inventing a new religion or denying the others. The priests, imams, sheiks would all object to it. Yes, there may be different systems of faith and different Books. But they’re all the same Book. We Alawis read the Koran because we believe it includes all the Books that God has sent to earth. The Koran recognizes all the Prophets. Then how do you pray? Which religion’s rules do you follow? Let me tell you what I do. I forgot how to do the namaz [the Sunni one she was taught in school], but I know some surahs from the Koran and I read them. I recite the prayers to myself when I’m walking on the street. I don’t see that it’s not as valuable as the namaz. I don’t think I need a sheikh or an imam to help me. God knows our heart and reads our mind. Faith is everywhere in the world and not just in the hands of the powerful.

This explanation was offered to me in Emine’s living room. The narrative starts with a self-reflexive question about the Alawi identity. “Who is an Alawi?” and “Who are we?” were questions that I often heard from Alawis in Antakya as the opening to their discussion on religion. The question was rhetorically framed as something that they always asked themselves,

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122 I met Emine in a local festival. She invited me to her apartment a couple of times and after we got to know each other better, I accompanied her to the Alawi tombs she visited occasionally. She lives in a rented apartment close to the centre with her husband, their two sons and daughter.
rather than others, as here. This was partly related to the inward (batini) nature of Alawi theology, as commented on in the Arab Alawi sacred book, *Kitab’il Mecmu*.  

The Alawi distinction between batini (inside/internal/implicit/esoteric) and zahiri (outside/external/explicit/exoteric) constitutes the basis of Alawi theology and is the main reference point of the differentiation between “us” and “them.” The batin, as the internal, invisible and esoteric truth resides in and beyond the self and transcends the material world. Yet it is almost always addressed in relationship to, and needs for its completion, others, the society or the world external (zahiri) to the self. As in Michael Lambek’s remark on the tension and movement between immanence and transcendence in Jewish and Christian theologies, “the more-than-human constituted as transcendence” in Alawism folds back into and becomes concealed within the immanent, the body, the world, the ordinary, and the everyday (2013:17). While the external world is perceivable through the senses, the batin as the hidden divine truth requires the work of mind and introspection to complement knowledge of the zahir. Knowledge of the batin, as well as the very distinction between the batin and the zahir, should be kept hidden from women and uninitiated men as well as non-Alawi outsiders.

Considered, as a woman, to belong only to the zahir and excluded from the main rituals or initiation ceremonies of Alawism, Emine frames her story as an inquiry into her religion “on her own.” This personal inquiry inevitably involves an encounter with and conceptualization of the us-them (Alawi-other) distinction within which women (Emine) hold an ambiguous position.

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123 *Kitab’il Mecmu* is composed of sixteen surahs, five written by Hamdan el Hasibi in the 10th century and the rest completed by early Alawi theologians. It is used for educational purposes in initiation ceremonies and seen as complementary to the Koran. What is written in Kitab’il Mecmu is believed to reveal the esoteric parts of the Koran to its reader, since the Koran is also believed to be composed of explicit and implicit words and surahs (see Turk 2005).

124 Arab Alawism, as opposed to Turkish Alevism, excludes women completely from the religious rituals and exempts them from religious requirements except for the preparation of food and services during the bayrams.
Any development beyond this distinction requires a move beyond the specificities of particular religions both at the level of belief and practice, which Emine names the “consolidation” (birlesme) of inanç.

This consolidation of inanç requires a direct and personal attachment to the transcendent and its zahiri manifestations (e.g., the Books and Prophets) without the mediation of religious authorities, tenets, or even specific and circumscribed forms of praying. The self-reflexive journey to the religious self here may appear as coterminous with secular notions of selfhood and belief. Yet inanç as an interior state is not necessarily a priori to its expression through practice (e.g., by reading the Koran or praying while walking). In fact, it is within such practices that the consolidation takes place for Emine, as happens in the incorporation of other Abrahamic religions into Alawi bayrams.

The Muslim understanding of the Koran as the last Book that God sent to Earth, Mohammad the last Prophet and therefore Islam the most valid and all-encompassing religion, was common in Antakya. It is necessary to note, however, that Emine’s portrayal of Alawism as an all-encompassing manifestation of the divine is not a proselytizing narrative as it is in some Islamic representations of the Koran. One cannot convert to Alawism but has to be born one. Hence, I consider Emine’s narrative more as a way to situate Alawism within a cosmopolitan logic that carries the imprints of secular notions of self but also articulates such notions with certain Alawi categories of internality and externality. Given that such theological positionings always take place in particular historical and social contexts, one finds implicit and explicit references to

125 This contrasts with the way a covered Sunni Muslim interlocutor used the same argument in her attempt to convince me to try converting my non-Muslim husband. Similar to Jozef’s best friend trying to convert him, she told me that Christians are easiest to convert because there are a lot of commonalities between the two religions. She said, “We are such lucky people that God created us as members of the most sacred religion, Islam and now it is our responsibility to turn our loved ones to the true path before it is too late.”
Sunni Islam in her narrative as well, which becomes most evident in her refusal to leave “faith” only to the hands of the “powerful.”

Moving back and forth between what Doğruel and Leman (2009:607) call “pro-cosmopolitanism” and “pro-communitarianism,” all these examples concerning “faith beyond religions” allow us to recognize the presence of secular conceptualizations of religion as a powerful variable in local debates on religious diversity. In Halise’s words, “the real difference is not between different religions, it’s between people who have internalized secularist principles and those who haven’t.” Understanding religion as something that is ultimately located in one’s heart and accessed through one’s mind and introspection, however, has implications for people’s social and political relationships that differ depending on who claims the idea, in what contexts and in response to whom. As argued (above), the turn to the secularism argument in the narratives of religious minorities is often also a way of claiming recognition, if not equality, in the face of the privileges accorded to the majority Sunni Muslims in Turkey (Micallef 2006:149). Therefore, Islam becomes the reference point both for demanding intelligibility and acceptance, and for illustrating what religious parochialism looks like in a non-secular regime.

When it comes to people like Şaul and Jozef, on the other hand, the addressee is not only the Sunni Muslim majority but also their own communities. They take issue with the traditional ways of practicing religion and accommodating religious difference. In the following section, I examine the generational and class conflicts and the missionary work of the new churches and religious movements, which equally contribute to the heterogeneity of Antakya’s religious landscape. These phenomena create tensions between old and new ways of relating to religion and religious diversity, and reveal and contribute to the limits of the material actualization of religious cosmopolitanism.
4.4 Shifting meanings of religiosity and institutional contexts of flexible religious attachments

Since the mid 1990s, there has been a renewed scholarly interest in the creative role of “world religions” in shaping modernization and globalization processes (Beck 2010; Neuman 2011; Turner 2001). The acknowledgement that the secularization thesis is no longer tenable has made it difficult for scholars to avoid religious dimensions of globalization and transnationalism. With this acknowledgement, anthropological studies on the global nature of new religious movements have looked at the transnational movement of religious members, funds, institutional arrangements, scriptures, hymns, sermons and practices beyond the local contexts that anthropologists of religion have traditionally examined (Beyer 1994; Coleman 2000; Csordas 2007; Daswani 2010; Eisenlohr 2012; Hefner 1998). Although the emphasis on “personal faith” in Antakya reflects the shifting meanings of religiosity in the context of similar transnational movements within Christianity and Islam, the expansion of religion beyond “the local” through such emphasis is also about the day-to-day encounters between different religious actors.

Antakya has long been a stage for the evangelizing forces of Christianity due to the historical significance of Antioch as the place of origin for the differentiation between Judaism and Christianity (Zetterholm 2003). The institutional pressure of the Turkish state on Christian missionary activities during the Republican period contributed to the evangelizing movements focusing their attention mostly on the Orthodox Christian community, along with Alawis who

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126 The grotto church of St Peter in Antakya is known to be the place where St Paul and St Peter preached to Antioch’s early Christian community, making Antioch the holy city where the disciples were called “Christians” for the first time. The church was declared a pilgrimage site by the Vatican in 1989.
were suspected to have a secret Christian proclivity due to the affinity of certain Alawi doctrines with Christianity.\textsuperscript{127}

The recently (and unofficially) established Methodist, Pentecostal, and Apostolic Churches in Antakya have a very small number of recruits mostly from the Alawi community, despite the relative freedom they enjoy in preaching there compared to the restrictions they face in Anatolian cities.\textsuperscript{128} Although they have an antagonistic relationship with the Orthodox and Catholic Churches in Antakya, which is often expressed in theological terms (they are accused by the latter of being disrespectful to Virgin Mary), these churches do not present a real threat for the Orthodox Christians.\textsuperscript{129} A local Alawi intellectual who was very knowledgeable about the religious factions in the city once remarked,

These new churches are openly missionary, they target younger generations but recruit very few because they are not flexible enough. They require their followers to deny other ways of being Christian. So, I cannot name you a ‘Protestant family’ in Antakya. There are only individuals.

\textsuperscript{127} As also implied in Emine’s narrative, Alawi religious ceremonies involve bread and wine and attribute a sacred role to wine drinking. The position of Ali, the fourth Caliph, in Alawism is understood to be the (Jesus-like) incarnation of divinity. Its Trinitarian theology, consisting of Muhammad, Ali, and Salman al Farisi (a freed slave of Muhammad) resembles the Christian trinity and some Alawi sheiks draw parallels between the two. Alawis also celebrate many Christian festivals (including Christmas, New Year’s Day and Epiphany, Easter, Pentecost, and Palm Sunday) and honour many Christian saints (St Catherine, St. Barbara, St. George, St John the Baptist, St John Chyrsostom, St Mary Magdalene) (Lane, Redissi, and Şaydâwî 2009; Bar-Asher and Kofsky 2002; Pipes 1989).

\textsuperscript{128} The Methodist church was built in 2002 in a renovated building from the Mandate Regime by Korean missionaries. Its priest is Korean and preaches to a community of around 20 people, mostly from the formerly non-pious Alawis and a few from the Orthodox Christian community. The Apostolic and Pentecostal Churches were converted from old Antakya townhouses and are not officially registered as churches. They also have foreign and visiting priests and their communities are even smaller than the Methodist. The Alawis are the most attractive target for the evangelizing efforts of these churches because unlike the Sunni Muslims and the Orthodox community, they do not have an officially recognized foundation and their conversion is considered to be less threatening from the perspective of the state.

\textsuperscript{129} Rebuilt in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century after a fire, the St Paul Orthodox Church of Antakya continues to serve the largest and oldest Christian community in Antakya. Although the annexation of Hatay to Turkey resulted in the tying of the region’s Orthodox churches institutionally to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul, especially in matters concerning the state’s regulation of non-Muslim foundations and institutions, these churches associate themselves spiritually with the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchates in Damascus and Latakia.
The Catholic Church of Antakya, on the other hand, seems to have a more significant effect on the way the youth of the Orthodox Christian community differentiate themselves from the older generations. Founded in the 19th century, empowered during the French Mandate period and moved to its current location, a renovated Antakya townhouse, in the 1970s, the Catholic Church has a longer established and more accommodating relationship with the Orthodox Church as well as the Turkish state. About 60 people are registered in official records as Catholic in Antakya, a number mostly made up of the remaining Catholic Armenians along with a few baptised converts from the Alawi community and Sunni Islam. Most of the active attendees of the Catholic services, however, are not registered as such. They identify themselves as Orthodox Christians and are registered in the records of the Orthodox Church.

The Catholic Church avoids antagonism with the Orthodox religious leaders by emphasizing their theological commonalities, and is more flexible in its membership and attendance rules. Its Sunday mass is held in the evenings so as not to overlap with the morning mass of the Orthodox Church. It also celebrates the important religious holidays such as Christmas and the Easter on the same day as the Orthodox Church. While the Sunday mass in the Orthodox Church is widely attended by locals, most of whom are in their fifties and older, the evening mass in the Catholic Church is preferred by younger families and individuals from the Orthodox community.

Many attend the services of both churches. For instance, the singer of the Catholic Church, Apo, was baptised, got married, and had his children baptised in the Orthodox Church, where his whole family was registered. Since he was a child, though, he has also attended the services in the Catholic Church. Even though he repeated a number of times to me that he does not differentiate between the two churches and that “the church and God is one” for him, he is more active in the Catholic Church and defines his relation to the Orthodox Church more as a
traditional, rather than a religious, attachment. This, he notes, is because the services in the Catholic Church are in Turkish, and tend to be more collaborative and less hierarchical. During the Sunday mass, the accented Turkish of the Italian priest is often accompanied by voices of the regular attendees who read the prayers in turn. “There is no separation between rich and poor in the Catholic Church,” Apo tells me, “Unfortunately one cannot say the same thing for the Orthodox Church. People are all dressed up in fancy clothes and look down on you if you don’t wear such clothes.” Although the lack of class distinction in the Catholic Church does not speak to Apo’s own personal experience, it does appeal to younger generations and immigrants from nearby Orthodox villages who feel excluded and looked down on by the urban Christian elites in Antakya.

Not everyone shares the same view as Apo. Coming from an urban Orthodox family, Mustafa started going to the Catholic Church at the age of fifteen. He also tried the Protestant Churches as he was curious about learning all aspects of his religion. Similar to Apo and Jozef, he found the classic Arabic of the sermons in the Orthodox Church to be a major obstacle. He continued his attendance at the Catholic Church for about seventeen years. Now he is back to the Orthodox Church, as he no longer believes in the sincerity of the Catholic Church’s emphasis on the commonalities between the two denominations. “We are all brothers, all Christians and all Muslims. No denying on that. But we are also different,” he says, and adds

The flexibility you see in the Catholic Church is just to recruit more people from our community. If they were the majority in Antakya, I do not think they would go easy with the Orthodox teachings like they do now. I find the Protestant Churches more honest in that sense. They say, “This is us, if you accept it, come, if not, stay where you are!”

Notwithstanding such considerations, however, it is their ability to “understand” the service that remains key to the narratives of those who choose the Catholic over the Orthodox Church. The
criticism within the community on the matter has motivated the latter to add a section to the Sunday mass where the priest reads parts of the Bible from its Turkish translation after the reading from the classical Arabic. This does not satisfy all, such as Jozef. Although his mother brought him and his elder sister to the Orthodox Church every Sunday, they have also attended the Catholic Church since childhood. After being orphaned at the age of 15, he (as well as his sister) has been taken care of by both churches and the Orthodox community, mostly through bursaries for their education. Jozef now lives in one of the flats owned by the Catholic Church in exchange for a nominal rent, and he has stopped going to the Orthodox Church even though he identifies himself as Orthodox:

If I remained with the Orthodox Church, I’d eventually be alienated from my religion. They’re too old school. People go there out of habit, not because they are interested in religion. I wouldn’t put up with the narrow-mindedness of the priest and the community.

The following conversation I had with Jozef illustrates how his understanding of religion “as a matter of faith” diverges from the restricted and exclusive ways in which one belongs to the Jewish, Alawi and Orthodox communities in Antakya:

Jozef I believe that everyone has an interpretation of God of their own. My own interpretation might seem wrong to some religious authorities. Theirs don’t seem right to me, either. I can assure you that my religious beliefs stand in the forefront in my life. I may not call myself “dindar” but I live my life as a devout Christian. This isn’t because I was born a Christian, but because I make my decisions about life in accordance with the requirements of my religion and believe that religion in general can teach a lot to people. There may be no need for religion to separate the right from the wrong, but religion facilitates this separation more than any other thing in life as long as you make an effort for it.

Seçil What kind of a place you think religion holds in my life?
Jozef It seems like you don’t care much about it.

Seçil Are you not bothered that someone who does not seem to care about religion keeps asking you questions about it?

Jozef No, not at all. You may not call it religion but if you have faith in truth, justice, or goodness, and if you are trying to live your life accordingly, you might as well be considered faithful from my perspective.

Jozef’s emphasis on openness to individual reinterpretation opposes the position of my elderly interlocutors who view and accept religious difference as “given by birth.” The tension between the two positions that Jozef identifies here (to be born as a member of a religion versus being faithful through a conscious and wilful commitment to “righteousness”) becomes most acute in the case of converts. Although very few in numbers, converts pose the biggest challenge to the traditional ways of being religious as well as to the narratives of being the subjects of the same God. The priests of the Orthodox Church, for instance, refuse to give communion to converts baptised in other churches, and the Church recently became stricter in baptising the children of inter-faith marriages. A convert to Catholicism from Sunni Islam recounted her story of how she was denied communion in the Orthodox Church in the following way:

I was in the line. When it was my turn and the old priest was about to give me the communion without knowing who I was, the younger one gave him a sign of “No” with his fingers. I felt really humiliated. When I asked the younger priest about this incident later during a concert trip (they both were members of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations at the time), he said, ‘It’s not my personal belief, it’s the procedure. You were baptised later and we’re not supposed to give you communion.’ But a baby born into a Christian family has no consciousness when it’s baptised. Isn’t it more valuable for someone to become Christian with his or her own will as a mature person?
The emphasis placed on “personal faith” and “individual choice” as opposed to traditional assignment of religions by birth complicates the associations made between secular conceptions of belief and Christian (and in particular Protestant) understandings of interiority. It shows how diverse Christian populations in Antakya, even when they inform each other, reflect and are marked by different experiences of religiosity and sociality. This is also noticeable in the case of Ezgi, the shopkeeper in Ethem’s silver shop (Chapter 3).

As a convert to Catholicism from Alawism, she confronts the hostility from both Alawis and Orthodox Christians, including some of those who attend the Catholic Church. Her response to this hostility is to emphasize the superficiality of the traditional understandings of religious belonging, in a similar way to Jozef:

They take their religion for granted because they’re born into it. Many accept it as tradition and don’t think about it or make an effort, like I do. Alawis visit the tombs out of habit or to ask for favours from God, not out of real religious commitment. My religion is in here [pointing at her heart], I believe in it for myself and for God, not for the others. It doesn’t concern others.

Ironically, however, such emphases on “individuality” in describing a more inclusive and flexible attachment to God are motivated by precisely such intimate confrontational encounters. As Asad notes, “words translated as [belief are] usually embedded in distinctive social and political relationships and articulated distinctive sensibilities. They [are] first of all lived and only occasionally theorized” (2011:47). Jozef, Šaul, and Ezgi conceptualize their shifting religious orientations as a matter of “faith” beyond the circumscribed boundaries of particular religions. Yet, in a similar vein, such conceptualizations cannot be isolated from the political and social engagements these young Antakyans have had with the religion they were born into as well as with other religions they encountered and developed an interest in. Šaul’s following
commentary illustrates well how social and inter-religious is the context that grounds his theorizing of individual belief, again echoing Tariq Ramadan’s comments on diversity and excess:

In the modern secular world that we live in, even believers take religiosity for granted. They spend less time than their ancestors in thinking about what their religion requires them to do. They think they know their religion because they’re born into it. But our lives are not centered around religious practices anymore unless we make an individual effort to pray. So, when someone outside of and unfamiliar to your religion takes a sincere interest in yours and starts asking you questions about it, you realize how little you know. This questioning stimulates curiosity and motivation on your part to learn about your own religion and build your iman as a way to communicate with others.

In the same way, if you enclose yourself within your own community and have no interaction with the members of other religious communities, you either lose your interest or risk being dogmatic. Learning about other religions is in fact the best way of raising your awareness about your own religion. So, it’s a double-sided process. You strengthen your beliefs by being asked about your religion as well as by asking others about theirs.

In this idealized narrative, the individual effort to pray and cultivate faith requires a particular mode of religious inter-subjectivity, one that understands the individual-believer as an inherently social being. The imagined and desired journey of self-orientation to the transcendent is mediated not only by the rules, rituals, and norms of particular religions but also by constantly questioning the self in relation to proximate and distant others, as well as the necessity to explain the self to the majority Muslims. This formulation is rooted in the very experience Saul has had on a daily basis and aligns his position with that of the elderly.130 “The question of how to make

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130 As a reflection of the minority-majority relations on the ground, to many Muslims in Antakya who do not have close relationships with other communities, the distinction between Jews and Christians or the different denominations of Christianity are not clear. I have witnessed many occasions in which my Muslim interlocutors referred to the Christian people I knew as Jews, or vice versa. Amit, who was always careful about celebrating the
itself intelligible to others, how to translate its texts and ritual practices in other languages, or what attitude to take toward the ways of life it encounters,” (Das 2013:70) lies at the heart of such inter-subjective processes.

I now turn to a particular example of inter-faith dialogue in Antakya, a case that understands cosmopolitanism not merely as the commonsensical acceptance of religious difference nor as a power struggle between the minority and majority religions, but as an active and embodied embrace of religious cosmopolitanism. As an adaptation of a Western model of ecumenical Christianity by a German nun, Maria, who has been living in Antakya for over 30 years, this project has been initiated and performed in the daily prayers of a religious individual who is cosmopolitan in the casual sense of the term (worldly, international, well-traveled) and in the ethical sense through her commitment to going beyond her own religious grounding.

4.5 The Guesthouse

Almost every morning at 8 am, I wake up with Maria’s soft voice and the sound of her guitar traveling through the thin wall between her courtyard and the courtyard of the guesthouse where I stay. The music is part of the morning dua (prayer)\textsuperscript{131} that takes place in Maria’s half-basement converted into a place of worship. After months of attending her noon and evening duas, I recognize the music that affects me, a hymn from the book of Taizé songs edited by the religious holidays of his Muslim and Christian friends once told me, “We celebrate the Ramadan of our Muslim brothers. But many do not know when and how long we fast, what are our holidays and so on. This is because we have been a very small minority.”

\textsuperscript{131} Maria insists on using “dua” [prayer] and not “ayin” [service/sacrament/ceremony] to dissociate the praying from the connotations of the Turkish term “ayin” that is often used to refer to non-Muslim, specifically Christian, forms of praying or service. “Dua” refers to prayer in a more general sense, which may be the reason why Maria thinks of it as more inclusive and appropriate.
eczumenical Taizé community in France and duplicated by Maria to assist her guest-participants in following along.

The hymnbook contains a collection of notated polyphonic hymns from different denominations of Christianity with lyrics in European, Asian, and Slavic languages – but none in Arabic or Turkish. Having the same shape, layout, and structure of the solfège books that took me years to learn to read studying at the Istanbul Conservatory of Western Classical Music, the book, I know, is hardly intelligible to an ordinary dua participant, including those who may know one of its languages. There are also a few Muslim songs that I sometimes hear Maria singing in the morning duas, the ones she had notated and classicized with the help of her musician friends. Her archive also has local Jewish, Orthodox, and Alawi songs, but she finds their oriental melodies and semitones harder to adjust to when singing and playing guitar. This is why I hear them in the duas only when there are members of these communities present or when Maria can rely on someone else among the participants to sing these songs in their authentic style.

The morning dua fixes the start of Maria’s daily routine, a routine that constructs a compartmentalized temporality according to the fixed times of her prayers. Not so different in its temporal organization from the Muslim ritual demarcation of five (or three) namaz performances (See Bowen 1989; Haeri 2013), Maria’s day is punctuated by her duas, held three times a day, before breakfast, lunch, and dinner. In the summer, the noon and evening dua times overlap with the noon and evening ezans (Muslim call to prayer), when the amplified voice of the imam coming from the parallel street intrudes, like an uninvited guest. The only exception to the routine of daily duas is Sundays, the official weekly holiday of the secular Republic and religious weekly holiday for the city’s Christian community. For Maria this is indeed also a holy day, in that she expects everyone to take a break on Sundays and focus on their religion’s principles, as
does she.

The daily duas are an integral part of a wider project that brought Maria to Antakya forty years ago. Inspired by the ecumenical Taizé community in France as a young German nun in the early 1970s, Maria settled in Antakya on a mission to create an inter-faith environment for the members of the three Abrahamic religions living in and traveling to (or through) the city. Although she continues her communication with the Taizé community, she also emphasizes the difference of her project from the Taizé monastic order: it is not limited to the different denominations of Christianity. This embrace of different religions led her into an ideological conflict with the Italian priest of the Catholic Church and his neo-Catechumenism, resulting in her split from the church eight years ago. Since then, Maria has put all her energy into inter-faith dialogue activities, which, she says, are themselves a form of prayer to God regardless of religious preference.

Maria’s explicit interest in the local religious beliefs and practices and her attempt to make them part of her own prayers differentiate her project from the evangelizing efforts of other foreign religious figures, such as the Korean pastors of the newly established Methodist Protestant Church and the visiting European pastors of the Apostolic and Pentecostal Churches. They resonate with the philosophical models of alterity in which “the recognition of the essential humanity” requires “the act of looking at self through the eyes of the Other” (Nussbaum 1996:34). Yet, when situated in actual relationships, the abstract desire to address the religious other suggests different engagements and negotiations for different people. Some of these

132 Jozef told me that the committed followers of the Catholic Church are not allowed to attend Maria’s duas. He also told me that Maria used to attend the Sunday masses even after she dissociated herself from the church officially, but not anymore. He then summarized the current situation between the priest and Maria: “They respect each other but they don’t approve of each other.”
engagements correspond to, inspire, and enable particular aspects of Maria’s project, while others reveal the limitations and challenges involved in taking the idea of “believing in the same God” more seriously. To clarify some of these engagements and challenges, it is necessary to take a closer look at how Maria puts her ideals into practice and who becomes involved in her project and under what conditions.

4.5.1 The Dua

In accordance with the multi-religious spirit of her daily duas, Maria envisions her semi-basement grotto space as “a place that belongs to all religions where everyone from any religion can sit and pray comfortably next to one another” (Figure 14). Maria sees this as a neutral place, equidistant to all religions, so that going there should not prevent anyone from going to their own church, mosque, or synagogue to perform their religious duties. To visually manifest this neutrality to potential participants, the hall is decorated in the simplest way possible and bare of any religious symbols and icons that could create controversy among the followers of different religions. In line with the instructions given in the introduction of the Taizé hymnbook, there is a long cane carpet and a few cushions on the ground for those who pray on the ground, and wicker benches and wooden stools around the carpet for others to sit. Hung on the stone brick wall across the entrance are a number of wooden placards with the word “peace” written in different scripts, as well as the signs of peace and of the three Abrahamic religions. On the wall of the other end of the hall is a big poster that Maria calls “the tree of peace,” which carries paper-leaves with messages by her visitors.
Although she desires to neutralize the dua space and bridge different religious (and national) identifications under a wider message of world peace, Maria also acknowledges the significance of traditional religious buildings, and does not want to completely detach her daily duas from them. One of her aims, whose proper extension keeps being postponed to the future, is to hold the evening duas at a different religious site each day; so far, she has only managed to get permission from the priest of her former church, and the evening dua is now practiced in the Catholic Church on Tuesdays.

As far as I can tell from attending them, even the church does not provide a very welcoming atmosphere for these duas. If the priest or other church members are present in the courtyard when Maria’s group enters on a Tuesday, the tension in the air is quite apparent. It is not a habit of Maria to express negative opinions of people or situations, so I never hear any direct criticism from her, but I did notice her employee Meryem or others on a few occasions making cynical or disapproving comments about the tension. While we were leaving the church after a Tuesday dua
one time, for example, she once said to me quietly (in order to avoid reaction from Maria), “This isn’t a Katolik kilisesi (Catholic Church), it’s a Kötülük kilisesi (church of evil).” It was only intended as a joke, but the pun did, nevertheless, express the tensions around inter-religious praying.

The ritual structure of the daily dua is observed regardless of when and where it is held. It starts with the collective singing of two religious songs, usually from the Taizé hymnbook or the book produced and updated during each St Peter’s Celebrations (below) and contains the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish songs (words and notations). Then, one of the participants reads from the poetic writings of Sufi figures, such as Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi or Yunus Emre, or excerpts from the Quran, the Bible, or the Torah. All of these texts are carefully organized in folders with their translations in English, German, and French and placed in the cupboard in the room to be chosen by the person who wishes (or is asked) to do the reading. Depending on the identity of the guest-participants, the reading of the Turkish language texts may be followed by the reading of a translation. If there are any participants who know how to play an instrument, they are invited to multiply the sound of Maria’s guitar. Maria also wants the intervention of her participants, especially those who are familiar with the dua structure, to decide on the third hymn, which follows the text. If she is alone or with very few people, she picks one herself from the Taizé hymnbook.

Appropriated again from the Taizé community, the third hymn is followed by a five-minute silence, which ideally overlaps with the ezan hours so that the Muslim participants do not breach the rule of “no music” while the ezan is on. The “Silence” (Sessizlik) can be read as a meditation time, during which the participant is invited to speak to God, perhaps, in his or her thoughts. Jozef gives me his own interpretation of the Silence, thus:
In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, we do not even find time to stop and listen to our bodies and minds. If you do not listen to yourself, you cannot listen to God. I think silence in Maria’s dua gives that space for you to individually communicate to God in a collective environment.

This emphasis on introspection positions the passively listening body at the centre of the cultivation of belief in God. However, rather than suggesting a God of one’s own, as in Beck’s formula, the individuality of the desired communication with God requires the listening body to be situated within a collective environment and a “sharing” of silence.

The Silence is broken by the reading voice of one of the participants. This time, the text or the poem is from one of the books in the cupboard that directly engages with the theme of peace and brotherhood. Not all of these books are written from a religious standpoint and some involve the writings of secular thinkers on peace and togetherness. The dua ends with the final song, often one of the Muslim songs that I hear Maria singing also in the morning duas.

Maria is often alone in the morning duas: full attendance is not required and many guests are reluctant to sacrifice their morning sleep to bodily self-discipline through music, reading, and silence. This changes for guests who stay for a period and work for Maria in exchange for board and lodgings. Much of the work done by these young travelers and local boys, mostly, involves helping Maria’s permanent employee, Meryem, in cooking, cleaning, and managing what is actually a guesthouse complex. In fact, Maria has rented, partially renovated, and now maintains five buildings: three in a row, in one of which she lives and two across the street, all with courtyards, and which reflect different time periods and architectural styles. At other times, the live-in workers are asked to organize Maria’s archive of books, hymnbooks, and albums and her folders full of handwritten or photocopied songs, poems, and secular and religious writings that she finds relevant to her project. During my stay there was a local Alawi boy and two German
backpackers who took up this position. I noticed also that, on Meryem’s initiative, local boys from the Orthodox Christian community were helping with the work and sometimes attending the dua.

The live-in workers also have duties more directly related to the mission, insofar as they are expected to spend a couple hours in the afternoons practicing polyphonic singing with Maria and attend her evening programs. These programs usually involve reading and discussing a Biblical or Koranic story on the theme of the day. Given the lack of interest of Maria’s local visitors together with the temporary status of the workers, these programs rarely attract a sufficient number of attendees and thus are usually replaced by some evening conversation on a random topic in Maria’s courtyard over tea or coffee. Maybe not as systematic and regular as her ideal of scheduled meetings for each evening, these short interactions are still valuable occasions for Maria to introduce her guests to one another. As Maria often says:

> I am not here to proselytize to people, even though this is what everybody thinks. There’s a reason why I see this place as a guesthouse (misafirhane) and not a hotel or a permanent rental place. This is a temporary resting place for travelers similar to the caravansaries of old times, where people would meet, exchange ideas and beliefs, become comrades on their journeys, and travel together.

What place does Maria’s version of cosmopolitanism hold in Antakyans’ understanding of religious difference? Except during the week of the St Peter Celebrations or the times she hosts large tourist or pilgrim groups, the duas rarely include more than a few people (while I was there, very often only the three of us, Maria, Meryem, and myself, and any live-ins). Even though some visitors staying at the guesthouse or Meryem’s friends occasionally show up, there is not much regular attendance from the community. In each visit to Antakya over the course of three years, I noticed that the regular dua attendees from Antakya had been replaced by new ones. Some of the
dropouts recounted their personal conflicts with Maria as the cause and explained that these conflicts were often triggered by Maria’s strictness on certain rules in the guesthouse.

When I met Jozef, it had been a year since he had quit regularly attending the duas after two years of commitment. He continued to come at times, but had felt alienated from the ritual since the day Maria criticized him for choosing a controversial excerpt from the Bible to read during the dua. The section he chose was about the Crucifixion of Jesus. Although Jozef understood Maria’s point that the story could generate conflict rather than dialogue between the members of particular religions, he found it problematic and unrealistic to expect a conflict-free engagement from a multi-religious environment. For him, conflict was also a form of social relationship that needed to be accepted and worked with, rather than ignored, on the path to God. Similarly Lale, a middle-aged secular Jew, found Maria too naïve to understand the thick but invisible borders that divided the religious communities of Antakya.

Examples like this led me to interpret the low attendance at the dua as evidence that, regardless of any personality or lifestyle issues, Maria’s vision of multi-religious engagement did not match local conceptualizations and practices of religious plurality. To my knowledge, the boundary-making and boundary-crossing mechanisms between different religious communities of the city included celebrating, grieving, traveling, singing, doing business, and living together, (with inter-faith marriages and religious conversion placed at an extreme end of these cross-boundary engagements). Praying together, on the other hand, was completely out of question and did not even seem to be a “contested” agenda for locals. This remained the case even after the discourse of tolerance pervaded the city, which might have been expected to have raised it as an issue.

Maria’s promotion of the act of shared worship by people of different religions was not considered a danger by the locals either, even though she had become a public figure and most
people who lived in the city centre knew who she was and what she did, even if they had not met her in person. Later on, I realized this was only part of the story, the part that revealed that I, like many others in Antakya, saw Maria as a guest, a misafir, who did not belong to the city despite the 40 years of her life spent there.

On one hand, although Maria may seem to be a lonely figure and the personification of the “Western individual subject” in the eyes of many locals, others see her as more able and capable of bringing change to Antakya than the “local” women who are caught up in communal life, gender ideologies, and kinship relations.\textsuperscript{133} Lale’s comments on Maria’s naivety, for instance, were followed by her remarks, “Antakya needs an idealist, too. Maria’s conviction widens our imagination for the future even if we don’t actively participate in her rituals.” Davud had a framed picture in his living room of himself with Maria in Maria’s dua place. When I asked him about the picture, he said that he keeps it there, as an inspiration.

On the other hand, the messages that were placed on the “tree of peace” in Maria’s basement did not quite reflect the spirit of going beyond the local affiliations and particularistic attachments. Among the “peace” notes specifying the locations, towns and cities that the travelers are from, I

\textsuperscript{133} The impact of Maria’s connections to the West on such perceptions became clearer to me during an interview that I was rather unwillingly persuaded by Maria to give to two journalists from a local newspaper. During the interview, I was asked questions that focused less on my research than my connections to Canada, including what “Westerners” think about Turkey as well as how different life is in Canada compared to Antakya. Although I was familiar with such questions as I encountered them in my first interaction with almost everyone I met in the city, I was explicitly guided by the interview questions to frame my answer in relation to my views on the positive impact of the guesthouse and Maria’s project on Antakya’s landscape and public image. One particular question, for instance, was whether I thought Maria and her guesthouse had a role in raising the inhabitants’ awareness of the historical value of the old Antakya houses. References to the city’s multi-faith character were mentioned again with reference to Maria’s agency in making people realize that this was an asset for the city. When I had the chance to take a look at the previously published interviews on the same theme in that local newspaper, I noticed a similar pattern, one in which Maria’s unusual decision to pursue the rest of her life as a Westerner in Antakya was emphasized and thus a subtext structuring the final product (newspaper report). This decision is believed to have concrete consequences on the way Antakyans look at themselves and understand their relationships with each other, with their own religion, and with the West.
saw one note saying “Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene!” [How happy is the one who says ‘I am a Turk’], Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s famous dictum since turned into a popular patriotic slogan. The appeal of this aphorism to Turkishness constitutes an ethno-nationalism that stands for the exclusion and minoritization of particular groups, including the Christian, Jew and Alawi Arabs of Antakya.¹³⁴

Maria’s project, then, provides us with a lens through which we can understand both the possibilities and the limitations of religious cosmopolitanism in Antakya. It is clear from her empty prayer room that her desire to cultivate a cosmopolitan belief through bodily practice and music on a day-to-day basis does not appeal to most people. The social forms of being expressed in cosmopolitan rhetoric have their limits. While the idea of “religion” as all-inclusive appears attractive to people in Antakya for various theological, political, and pragmatic reasons, this openness in everyday interaction never transforms what was referred in the choir settings as “listening to” the religious other into “singing” with her. It creates alignments against the other “others,” such as fundamentalists, atheists, and, in some contexts, converts. Yet these alignments never call for the effacement of theological boundaries and rarely entail a complete transcendence of them.

Nevertheless, Maria’s project finds a place within the future-imaginations of Antakyans insofar as it incorporates the tacit codes of coexistence in Antakya, and, moreover, places them in relation to the wider world in an inferred Western endorsement of the Antakyan, which has only a peripheral status within Turkey. Maria carves a space for her own practice of cosmopolitanism

¹³⁴ Atatürk’s saying was required by law to be chanted every morning by all the students in all Turkish schools. The AKP government ended this ritual in 2013, a move portrayed by the government and regarded by many as “democratic,” in the sense of inclusive and pluralistic, but by others as part of an anti-Kemalist symbology actually employed for de-republicanizing Islamification—or, as a de-ethno-nationalizing neo-Ottomanism (Chapter 1).
within Antakya’s multi-faith milieu not so much through her daily prayers but more through her successful incorporation of the logic of guesthood in her overall project, possibly, indeed, owing to her own, very personal experience of being a long-term guest in Antakya.

For Maria, the guesthouse is more than a stop on the way: it is a symbol of the “path” and of all the relationships established along the way. Like any relationship established with other humans on temporarily shared life-paths, those built around guesthood are also inevitably fleeting encounters, of limited duration. In accordance with this understanding, she is reluctant to give rooms to the same guest for longer than a month, even though the guesthouse is never full—nor does she want her live-ins to become too attached to the place and stay longer than agreed. In this sense, as long as she has at least some guests, Maria’s presumed loneliness and the lack of a permanent community attending the duas is not simply a failure on her part, but also an outcome of the emphasis placed on the transitory nature of social interaction, including that in the guesthouse.

This temporariness connotes a theological understanding of guesthood that anticipates the eventual end of relationships on the ground and takes the ephemeral as axiomatic, that every human is a “temporary” visitor in this world and thus that whatever effect a guest may have might also be reversed. Indeed, such positioning of the this-world with regard to the afterworld is what enables all cross-religious engagements amongst inhabitants of Antakya that exceed the political limitations of majority-minority relations as well as theological specificities of different

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135 I was lucky that my offer to be her long-term tenant coincided with a time when she was under the pressure of some (building-related) debts. Even though I updated her on every single difficulty of my house hunting process in my first weeks in Antakya, and her guesthouse was, actually, quite empty for the whole time, she never offered to rent one of her rooms to me and did not immediately accept my offer either (i.e. money did not change hands between us). Finally, in order to persuade her to take a financial contribution from me, I had to agree to leave my room and find another place for the week of St. Peter’s Day celebrations.
4.6 Conclusion

Anthropological reflections on cosmopolitanism have dealt with the relationship between “self-understanding” and “engagement with diversity” beyond the categories of the local, national, religious, and even global (Hannerz 2007; Lawrence 2010; Werbner 2008). One significant effect of these reflections has been the attempt to surpass the universalism as well as the elitism and Eurocentrism embedded in the philosophical meanings of the term by focusing on forms of cosmopolitanism that are “vernacular” (Bhabha 1996), “rooted” (Appiah 2006) “indigenous” (Goodale 2006), “discrepant” (Clifford 1997), and “everyday” or “ordinary” (Vertovec and Cohen 2002). While the secular bias of this literature has recently been problematized (Leichtman and Schulz 2012) and new adjectives introduced to the contextualized analyses of cosmopolitanism, such as “religious” (Neuman 2011) and “prophetic” (Hoesterey 2012), the question of how cosmopolitanism becomes a way and language of engaging with religious diversity remains under-examined.

In Antakya, I observed that people relate to their own and others’ religious difference in multiple and discrepant ways. These often include the positing of oneself as part of a larger collectivity beyond particular religious, ethnic, and even national communities. Such cosmopolitan rhetoric, however, does not necessarily negate what it claims to surpass. The imagination of “diversity” as the coincidental and/or purposeful doing of God both reinforces particular forms of religious belonging and incorporates the “afterworld” within the conception of the world. This is pluralistic unity as cosmopolitan cosmology, or, perhaps, a cosmology of the contemporary cosmopolitan. Ideas about other paths, practices and experiences of religiosities shape the imaginations of people who have never left Antakya as well as those who have migrated,
traveled, or been subject to newer technologies, ideologies, and regimes.

What people frame as “belief in the same God” appears to be a significant link between the locality, particularity, and groundedness of religious subjects and their cosmopolitan discourses. Slipping often into a more general and sometimes secularized idea of *inanç*, yet at the same time expressing a particular and inter-subjective way of being “religious,” ‘belief’ in such contexts proves to be more than an “inner state of mind” or “conscience” and instead implies a language of connectivity across religions. The ambiguity of the boundaries between *inanç*, *iman*, and *dindarlık* indexes the multiplicity of responses people develop to make sense of and negotiate religious diversity on the basis of their denominational, generational, class based, ethnic, and gendered differences. The cosmopolitan rhetoric of Antakyans should be understood as a space where different conceptual domains represented by *inanç*, *iman*, and *dindarlık* ranging from secularism to Muslim and Christian theologies converge, collide, and remain in a state of tension. These collisions and convergences require attention not only to matters of theology, but also to socio-political contexts that characterize inter and intra-religious engagements in Antakya, and push particular religious positions to the peripheries of national citizenship.

Although references to “individual faith” enable the imagining of a universal community of believers beyond the particular conditions of individual (and communal) lives, in practice such a flexible and inclusive form of engagement can only take place temporarily, as suggested in Kant’s description of the right to hospitality. This temporariness is already embedded in the everyday ordering of difference in Antakya, encapsulated in the metaphor and practices of guesthood. Such an ordering involves a distancing of the host from the guest—and entails of course, all the asymmetric dualities this invokes. Yet it also, and more interestingly, I suggest, includes and consists of a moral and intimate relationality marked by the proximity, mobility,
and temporariness of the visit and the continuity of interactions (neighbourliness, camaraderie, kindred, etc.) that enable such visits in the first place. The following chapter examines more closely how, as a part of this relationality, attachments, affections, and conflicts of various types render the metaphor and practices of guesthood in Antakya a significant marker of social boundaries at the intersection of interpersonal and identitarian engagements.
5 Whose Misafirs?: Hospitality, Reciprocity, and Recognition

“Whose misafirs (guests) are they?” asked Meryem. “Hatay’s, Turkey’s, or the government’s?”

She was referring to the first group of Syrians who had just crossed the border from Latakia to Hatay’s border district of Yayladağı. It was shortly after the start of the Syrian uprisings in March 2011, and we were sitting in Meryem’s courtyard enjoying the bitter taste of the smuggled tea that she had bought in Antakya’s Syrian market two months ago.136

Meryem was originally from an Orthodox Christian village situated in the district of Altınözü, to the north of Yayladağı. At sixteen, she had married a man from her village, and they moved to Antakya to be closer to the textile factory where her husband worked. I spent a lot of time with Meryem in the kitchen of the guesthouse, helping her cook and clean before and after our group meals, and we quickly became close. I often visited her house on Sundays, the only day she had off. It was one of these days, in April, 2011, when she posed this rhetorical question on the legal category assigned to Syrian newcomers by the Turkish state.

There were about 250 Turkish-speaking Syrian citizens, kept in tent camps in the Yayladağı district and suspected by my interlocutors to be ethnically Turkish.137 Politicians, the media, and commentators addressed them as “misafirs” hosted in guest camps rather than as “refugees” or “asylum seekers” (Erdim 2011; Özden 2013; Zeyrek 2011). The Turkish foreign minister stated that Turkey was ready to allow in Syrians who were not “happy at home” and would welcome its

136 The smuggling of cheap Syrian goods such as gas, cigarettes, tea and coffee, was fairly casual and quite commonplace, this representing another of the myriad modes of human connection in the cross-border area.

137 Following the Syrian regime’s attack on Jisr al-Shugur in June, 2011, more than 7,000 Syrians had arrived in Turkey, a number that had increased to 156,000 (registered) by January, 2013, in 15 camps, six in the Hatay region (Özden 2013), with also 70,000 nonregistered in cities (UNHCR 2013).
Syrian misafirs until the conditions for their return were secured (Milliyet 2011). The governor of Hatay emphasized that these Syrians came with their passports, and would thus be shown respect, honour, and geniality in accordance with the codes of “Turkish hospitality” (*Türk misafirperverligi*) (Hatay Gazetesi 2011). Prime Minister Erdoğan declared that Turkey was capable of “hosting” (*misafir etmek*) the whole Syrian population if necessary (T24 2012).138

In official terms, the misafir status meant that these Syrians could not register with the UNCHR in order to apply for asylum in a third country. They were instead under Turkey’s “temporary protection regime for Syrians,” which meant “an open border policy, no forcible returns and registration with the Turkish authorities and support inside the borders of the camps” (Özden 2013:5). This legal status marked the difference of Syrian newcomers not only from Turkish citizens but also from “non-European” asylum seekers in Turkey.139 As the only country that implements the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees under the condition of “geographical boundaries,” Turkey grants refugee status only to “citizens of member states of the Council of Europe” (Foca 2011) and provides temporary asylum for asylum seekers in Europe and North America as a third country.140 Naming Syrians “misafirs,” then, was partly a strategic

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138 The verb “*misafir etmek,*” implying a host-guest relationship, was preferred to, for example, “*agılamak,*” which also means *hosting* but in a more general sense.

139 “Non-European” asylum seekers in Antakya are held in an institution tied to the Turkish Police Department, the *Yabancılar Geri Gonderme Merkezi* [The Foreigner Return Centre], which, at the time had people from Burma, Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iran, but no one from Syria.

140 This separation between European and non-European speaks to the complex history of Turkey’s international relations with its Eastern neighbours as well as its dominant ideologies of citizenship. In contrast to the Ottoman Empire, which granted asylum to a wide range of non-Muslim and non-Turkish communities, Turkey has publicly emphasized Turkish language and ethnic affiliation in its immigration policies and, despite its silence in respect to religion, preferred immigrants with a Sunni and Hanefi religious background (Kirisci 2000:3; Parla 2007). This ideology has been reflected also in its refugee policies, with the acceptance only of 43 “refugees” from Greece, Bulgaria, Azerbaijan, Serbia-Montenegro and Albania (Foca 2011). The distinction between Europe and non-Europe is justified also on the grounds of Turkey’s geopolitical proximity to the politically unstable Middle Eastern countries, and has been shaped significantly through Turkey’s political relationships with its neighbours. For instance, although the Chechen people who escaped to Turkey could be categorized as “European” (Russia is a member of the Council), they were denied asylum in Turkey in order to maintain good relations with Russia.
move for the Turkish state to avoid possible tensions with European countries on refugee agreements. Yet this talk of hospitality had implications that went beyond official policy. It became a powerful means to reinforce the Turkish state’s role as a “benevolent” and “tolerant” host, open to the differences of its visitors as well as its own citizens.

The question of whose misafirs these were assumed the language of hospitality employed by the Turkish government. The problem for people like Meryem, therefore was not so much the misafir status of the Syrians, which in fact resonated with the way residents of Antakya had interacted with people across the border since Hatay’s annexation; rather, it was the unknown identity of these new misafirs and the well-known identity of their hosts. “If they were my misafirs in my home” Meryem continued, “I would do everything to make them feel comfortable. But I would also know who they were, how long they would stay and what they wanted from me. We don’t know any of these, only the government does!”

Meryem’s suppositional approach to hosting Syrians (in her own home) acknowledges how power operates in domestic and public domains of hospitality with respect to time, mutual expectations of guest and host, and the ability to host and recognize the misafir’s identity. Yet more importantly, it shows how people understand the state’s hospitality through their own experiences of hosting. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the household practices of hospitality that animate the metaphorical use of “misafir” both enact and disrupt the Turkish state’s authority as the ultimate host. I argue that the sudden transformation of the Syrian from neighbour and a familial misafir to the misafir of the Turkish state revealed more than what Syrians on the other hand are given a special misafir status in accordance with the Turkish government’s ideological tension with the Assad regime.
Antakya’s minoritized communities wanted to accept about their own position within the emergent politics of tolerance: that they could become part of the new liberal definitions of the nation and be recognized by the nation-state as long as they remained the perpetual misafirs of Turkey.

This problem, which I see as one of reciprocity and recognition, was expressed in the social (re)structuring of the positions of guest and host at multiple levels, from inside the house and the neighbourhoods to the city of Antakya and the nation as a whole. People in Antakya acknowledged and addressed the problem in their claims to be the hosts, claims which were manifested in the way they talked about and interacted with misafirs of different kinds, structured their houses and workspaces, and enshrined domestic forms of hospitality as the ideal social form for public interaction.

The emphasis placed on being the “host,” as characterized by Meryem’s comment on hosting Syrians, is captured by the perspectival shift in the transfer of the Arabic word “misafir” to Turkish. Deriving from the root “safar” (travel), “misafir” in Arabic means “one who is travelling” as opposed to the Arabic term dayf (guest). The way it is used in Turkish, however, prioritizes the perspective of those who host travellers and translates into English directly as “guest.” In a bilingual context like Antakya, where many communities switch between speaking Turkish and Arabic, these two meanings converge and address guesthood as a matter of both hospitality and mobility. A misafir, after all, is a traveling guest, and the moral position she inhabits involves being on the move and not overextending the stay.

This convergence of meanings understands welcome and trespass not as simple opposites but as mutually constitutive situations that recognize, rather than deny, the “difference” of the guest. Hence, addressing the “other” or the “outsider” as a “misafir” not only confirms one’s ability to
host but also disrupts the fiction of equality and harmony on which national ideologies of citizenship are premised. The Syrian as an internal misafir within Antakya’s religious communities is not identical to the Syrian as the misafir of the Turkish state. Host-guest relations in each case imply a different degree of intimacy and proximity as well as a different form of involvement by the Turkish state. Yet it is through this very difference that the Arabic-speaking communities of Antakya are able to recognize the temporal and ethical limitations of their own situation, residence and citizenship in Turkey.

Moreover, unlike the bounded, place-based and static categories of identity and ethnicity, the notion of the misafir relies on a temporal and temporary “difference” and exposes the indeterminate ground one occupies and on which one alternates between the positions of guest and host. On the one hand, the instability and temporariness of these positions mean that they can be inhabited by anybody, a flexibility that allows people to link their individual lives to the trajectories of the collective and to transgress religious boundaries. On the other hand, the inability to perfectly and permanently occupy either position makes it necessary for people to constantly negotiate control of the space of interaction, who belongs to it, who holds power over whom and who owes or is owed respect. It therefore requires a lot of boundary-work within and across, for example, religions. This is affected also by the temporal status of the arrangement, insofar as these are long-term guests.

In this chapter, I explore this realm of negotiations, focusing on the ways in which the figure of the misafir as an abstraction and a political metaphor draws its meaning from the existing and emergent politics of reciprocity and recognition in Antakya. Probing the daily negotiation of socially ascribed identities (religious, ethnic, and national) in interpersonal relations of hospitality, I claim that the figure of the misafir represents the permeability of communal
boundaries as well as of national borders. To that end, I first address how hospitality has been conceptualized in border settings, and in relation to border crossings. Then, I discuss the historical and temporal registers of the figure of the misafir, which, in Antakya, build on the heritage of the past movements in, out, and through the city in the form of resettlements by government design, and exodus, displacement, and fragmentation of particular communities in the making of national borders (Chapter 1). I examine the multiple ways in which Syrians have become misafirs for Antakyans and look at the kind of misafirs they have become.

The political stakes of such categorizations for Antakya’s inhabitants are recognized and addressed with reference to the everyday relations of hospitality, grounded in material objects, sites, and thresholds – houses, doors, borders, guestrooms, guesthouses, food, coffee cups, and furniture, as well as the spoken language, to which I turn my attention in the second half of the chapter. A careful attention to the materiality of hospitality in everyday settings demonstrates the moral value attached to being a host, which is why people often consider themselves as, speak from the position of, and desire to be the subjects rather than the objects of welcome. Tensions, however, emerge between such desires and the actual practices of visiting, between the lived realities, which entail particular codes of reciprocity and recognition, but also, not infrequently, their violation.

Scholarly accounts of hospitality have often worked within multiple scales and questioned the nature of its metaphorical extension beyond home space, especially in debates over immigration, asylum-seekers, multiculturalism, and post-colonialism (Barnett 2005; Benhabib 2006; Derrida 1998; Derrida 2003; Dikeç, Clark, and Barnett 2009; Rosello 2001). A commonly pursued approach is that although hospitality is always of a place, its direct association with travel and traveler render it inherently transportable, linking home to families, kin groups, and ethnic,
religious or national communities (Derrida 2000; Herzfeld 1987; Rabinowitz 1997; Shryock 2012). This approach has been problematized by others who argue that analogies and metaphorical relationships may simply suggest resemblances rather than pointing at existing connections (Candea 2012; Rosello 2001; cf. Strathern 2004).

In this chapter, I take the cultural categories of guest and host as indexical. They signify relative positions rather than properties or bounded identities, allowing people to collapse different and at times incommensurable meanings of hospitality into each other, or intermingle them in daily life. The misafir figure deserves our attention because while it connects the micro-political space of home to the public mode of politics, it also exposes the limits of this scalar slippage. The sudden influx of Syrian refugees and their state-assigned legal status as misafir throws into relief the fact that when used metaphorically to refer to the outsider, the immigrant, or the other within, the moral and temporal relationship between host and guest no longer involves a reciprocal and mutual recognition, but becomes a confirmation of the host’s authority. This, in turn, shows us the multiple and contradictory ways in which moral and symbolic boundaries in Antakya relate to institutionalized social differences around literal and territorial borders.

5.1 Hospitality, difference, and recognition at the borders

Studies that examine hospitality in the context of national borders often approach the dialectic of welcoming and exclusion through the legal, territorial, and ascribed categorizations of identity. Works inspired by Kant’s formulations of cosmopolitanism, for instance, understand hospitality as a natural and “cosmopolitical” right, bestowed by the state and protected by international law (e.g., Benhabib 2004:26). Hospitality as a universal right requires the nation-state to open its borders to non-citizens, refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and the like, yet does not necessarily challenge the nation-state system or its power to inscribe individual and national life
According to Derrida (2000:27), hospitality as a juridico-political right starts with interrogation of the newcomer’s name, and is conditional on the state’s ability to recognize and name the other (or, viewed differently, naming is central to the act of inscribing). Inscription, ascription and recognition become interlinked in what Didier Fassin (2011) analyzes as “identification,” and turn newcomers into “things” to be possessed or disowned by the state (Handler 1988). Within this framework, the gates/borders are opened only to good and deserving guests, “those who arrive with their passports, valid visas, adequate bank statements, or invitations” (Khosravi 2010:126).

Conditional hospitality, then, is intertwined with hostility, hostility referring to the preferential welcoming of guests, keeping the guests as strangers for generations, placing them in refugee camps, detention centres, or ghettos, or simply refusing them entry. As such, it reconfirms the nation-state’s sovereignty through its ownership of “home” and its populations. “The tolerance of strangers discloses the limits of a nation’s hospitality” (Khosravi 2010:127). The guest, in return, confers meaning upon the host: “without the ability to offer hospitality, there is no master in the home” (Rosello 2001, cited in Khosravi 2010).

Yet, as Derrida (2000:23-25) asks, if hospitality (or inscription, for that matter) can only be offered to a foreigner who is “represented and protected by his or her family name,” what happens to the anonymous new arrival who has no name, no family, and no social or legal status that is recognizable by the host? What kind of a place does the depoliticized body and naked life of an unrecognizable guest, or in Agamben’s words the homo sacer, hold in a concept of...
citizenship defined through hospitality?141

This question exposes the difference between the foreigner and the absolute other as the object of welcoming (such as in the case of the registered refugee vs. the displaced escapee). Unconditional hospitality breaks with hospitality in the ordinary sense by being offered also to the “absolute others” in the form of an unquestioning welcome, that is, “without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names” (Derrida 2000:25). Hospitality for a nameable foreigner always falls short of unconditional hospitality towards the absolute other.

Syrian newcomers in Hatay occupied an ambivalent place between the realms of conditional and unconditional hospitality. Their official status as misafirs evoked a discourse of generosity rather than one of rights (Özden 2013), and thus positioned them in a more vulnerable place than refugees or asylum seekers in Turkey. After all, being a misafir could mean, among other things, that one could be deported from Turkey any time the state wished (Özden 2013). On the other hand, neither the guesthood of Syrians nor the associated discourses of generosity were independent of the historically contingent characteristics of the Turkish-Syrian border and related processes of minoritization (see Chapter 1). The identities and identifications of border-crossers in this particular case were not only about their foreignness and national citizenship, but also concerned their religious and ethnic affiliations in relation to those of Antakya’s residents.

This ambivalent position, I argue, can be better understood if we shift our gaze from the institutionalized processes of identification to how these processes frame, relate to, and are

141 Agamben (1998) uses the Roman legal term homo sacer to describe those who have been stripped of membership in society and thus of their rights. Homo sacer, as bare life, can be killed by anybody without punishment, but may not be sacrificed in a religious ritual. According to Agamben, nation-states establish their sovereignty on the basis of this distinction between bare life (homo sacer) and bios (citizen). Khosravi adopts the term to address undocumented immigrants who risk death at border crossings.
exceeded by daily relations of hospitality. Hospitality is ultimately a way of relating to the “other.” As is argued by the abovementioned scholars, it is about recognizing and giving space to someone (or something) who is not considered to belong to one’s own home, household, or nation. But it is also a reminder of how the boundaries of home, household, and nation are not as impermeable, and the meanings and content of otherness are not as fixed as assumed in social and political categorizations of identity. As I will show below, social identities “ascribed” to and recognized by others on the basis of their origins, locality, relatedness, citizenship, or religious affiliations gain their meaning and value in interpersonal relations of hospitality.

5.2 From wives and neighbours to misafirs

Prior to the uprisings and the continuing conflict, the Syrian occupied an ambiguous place for the self-image and self-representation of Antakyans, oscillating between kin, neighbour, and enemy. Although the border and the political disputes between Turkey and Syria since the annexation of Hatay in 1939 divided communities, isolated some groups from their extended kin, and resulted in mass migrations, people in Antakya continued to deal with people from Syria, marrying and doing business with them, for example. Indeed, cross-border (international) marriages between people of the same faith were positively desired by the city’s diminishing communities of Jews and Christians. Partly due to the homogenizing policies of the new Republic, these communities had lost some of their younger generations to the urban centres of Turkey, as well as to Europe, Israel and the Americas. For those who remained, it was easier to find an acceptable match of the same faith in Syria than in the rest of Turkey, especially when they could not find one in Hatay. Since such marriages were often followed by the resettlement of the

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142 See Akyol (2009), Dogruel (2010), Kasaba (2006) and Stokes (1998) for a more detailed account of how people at the border between Turkey and Syria maintained familial and economic relationships in the 20th and 21st century.
newlywed wife in the place where the husband and his family lived, the Syrian as a family member in Antakya referred to “the wife” rather than the “husband.” During my fieldwork I met and became close with two such women, Salma and Dima, who ambivalently cohabited the positions of kin and misafir.

Salma was the daughter of a rabbi in Damascus, where she had grown up and worked as a teacher in an elementary school for Jewish boys. She was told one day by a visiting acquaintance of the school’s director, a tradesman and the Jewish community leader in Aleppo, that a young Jew in Antakya was looking for a suitable match for marriage. He asked her whether she would like to go and live in Turkey, a possibility that her parents thought over and decided to try. This was in 1984, the years of conflict under the rule of Bashar al-Assad’s father Hafez al-Assad, and it was not easy for the Jewish community to go abroad, partly due to the tension between Syria and Israel. Eventually, with passports in hand and a visa for one month, the family made the visit to Antakya.

The two families quickly reached agreement, and by the second week of the visit Salma married. Her husband worked in his family’s houseware store in the historic souk, and they moved into the family apartment on the grounds of the synagogue in the old city, where Salma lived with her in-laws for some ten years. Her parents left after the wedding and, although some of her family members visited from time to time, she herself has never been back to Syria since (among other things—the woman does not usually return much—she was afraid of being arrested upon entry to Syria for having violated the passport regulations). There was nothing much left there for her to go back to anyway, she said, since a large part of her community in Damascus had emigrated to
the US in the early 1990s after an agreement between the two countries.¹⁴³

I met Salma in the rehearsals of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations, where she continues to serve as the only female Jewish member. She began giving me Arabic lessons and we would meet almost every morning before she went to the shop in the souk, where she worked with her husband. I also made occasional trips to her new apartment, located in an upper-class neighbourhood of the new city. She no longer shared the apartment with her in-laws but lived in the same building, a common practice among families who have moved out of the old city.

Salma was a very social and sociable woman, easy to be friends with and always energetic. Over the 30-odd years of her stay in Antakya, she had learned Turkish well enough to interact with her fellow choir members and customers in the souk, even though most of the bargaining in the market was done in Arabic. Every time I met her, she would start our conversation by listing the ordinary tasks she accomplished before meeting me, tasks that required her to fill the role of mother, housewife, storeowner, Choir member and daughter-in-law. She was most troubled by this last identity, which for her functioned as the major reminder of her outsider status.

Salma felt that her mother-in-law never saw her as a true family member and exploited her labour without showing any sign of gratitude. Once when we visited her mother-in-law in the apartment below, Salma drew my attention to the fact that the guestroom where we were welcomed did not have any framed pictures of her, even though the counter of the mirrored buffet was decorated with family pictures, including the wedding pictures of her other sons and grandchildren including Salma’s three sons. After the visit, she observed that her mother-in-law

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¹⁴³ Salma referred to is the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, at which the US pressured Syria to ease restrictions on its Jewish population. Thousands of Syrian Jews from Damascus and Aleppo were thereafter granted exit permits on condition that they emigrated, though not to Israel (Quilliam 1999).
served chocolates and lemonade to me but not to her, and added, “She always does this, even in our bayram (religious feast/holiday) visits.”

Although Salma addressed both issues as examples of her exclusion from the family, they meant different things for her status in the family and the community. Not being welcomed as a proper misafir at her mother-in-law’s apartment could, in fact, be seen as the very proof of Salma’s insider status—had that inclusion been recognized by a picture of her in the guestroom. In other words, Salma was “too close” to be a misafir but “not close enough” to be an accepted and respected family (and community) member. It was this ambiguous position between the two and the consequent vulnerability to marginalization that caused distress for her.

The way she expressed this distress, however, was also the indicator of how the categories of misafir and family member were not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, as I will show in the second half of this chapter, familial relations in Antakya are established and maintained through particular rituals of hospitality characterized by power relations that involve proximity, attachments, and affection as well as hostility, distancing, and conflict. Hospitality, offered or denied to the most intimate, registers the ambiguous realm of power and relatedness that renders the misafir a significant category for expressing both closeness and distance.

No-one familiar with Turkey would be surprised by Salma’s narrative of conflict with her mother-in-law, since such stories are entirely commonplace among families of all social and economic classes everywhere in the country. Most of these narratives reflect the generational, gendered, and also educational, and to a lesser degree religious, conflicts between mothers and daughters-in-law, as has been demonstrated in studies of households and kinship in Turkey (Delaney 1991; Duben 1985; Kandiyoti 1987) and elsewhere (Das 2007, 2012; Leonetti, Nath, and Hemam 2007; Vera-Sanso 1999; Yan Du 2013). Hence, it was not surprising that almost
every married woman I met in the city had something to say about how they suffered at the hands of their mothers-in-law. This kind of homo-social conflict in itself did not have to be about the national origin of the new female member of the family. And in fact, Salma did not see her Syrian background as the fundamental cause of these problems either—for her it was jealousy, the personality of her mother-in-law, the passivity of her husband, or her own good faith and silence that led to her exclusion and marginalization.

It was, nevertheless, the way in which her familial otherness was articulated with and hinged on her connections to Syria that was particularly striking in Salma’s case. These were connections cut by her marriage but emphasized by her new community in Antakya on many occasions. My interaction with other members of the Jewish community in the city clarified for me that although Salma’s Jewishness made her entry into the community possible, it came after her Syrian origin in matters concerning the community’s place within the Turkish nation as a whole. I often noticed, for instance, that when the Jewish members complained about the low representation of Jews in the Choir or in other public occasions, Salma’s name was never mentioned in their list of the few members involved. She was the most devout of all and the only one who ate kosher food, fasted, and obeyed the Sabbath rules, others having had long since relinquished such practices due to structural obstacles.144

The lack of recognition received by Salma for her sincere dedication—even though it was important for the Jewish community to continue its religious practices for the survival of its “identity,” especially now that it was smaller than before—extended beyond this, however to manifest discrimination. I observed in my visits to the synagogue that men there either ignored

144 There is nowhere in the city that prepares or sells kosher food, for instance. The rabbi brought monthly from Istanbul prepares the meat, and Salma deepfreezes it to use until his next visit.
her or were rude—ruder to her, that is, than to the other women. When, in conversation with some of these men about the life of Jews in Antakya, I explicitly mentioned her name as someone whose religiosity impressed me, one said, “You know she is from Syria right? She is different from us. Jews there are more conservative than us. We are more modern and secular!”

This immediate attempt to differentiate the Antakyan Jew from the Syrian one on the basis of the Turkish nationalist discourse of secularism speaks less about Salma as an individual and more about the realm of dangerous proximity with the Syrian that she embodied. This proximity creates anxiety for valid historical reasons, especially when highlighted in public by a stranger like me. The story of Dima demonstrates more explicitly how this anxiety was expressed and overcome by the Orthodox Christian community through a particular use of the concept misafir.

Dima’s story was similar to Salma’s in many ways but at the same time very different. She had come to Antakya from Aleppo about 40 years previously upon her marriage to Hamid, whom she had met during one of his visits to Syria. When I met him, Hamid owned two jewelry stores in the gold bazaar of the souk, which were managed by his son and their employee. Having worked in the gold bazaar since he was six, like many Orthodox Christians of Antakya, Hamid could not get used to the life of a retiree and spent his afternoons sitting on a bench in front of one of his stores, looking around and chatting with passersby like me. It was soon after I met him that I was invited to their apartment to meet and have coffee with his wife, “a Syrian whose Arabic is much better than ours.”

They used to own a townhouse in the old city but had sold it and moved to a modern apartment building located where the old city ended and Salma’s neighbourhood began. Dima’s family was originally from Antakya but had immigrated to Aleppo during the annexation, afraid of losing their rights and properties under the Turkish regime. Dima married at the age of 30, never
worked after she got married, and learned and spoke little Turkish, as she could easily communicate with her neighbours and sellers in the market in Arabic. She spent most of her time at home, and liked watching and talking about the Turkish soap operas, as did Salma, to which she owed much of her Turkish. The TV in the guestroom of their house was always on, broadcasting religious programs from an Orthodox Christian channel in Syria.

For the first few weeks of my acquaintanceship with the family, I did not notice anything in the behaviour of my other Orthodox interlocutors to suggest that Dima was perceived to be any different from the rest of the community, and certainly not in the way Salma was. I would attend mass with them in the second row of the church, observing their interaction with the community in the courtyard after the mass and joining them for lunch in their home together with their son, daughter, and their families after the Sunday morning service at the Orthodox Church as their guest – *Tanrı misafiri* (a guest of God) in Hamid’s words.\(^{145}\)

As I got to know more Christian women over time and became a misafir also in their houses, however, I noticed that unlike most of these women who arranged reception days among themselves, Dima was visited only by her neighbours who lived in the same building, her own children and a few Alawi women who had previously worked for her as a maid. The exclusion of Dima from the Christian women’s visitation network meant that although she could occasionally be a misafir at other community members’ houses, her status of guesthood would not necessarily require those who hosted her to pay a visit in return. In other words, her inclusion to the community was marked by an exclusion from hosting and thus permanent guesthood, rather than an exchange of positions between guest and host. This became most apparent to me during a

\(^{145}\) The phrase “Tanrı Misafiri” is widely used in Turkey to express hospitality for unexpected guests. In most circumstances, it is a way of referring to an unexpected guest as sent by God.
conversation with Jacob, the former head of the Orthodox Community Foundation, in his office across from the apartment building where Hamid and Dima lived.

Educated as an archaeologist, Jacob worked in different professions and had at last joined his wife’s business of youth education counseling. I had heard that through his contact with the current head of the Antakya Jewish Foundation, he had recently taken responsibility for the restoration of a building on the grounds of the synagogue—the very same building where Salma had lived with her in-laws for her first 10 years in Antakya. When I asked Jacob about the restoration, which would transform the empty building into a guesthouse for Jewish visitors from all over the world, he told me about his own ideal for the building: a cultural centre run and visited by the Jewish youth. “You can count the Jews here on one hand,” he said. “In the near future, it will be the same for our community. It means nothing to renovate the empty buildings if you don’t fill them with people of these communities. We should try to think of ways of doing so with the commitment of younger generations.”

But he did not like my idea that they could recruit, for such a project, a young Jewish French friend of mine who by then had lived in Antakya for about a year: “We need people who are really committed, who will spend their lives here. These people do not belong to here. They are only misafir. Do you think they will stay here? Of course they won’t. One day they’ll go back to where their roots are.” In the midst of this conversation, Dima, walking past, towards her home with a neighbour, waved at him and he reciprocated. Then he turned to me to make the interruption relevant to our conversation, “You see her? She is also a misafir here for many years.”

Sharing her language, religion, and history with Antakya’s native Orthodox Community, Dima certainly is not to be lumped in with other (e.g., French) foreigners settling in Antakya, including
those of the same religion (e.g., Jewish). It was Jacob’s emphasis on “rootedness in land” that made his comparison possible. Evoked as the major ground on which a misafir is differentiated from the host at the communal level, it draws attention to the permanence of hosts as opposed to the mobility of guests.

People’s sense of who is “truly” from Antakya relies on this differentiation of permanent-temporary or settled-transitory—or, perhaps more accurately, on the blurring of the two—which exists beside but also transcends the reified categories of ethnic and religious identity in contemporary discourses of tolerance in the city. In this context, the concept misafir combined past and present articulations of the “difference” of non-Muslim Arabic speaking communities in Antakya and shaped the language they used to address the national other, “the Syrian” within, and even within their own (religious) communities.

5.3 Syrians as bad misafirs

As implied by the cases of Dima and Salma, the trouble posed by the Syrian for Antakyan’s self-image has a history that goes back long before the arrival of the Syrian “refugees” on Antakya’s doorstep. In fact, although “Hatay’s (re-)joining the motherland” occupied a central place in official historiography, its Arabic-speaking citizens were implicitly or explicitly blamed for the delay of the union (Micallef 2006:149).

In response to such accusations, many non-Sunnis of Arab origin in Antakya emphasized their love for Turkey in our first conversations, and communicated their resentments only after they knew me better. These resentments, it should be emphasized, did not necessarily contradict their first remarks. Their communities were well integrated—and had been assimilated—into Turkey even if they continued relationships with the Arab world: new generations, for example, had a better knowledge of Turkish than Arabic. Many referred to themselves and each other as
“Turkish” and distinguished themselves from Syrian Arabs, for whom they employed the conventionalized Turkish characterizations as “dirty,” “disordered,” “religiously conservative,” and “uncivilized.” The very necessity people felt to highlight their nationalism reflected their experiences of exclusion from hegemonic understandings of Turkish citizenship. The same necessity, together with a feeling of resentment, nevertheless implied their desire to belong to and be recognized by Turkey, not Syria.

The complicated nature of the relationship with the Syrian was strikingly exemplified by what I overheard while crossing the border in a private taxi. The man sitting in the front seat told the driver about his experience of being hosted by a Syrian family:

I do not deny that I am an Arab, too! But I have to say that Arabs across the border live completely different from us. Once I was invited to the house of this man who I do business with in Aleppo. You should have seen the egg that they served me… with their hands. No hygiene whatsoever! I was shocked! I couldn’t refuse it, not to offend them, but I was disgusted. It’s a completely different world over there.

This emphasis on “difference” is telling not just for the common stereotype of “dirty” Arab and the dyadic constellations that invokes (Douglas 1966), but also because it is enabled by an interaction that takes place within domains of friendship, proximity, and guesthood. The Syrian is not simply an absolute other or the enemy, although the term has been employed as such in Turkish historiography and even though the people of Hatay feel the necessity to address it—them—as such in order to evade suspicions about where their true attachments belong. The Syrian is also the neighbour, the friend, the business partner or a family member whose difference is addressed on the basis of how they perform as guests or hosts to Antakyans. While

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146 Antakyans generally used taxis to cross the border, since private cars had to be registered with the authorities in advance (as a precaution against smuggling).
they can be hosts in their own country—albeit addressed in terms of imperfection—they remain and are related to as misafirs in Antakya.

Dima and Salma’s guesthood was framed in this realm of proximate relatedness, and was managed primarily by the communities they entered into. This, however, was not the case with the new misafirs of Antakya from Syria. As the question “Whose misafirs?” implied, the Syrians who arrived in Yayladağı during my fieldwork with their passports were identifiable to the state to a certain extent, but less so to the residents of Antakya, especially in comparison to the Syrian in their own circles or families with whom they had more intimate relations. As misafirs of the Turkish state rather than of these Antakyan communities, they occupied a dangerous realm of proximity especially for the Alawis, Christians, and Jews of Antakya, one that reminded the latter of their own guesthood in Turkey and that they would never be considered the owners of the lands on which they lived.

The idea of being rooted should be understood in this context, in relation to the way in which these communities tried to differentiate themselves from the Syrian in the eyes of the Turkish state and society in order to regain their status as hosts. The current head of the Orthodox Community Foundation (OCFA) in Antakya addressed this problem in his critique of the patronizing connotations of the term “tolerance.” Echoing Derrida’s (2003:127) argument that tolerance “is most often used on the side of those with power, always as a kind of condescending concession,” the OCFA head said:

We are one of the oldest and most rooted communities, who existed in these lands for centuries. Yet we have been reduced to the position of a misafir. As we have been minoritized, we have turned into a community that needs to be tolerated. We have almost become like the unwelcome misafirs in our own homes.

While calling others “misafir” often expressed the self’s openness, generosity, and friendliness,
references to the self as misafir highlighted the exclusionary implications of the term, which became even more salient when coupled with the new political language of tolerance. Rather than suggesting closeness, intimacy, and inclusiveness, being a misafir was equated in such contexts with being minoritized and tolerated. The unexpected guesthood of Syrians intensified such associations, tying these communities’ past experiences of being at the peripheries of national citizenship to their new position as key figures in staging Turkey’s tolerance towards ethnic and religious minorities.

For instance, many suspected that the Syrians would be given citizenship in a couple of years and integrate easily into society as supporters of the government. Parallels were drawn between what was viewed as the government’s “excessive hospitality” towards Syrians and the resettling in Hatay of landless Sunni Turks from the Black Sea region in the 1960s and of Sunni Afghans in the 1980s. After all, since its annexation to Turkey in 1939, Hatay had indeed witnessed systematic resettlement policies intended to increase the number of Turkish and Sunni inhabitants, and the first group of Syrians who crossed the border in 2011 comprised Turkish-speaking Sunni Syrians, followed by Sunni Arabs.

One particular point that motivated such parallels was Prime Minister Erdoğan’s declaration, shortly after the first Syrians’ arrival, that events in Syria were for Turkey a domestic issue (Kanli 2011). For many secularist Turks in Istanbul, this statement was scandalous because it presented Turkey as part of the backward Middle East rather than modern Europe. The objection of many in Antakya to the statement was different. Yeşim, an Alawi woman in her 30s whose house I often visited, commented on this declaration saying, “How can Syria be Turkey’s domestic issue when its own Alawi citizens are not considered and treated as such?” People like Yeşim could not afford to be ignorant of what was going on across the border and the possible
material outcomes of a conflict between Turkey and Syria. For them, the kind of misafirs Syrians were in the eyes of the state was directly related to the kind of misafirs they themselves had historically been, showing the contours of who occupied the realm of the “domestic” (as kin), and under what circumstances.

It was not surprising then that the Syrian misafir suddenly entered the conversations of the residents of Antakya as a matter of public debate. Antakyans’ insistence in calling the Syrians misafir differed from that of the government as it implied that these misafirs were not only uninvited but also a negative influence. Some said they were worried that the Syrians would harm the culture of tolerance that was believed to exist between different communities in the city. Yet these worries were less about the actual culture of tolerance and more about the possibility of the Syrians settling permanently and taking on the status of hosts. During a lunch break in the guesthouse, Meryem told us about an incident that had occurred in her village:

Meryem: I heard that they’re going to build prefabricated homes near my village for the Syrians. This means they won’t go back. They’ll take over the homes of those who show them hospitality. I heard that recently some of these Syrians entered the garden of a man around my village, took his pomegranates from the tree, and threw them on the ground because they weren’t ripe enough. According to our customs it’s wrong to pick your neighbour’s fruits without their permission. When the owner came and confronted them, these Syrians told him that they could do whatever they want and nobody could stop them. This isn’t even about being a misafir any longer [bunlar misafirligi gecti artik]. If they didn’t plan to stay and weren’t backed by the state, they wouldn’t do such things.

Selim [live-in in the guesthouse from Harbiye, the Alawi district after Salma’s neighbourhood]: If this happened in Harbiye, nobody would let them get away with that.

Meryem: Same in my village. But I think they didn’t want to give the impression that we exclude the Syrians just because of a pomegranate.
A storeowner in the souk made a similar comment after repeating the rumours that I had heard many times about the newly arrived Syrians going to restaurants in the city and not playing for the food with the excuse that they didn’t like it, a rumour that was reported as news in local and national newspapers after the number of Syrian misafirs in Hatay increased (Butakin 2012; Sahin 2012). Some versions of this story had the cook or restaurant owners being beaten by these customers. This storeowner’s conclusive comments on these rumours were remarkable: “They show no sign of gratitude. This is not how a misafir should behave!”

Comments like these show the complexity of what the guesthood of Syrians meant for people like Meryem, Selim, or this storeowner. On the one hand, Syrians were identified as bad misafirs who refused to accept the proper role of guest, showed no respect, became parasitic, and even went so far as to claim the power and rights of their hosts. On the other hand, even having bad guests did not automatically justify showing bad hospitality, at least in the way people talked about such incidents.

In his study of Balgawi hospitality in Jordan, Andrew Shryock argues that bad hosts and bad guests in local historical accounts function as morality tales, registering “the ethical and political weight of the hospitality complex” (2012:27) and increasing the value of those who endure such encounters. A similar point can be made about the way in which people in Antakya communicated their anxieties about the Syrian misafirs, given that their comments were all expressions also of what good guests and hosts Antakyans are, as opposed to Syrians. The difference here lies in these people’s perspectives on the Turkish state’s role in breaking the thin

147 See Col (2012), Delaplace (2012) and Kelly (2012) for other anthropological accounts of parasitic guests. While Delaplace examines Mongolian stories of haunting by ghosts, which portray Chinese people as parasites who refuse to reciprocate, Col and Kelly approach the figure of the parasite more in terms of the anxieties created by the relations between human and non-human beings in the cases of Dechen Tibetan and Tanzanian hospitalities respectively.
line between welcome and trespass highlighted by Shryock (2009:42), following Derrida. Most of the Antakyans I knew implicitly or explicitly held the state’s excessive hospitality responsible for the threat they faced of intrusion and subordination. They believed, in Meryem’s words, that “Syrians wouldn’t do such things if they weren’t backed by the state.” And the backing of the Syrians by the state was yet another indicator for them of how they themselves were understood as the misafirs of Turkey rather than a “domestic issue.”

Paying closer attention to the way in which these incidents were narrated, we see that the narrators’ frame of reference in determining what proper and improper guesthood entails was often rooted in the mundane practices of hosting and visiting, which were both interpersonal and identitarian. Regardless of whether it was invoked to create a moral image of the Turkish state as a generous and tolerant host for foreigners or to reveal the limits of the nation’s openness to the “outsiders within,” the political significance of the misafir resided in its everyday connotations as a moral, emotional, and intimate realm of relatedness and rules of reciprocity. This realm of relatedness involved not simply the Syrians who had left their home country because of the conflict, but also women like Salma and Dima, as well as people who considered themselves and were treated as locals.

The misafir is a figure that at once enacts and disrupts the sovereignty of the spaces it physically and metaphorically enters by invoking particular forms of reciprocity, power, and representation. To understand what it means to break such rules for the people in Antakya, as described in the case of the pomegranate-picking Syrians, one needs to take a closer look at the everyday practices of receiving and being a misafir in the city and the ways in which the multiple meanings of guesthood are (re)produced in social practice.
5.4 Being Welcomed in Someone’s Home

During my fieldwork in Antakya, I was surprised by the number of people who invited me over to their houses for coffee or dinner on the day we met. Although at first I thought these were maybe just expressions of politeness that did not expect an answer in the affirmative, my experience of accepting proved otherwise.

My first host of this sort in the city was a real estate agent, Muhammet, whom I met while looking for an apartment in my first month in Antakya. Realizing that I had no family or connection in the city, he said with a look of pity on his face, “Why don’t you come over to our house for dinner tonight? I bought some fish today in the market and my wife can cook it for us.” After a brief moment of hesitation I accepted the offer and asked for his address, which I ended up not needing since we went there together after spending the rest of the afternoon in his office chatting about Antakya, my research, Turkish politics, and his past experiences of working in Saudi Arabia prior to his current job, a common practice among the lower class Alawi men, for whom employment opportunities in the city are more limited.

I was worried at first about how his wife would react to having an unexpected female guest but she didn’t seem bothered. On the contrary, Rabia welcomed me warmly, greeted me in Arabic and later in the dinner was interested in hearing my thoughts on the city, my life in Canada, and what brought me there. I was first invited to the living room, asked to sit on the single seat of a sofa set, and offered chocolate and cologne, as usually happens when people become a misafir in someone else’s house in Turkey. Then Rabia prepared the table in the other corner of the living room. The furniture they had was old-fashioned and a little worn-out, probably unchanged, I thought, since their marriage.

Since my offer to help Rabia while preparing and cleaning up the table was refused on the
grounds that I was a misafir, Muhammet and I mostly stayed in the living room during my time there, while Rabia was mostly in the kitchen. Muhammet tried to make her sit with us in the living room but she kept finding reasons to go back to the kitchen. In my second visit to their house, we ate in their garden instead. This time they let me help setting up the table, since Rabia had some knee problems that made walking up and down the stairs difficult for her. Muhammet stayed in the garden and took care of the barbeque. At the end of this visit, he thanked me for accepting their offer and added that they used to have a lot of misafirs when they were doing better financially. Since their situation had worsened, neighbours had stopped visiting them. “They must think we are not serving them well enough, like we did before,” he told me.

Of all my house visits in Antakya, however, it was only in Yeşim and her family’s house that I slept over, since they would never let me leave when I visited them. It was also the only house I visited that seemed inappropriate for overnight misafirs, a one-story house with only two rooms and a bathroom—one the living room, where they slept in the evening, the other the kitchen-diner, cum lobby and closet. Yeşim lived there with her mom and younger sister, who worked in a clothing-store and was the only one in the family with a permanent salary. When I stayed there, they would prepare one of the four divans in the living room for me, which functioned as couches in daytime and beds at night.

Since I felt a little uncomfortable taking their space and eating their food, I wanted to show my gratitude in some way: one day I brought some fruit and desserts to the house with me. My mistake was to buy these during my stay in their home and not before my arrival. They became really offended and told me that it was very humiliating for me, as their misafir, to make an attempt to do what they, as my hosts, should have been doing. My attempt to reciprocate became a criticism, an offense for which it took me some time to atone.
My own experience of being a misafir, of obeying and violating its rules, taught me some of the fundamental features of hospitality in Antakya that these two examples capture very well: the privilege and moral weight of being a host, its connections to the way power operates in etiquette and hierarchies of reciprocity, and the visible sites of hospitality that are created through the display of certain objects, performance of certain rituals, and the labour of women in less visible parts of the house.

In Antakya and the rest of Turkey, as well as most of the Mediterranean region and the Arab world (Dresch 2000; Herzfeld 1987; Meneley 1996; Pitt-Rivers 1977; Shryock 2012), guesthood is one of the most intimate ways of interacting with people outside of one’s own household. The routine of visiting someone at their house establishes and strengthens relations of neighbourliness, partnership, camaraderie, and kinship, and defines the internal and external boundaries of the house (Bourdieu 1977; Boddy 1989; Bruck 1997).

Almost all kinds of familial arrangements start with the visit of one party to another’s house, a visit that needs to be reciprocated later for the continuation of the relationship. These visits take different forms and the associated obligations are characterized by the type of visits and the identity of the misafir. Women, for instance, arrange rotating reception days in their homes where they offer each other food and company, manifest their cooking and hosting skills, and share gossip and news. Some of these reception days involve an economy of collective accumulation in which each guest gives a golden coin to their host, a ritual that repeats until each guest in the circle becomes the host and receives an equal number of coins (see also Chapter
A housewife can be in multiple circles of reception days, some of which are exclusive to women in a particular religious community (above, in Dima’s case).

While women’s reception days take place in daytime (typically in the afternoon), the evening visits, like the one I paid to Muhammet’s house, involve men and women, with ideally two or three families, including the hosts. These families can be relatives, in-laws, neighbours, or business partners who routinely reciprocate each other’s visits. Depending on the level of intimacy between the guest and host families, dinner may be served to the misafirs in these evening visits (“misafirlik”), which in Antakya is often accompanied by raki, the national, anise-flavoured liqueur, and followed by coffee (rather than tea, as is generally more common elsewhere in Turkey). People can bring dessert or alcohol to the houses they visit but they are not obliged to, and certainly should not do it in the way I did while staying in Yeşim’s house. Not accepting the delicacies offered, not finishing one’s plate, and leaving right after the dinner ends is considered rude.

This routinized etiquette is neither too strict nor unchanging; yet it provides a model for many forms of social and public interaction. For instance, the customers in the historical souk or visitors to people’s offices are always greeted as if they are a misafir in a house and are insistently offered coffee or tea until they accept. Most such visits end with the misafir stating, “We’re expecting you” [biz de sizi bekleriz], implying that the visit should be reciprocated. As we have seen in the comments of Meryem regarding the Syrian newcomers, these routines also provide a moral language to differentiate bad misafirs from good ones in broader scales of interaction. At all these levels, the constant and nuanced oscillation between the statuses of host

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148 The “altın günü” [gold day] also has a version in which the golden coins are replaced by US dollars. For studies that analyze the visiting patterns, the economy of accumulation and gender relations in such events see Benedict (1974) and Ekal (2009); also above, Chapter 3.
and guest is the main characteristic of social relations. This relationship is often troubled by people’s understandings of themselves as hosts, more so than as guests.

The tendency to understand and represent the self as host is spatially structured and significantly shapes the home-space and domestic life. As studies of houses in Turkey indicate (Bertram 2007; Duben 1985), the guestroom (misafir odası) in many houses is separate from the living room, and serves as a space of idealized self-display for the guests. When the houses are not big enough to have separate guestrooms, the living rooms undertake that function and are still referred to as “misafir odası.” Hospitality in such spaces is expressed through what Shryock (2004) calls “stagecraft,” the use and display of objects such as food, drink, utensils, and décor. In all the houses I visited in Antakya—no matter which social class, religious community, or ethnic group my hosts belonged to—the guestrooms had a similar layout with similar furniture, even though its value, quality, and style varied. The best furniture comprised matching chairs, Formica topped tables, a Formica buffet and a curio cabinet filled with fancy glassware or ceramics that were never used.

The guestroom was where I, as a guest, would be directed to and hosted, with coffee and snacks on the best china. If I was close enough to the family I visited, I could also spend some time with the women in the kitchen, but it was made clear to me that the guestroom was my place in the house and was not supposed to be confused with the rest of the house. The guestroom constituted the “public of the domestic,” where household members “experience their internal lives theatrically, as though oriented toward an audience” (Berlant 1998:284), in this case the misafir. It complicated the public-private distinction by showing how the house or its interior is never
unambiguously private or public. 

In his analysis of the Kabyle cosmology and space, Pierre Bourdieu (2003[1979]) takes the Algerian Berber house as a microcosm of the spatial and conceptual domains of the Berber world, which, he argues, is structured on gender and other social-symbolic principles informing the practical and the discursive knowledge of social actors. He argues that the divisions within the interiors of the house are governed by the symbolic oppositions between male and female, nature and culture, animal and human, dark and light, and lower and upper spaces, which “exist between the house as a whole and the rest of the universe” (Bourdieu 2003[1979]:134). These oppositions reflect the divisions by age, sex, and position in economic and social relations of production and register “the transformations of metaphoric and metonymic relations in which any part of the conceptual scheme implies the whole” (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003:8).

Although his symbolic categorization of space has been criticized for its rigidity and deterministic view of agency and gender relations (Grenfell and James 2003; King 2000), Bourdieu’s emphasis on the interdependence of meaning and action differentiates his analysis from other structuralist conceptualizations of the house (e.g., Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Lévi-Strauss 1988) and provides a productive framework with which to understand how the moral and political values attached to being a host are linked to the micro-practices at the household level. For Bourdieu, social practice is the main force that embodies and realizes generative and structuring schemes, and thus invokes spatial meanings in a context and practice-dependent way rather than as fixed in space. In the case of the Berber house, taking practice into consideration means attending to the crossings of the threshold, the movement of the body within

149 See Aswad (1980), Boddy (1989), Joseph (1983) and Meneley (1996:40) for a gendered critique of this separation in the Middle East.
the house space, and the positioning of the eye and foot with respect to its different sections (Bourdieu 2003[1979]:214).

Given that hospitality gains its first and literal meaning inside the house and people often refer back to this meaning while addressing misafirs at more abstract levels, a similar attention to the kinds of practices, bodily movements, languages, and objects in contexts of hospitality might help us to better understand the link between misafir as a real person and as a metaphor. In fact, Bourdieu himself notes that the place where the honoured guest is made to sit and sleep in a Berber house is essential in evaluating the hosting skills of locals. He notes, “When a person is badly received, it is customary for him to say, ‘he made me sit before his wall of darkness as in a grave’ or ‘his wall of darkness is as dark as a grave’” (2003[1979]:132).

It would not be wrong to claim in a similar vein that the generative schemes of hospitality in Antakya are only realized in practice through the act of visiting, and in the specificities of how and where misafirs are hosted, what they are served, who serves them, where they sit and sleep, what they are told, and what they tell in return. The boundary between host and guest is fragile precisely because it relies on these practices. This is one of the reasons why a failure on my part to conform to the practices of being a misafir in Yeşim’s house created discomfort. Furthermore, similar to the way the house acquires meaning differently for men and women on the basis of the position they hold in relations of production (see also Bruck 1997; Moore 1986), the moral codes regulating the domain of hospitality are implemented differently by the practical activities of men and women, as illustrated by my experience in Muhammet and Rabia’s house.

The meanings produced through actual practices of hospitality are linked directly to relations of power and evoked in ways people abstractly refer to others on other occasions. Stagecraft, for instance, functions as an indicator of where the host and the guest come from, what kind of
familial connections and class backgrounds they have, and to which community they belong. This awareness is expressed mainly in comparisons made between the habits of hospitality of city-dwellers (high value) and those coming from the nearby villages (low value), or between different religious communities. There are idioms, for instance, that specify which actions should be done where, as in “Eat the Jew’s food, sleep in the Christian’s house, and discuss politics with the Alawi,” with the match between the identity-markers and activity shifting according to the speaker.

In most of these comparisons, the self as host is portrayed as more civil, affectionate, and modern towards the guests than the other, with details provided about how far a host will go to honour a guest (i.e. those who sacrifice the only animal they have to serve to their guests versus those who do not offer even simple refreshments). At other times, people express the high status of the families they come from by making statements like “I come from a family that hosted (was able to host) guests” [Misafır ağırlayan bir aileden geliyorum, ben]. Thus, when I brought the dessert and fruit to Yeşim’s place, I not only questioned her family’s material abilities to perform the practices expected of good hosts, but also made a claim to replace their status as hosts. Muhammet’s resentment in respect of his decreasing number of misafirs was also related to the moral privilege and social status ascribed to being a host.

The kind of power this status holds can be better understood if one looks at relations of power inherent in the way people reciprocate in positions of guest and host, as well as in the expectations of reciprocity. The problem of reciprocity may be key to ruptures between hospitality as enacted at the local level and hospitality as enacted by the state.

5.5 The Problem of Reciprocity and Recognition

In his classic work The Gift, Marcel Mauss (2000[1954]:17) argues that “a clan, a household, a
group of people, a guest have no option but to ask for hospitality, to receive presents, to enter into trading, [and] to contract alliances through wives and blood kinship.” These reciprocal relations constitute “the basic act of recognition, military, juridical, economic, and religious in every sense of the word,” an act which comes with the obligation for the recognized to invite others and for invitees to be grateful to their hosts (Mauss 2000[1954]:52). “To refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept is tantamount to declaring war” (Mauss 2000[1954]:52).

Mauss’ attention to the unifying and divisive aspects of exchange has guided many in interrogating where power resides in relations of reciprocity (Cannell 1999; Healey 1984; Meneley 1996; Ortner 2006; Rosen 1979; Sahlins 1972). From Bourdieu’s analysis of symbolic violence highlighting the hierarchical order embodied by seemingly insignificant details of etiquette and dress (1977:94–95), to more recent studies that emphasize hostility and “agonistic intimacy” in different realms of sociability (Beidelman 1989; Herzfeld 1987; Meneley 1996; Singh 2011), there is a consensus that reciprocity is inherently political. As such, it upholds and creates conflict as much as it establishes social solidarity.

Analyses that examine this question of power in domains of hospitality measure among other things, the prestige and status of hosts and guests on the basis of their number and politico-economic status, the frequency of and length of time between visits, the closeness of relations among them (Allerton 2012; Aswad 1974; Candea and da Col 2012; Hammond-Tooke 1963; Meneley 1996). One such example, which specifically looked at my field site, was Barbara Aswad’s analysis of the visiting patterns of women from Antakya’s Sunni elite families in the 1960s.

Aswad applied Marshal Sahlins’ (1972) two models of reciprocity to differentiate visits between immediate relatives from those made for women’s reception days. She argued that the former are
based on “generalized” reciprocity in which “expectation of reciprocity is left indefinite, unspecified as to time, quantity and quality,” whereas women’s reception days involve “balanced” reciprocity in which “the failure to return the visit on equal terms and within an agreed upon time limit means either a break in the relationship or the affirmation of the higher rank of one party over the other” (1974:16). The prestige and the status of the host are measured by the number and status of their guests as well as their ability to not reciprocate a visit (cf. Rosen 1979:101).

This model resembles the “competitive hospitality” that Anne Meneley (1996:5,37) identifies in her study of formal and informal social visits of Yemeni women in Zabid, where, she argues, both men and women create their honour, personhood, and moral superiority through a hierarchical exchange of hospitality in their separate spheres. Although gender segregation is not as clear-cut in Antakya as it is in Zabid, the moral significance of hosting to the constitution of familial social status and community identity is, nevertheless, very prevalent. The nature of this prevalence and the moral and political underpinnings of being a host are overlooked in Aswad’s analysis.

One needs to be a host in order to be able to compete with other hosts, show mastery, and manage the rules of hospitality. Not reciprocating becomes a source of power rather than an inability as long as one is/can be identified as the host. In Antakya, one’s power is defined by the very ability to host others, to stage that hospitality, and be recognized as a host even though in actual relationships it is the reciprocity of visits that enables such privileged positions. This

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150 Shryock (2009:37–40) observes a similar tendency in Balgawi tales of hospitality, in which leaders of different tribes, like Yemeni women, take pride in their abilities to host, and challenge one another in a rivalry of generosity. According to Shryock, this rivalry is measured against an ideal and impossible hospitality, one that resonates with the Derridian ethics of unconditional hospitality.
reciprocity disintegrates, however, when hospitality is invoked metaphorically to address the outsider or stranger. Recall the stories of Salma and Dima, where one was denied hospitality at her mother-in-law’s apartment and the other denied the status of being a host.

Another anecdote from my fieldwork further illustrates what being denied the status of host meant for misafirs on another scale. In conversation with some women at the souk regarding the newly popularized image of Antakya as a tolerant and hospitable city, I—we—were informed by a newlywed woman from Istanbul that “Antakya may be tolerant as a host, but Antakyans don’t let outsiders be the host.” The woman then proceeded to tell us that her new neighbours visited her mother-in-law, who lived in the same building, rather than herself to celebrate her wedding and the birth of her first child. This, she said, made her realize that she did not belong to Antakya and that she was only a misafir.

It is no coincidence that this Istanbuli woman’s complaints about being a misafir were expressed in relation to Antakya’s image as a tolerant city. They are in fact reminiscent of the criticism offered by the head of the Orthodox Community Foundation on the concept of tolerance (above). The politics of recognition in Antakya functions according to similar rules of reciprocity, whereby the one with the power to recognize exercises this by claiming to be the host and asking to be treated and represented as one. In this context, the words of the Foundation head cited earlier can be rephrased as “Turkey may be hospitable towards its Syrian guests but it does not allow us, those who are different, to be the host, that is, to belong.”

When framed in this way, what makes Syrians unwanted guests for Antakya’s non-Muslim communities becomes not simply the latter’s alterity but the confirmation, through their guesthood, of the authority of the Turkish state as the ultimate host. In other words, the state-produced display of intimacy in the form of a tolerant hospitality, or the nation-state’s stagecraft,
heralds a dangerous space of proximity between “refugees” and “minorities” by their co-interpellation as the “misafirs of Turkey.” It is in order to move the self outside this space of identification, and overcome the anxiety that Meryem described as Syrians taking over “the homes of those who show them hospitality,” that the minoritized communities emphasize their rootedness in the land and reclaim their host status. This claim is best illustrated in the efforts of the Jewish, Christian, and Alawi community leaders to build guesthouses in Antakya for their potential visitors.

In the new regimes of tolerance, these institutions of public hospitality become a means for their respective communities to receive official recognition and express at least some degree of “autonomy” as hosts, an expression that acknowledges and is troubled by the authority of the state in modern Turkey regardless of whether it expresses this authority through tolerance, hospitality, violence, or exclusion. Ironically, however, the emphasis on rootedness is enabled by what Liisa Malkki (1992) calls the “national order of things” that has historically led to the instability of these communities’ own citizenship and property rights by creating the rootedness of some at the expense of the uprootedness of others.

5.6 Conclusion

Relations, paradoxes and power-plays of hospitality have long occupied anthropological thinking as the very possibility of ethnography and the precondition of most social interactions observed in the field. These interactions ranged from gift-giving (Mauss 2000[1954]) and rival feasting (Bourdieu 1990; Geertz 1973), to encounters with newly arrived strangers (Boas 1887; Sahlin

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151 Here, the reference is to Louis Althusser’s conceptualization of “interpellation” according to which the individual anonymously hailed by the police acknowledges this hailing by turning around (Althusser 1971:174). In the act of acknowledging that it is indeed he who is addressed, the individual thus recognizes his subjecthood. This implies a double process. Although he is recognized as a social subject by the law, he is also subjugated to the law.
visiting patterns (Antoun 2000; Aswad 1974; Beck 1982; Meneley 1996), and kinship arrangements (Hammond-Tooke 1963; Stasch 2009). Although anthropologists including Julian Pitt-Rivers (1954; 1968), Michael Herzfeld (1987) and Anne Meneley (1996) focused on host-guest relations more directly and highlighted the mutual implication of power and welcome, hospitality as a political and theoretical category in its own right did not appear in anthropological writings until very recently (Candea and da Col 2012; Harvey 2004; Shryock 2004; 2012; Stasch 2009).

“The return to hospitality” in anthropology, as captured by the title of the introduction to a recently edited volume on the topic (JRAI 2012), is part of a more general interest in hospitality across the social sciences and humanities (Barnett 2005; Benhabib 2006; Dikeç, Clark, and Barnett 2009; Morgan 2009; Papastergiadis 2007; Rosello 2001), an interest that is animated by the works of continental philosophers, and in particular Jacques Derrida, on the problems of identity, belonging, and alterity (Derrida 1998; 2000; Levinas 1979). While anthropological accounts of hospitality pay closer to attention to ordinary relations at the interpersonal level, the renewed philosophical attention to hospitality focuses on the legal and political processes of recognition, identification, and border crossings which often appear as interruptions to these relations.

In this chapter, I have approached hospitality through the temporal and moral figure of the misafir, which brings together the interpersonal and identitarian and refers to a number of different positionalities, identities, and persons depending on the context in which it is invoked. In particular, I have examined and compared the guesthood of Syrian newcomers, Syrian or non-Antakyan family members, Antakya’s minoritized communities, and its long-term residents through my own experience of being a guest in the city. I endeavoured to elucidate the linkages
and tensions among these different frameworks, as well as the ways in which the interpersonal and identitarian mutually inflect one another as ethical frames. Central to this interplay is the problem of recognition and its reciprocity expressed through the question “whose misafirs?”

Practices of hospitality and “guesthood” constitute one of the most flexible ways through which Antakya’s religious groups relate to each other on a daily basis. Daily routines of visiting, conventions of recognition and its reciprocity, and the material culture around hospitality crosscut socially ascribed and institutionally inscribed identities, including those based on religious difference. Yet they also reflect how the religious difference of Antakya’s Jewish and Christian communities is produced in relation to other boundaries, borders, places and people, as well as the historical and political processes that produce these connections. The religious sameness of Dima and Salma, for instance, is overridden by their national difference but not independently of the “difference” inhabited by the communities they married into, vis-à-vis the Sunni majority and the Turkish state.

The positions of guest and host nevertheless evade being overdetermined by or fixated on a particular identity, and are often subject to “considerable bargaining, rhetoric, emotion, and often conflict” (Rosen 1979:103). As my ethnographic material shows, the link between the actual misafirs in Antakya and misafir as a metaphor that stands for collective entities needs to be constantly (re)created and managed in discourse and in practice. The valorization of being host in perceptions and representations of the self is an indicator of the struggle that comes out of this need, and contrasts with the constant exchange of positions between guest and host on the ground. When one cannot exchange positions or inhabit either of them, as in the case of Dima and Salma and as expressed by the Istanbul woman and the non-Sunni communities in Antakya, the link between hospitality and hostility becomes most apparent.
Philosophers and anthropologists have examined the relationship between actual and metaphorical relations of hospitality as a matter of scale. Derrida, for instance, argues that “the right to hospitality involves a house, a lineage, a family, one kin-group or ethnic group, receiving another kin-group or ethnic group” (1997:27). Rabinowitz’s ethnography of Nazareth looks at the projection of localized acts of hospitality in homes and busses onto national contests over spatial sovereignty (Rabinowitz 1997:115–116). Looking at the expanding scale at which popular symbols of Bedouin hospitality are displayed in Jordan, Shryock (2012) speaks of “the scalar elasticity of hospitality.” Herzfeld similarly states that the “stranger” is a “shifter,” which constructs an “essential homology between several levels of collective identity—village, ethnic group, district, nation”; thus, “what goes for the family home also goes, at least by metaphorical extension, for the national territory” (1987:76). Yet questions remain as to what material social forms and structures this metaphorical extension entails and what enables metaphoric statements to “refer to meanings outside of the context of their utterance” (Moore 1986:85)?

In his analysis of Corsican hospitality, Matei Candea (2012) suggests that a scalar elasticity is possible only if we view hosts and guests as detached from the specifics of time and place. Rosello similarly criticizes the extension of the logic of hospitality to debates around immigration as in Derridian formulations and notes, “the vision of the immigrant as a guest is a metaphor that has forgotten that it is a metaphor” (2001:3). Such cautions deserve attention in order for us to acknowledge that the meanings and values attached to house, host, and guest at different scales are not always synonymous, and that the extension of hospitality beyond home space always comes with “the disarticulation of a complex, morally binding relationship between host and guest” (Shryock 2004:57).

My main aim here is neither to suggest a determinate relationship between these different scales
nor to simply criticize such suggestions, but to demonstrate how the workings of the *misafir* metaphor are deeply anchored in actual, lived practices and meanings, as well as to particular histories and geographies. From one perspective, one can even argue that these different uses of *misafir* all belong to the same scale: that of the everyday life. What we encounter in this case is not simply a scalar slippage, but an indexical relationship that is always relative to the interactional and historical context in which the concept is used. The literal-to-figurative movement of the metaphor of *misafir* is not simply a link made by theorists, but one that is also primarily a part of ordinary people’s ordinary language, thought, and action (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Moore 1986:82). People are aware of the political asymmetry involved in the separation of host from guests and of the configurations of this separation in both house politics and state power at the everyday level. They address it and make use of it as they can when they see fit.

This is not to say that Antakyans confuse the hospitality offered to people at home with the welcoming of tourists in guesthouses or the bureaucratic control of foreigners by the state. Nor does the experiential reality of hospitality in domestic life reside in the cultural displays of hospitality or the nation-state’s stagecraft, although these do sometimes influence the way people communicate their anxieties in public. Yet it is only by juxtaposing the multiple and contradictory uses and practices of misafir in each of these layers that we can identify how household practices of hospitality both enact and disrupt state authority.

While the language of hospitality implies intimacy and frames misafirs as kin, neighbours, or friends, the fact that intimacy needs to be constantly created through the sharing of space, food, and conversation confirms that it is ephemeral. It is not possible to perfectly and permanently occupy the position of either guest or host. Nor is it possible to talk about impervious boundaries and borders when there are misafirs. This double impossibility imbues relations of hospitality
with conflict and hostility. They are dangerous. Displays of elegant courtesy associated with ideals of neighbourliness, friendship, and love decoratively conceal the structural violence embedded in the very distinction between guest and host, and acknowledged in people’s desires to be the “host.”

The ordinary ethics of/as hospitality in Antakya conceives the misafir as both neighbour and enemy and sometimes temporary member of the house but never a member of the host community. As such, it provides a perfect terminology for the Turkish state to deploy in framing its relationship to citizens and non-citizens as more inclusive and pluralist than had previously been the case yet without forsaking sovereignty. Similar to the way in which the preferential treatment provided to misafirs at home conceals these intricate power plays, formal declarations of welcome mask the subtler and less visible modes of violence exercised by the new liberal face of the Turkish state.

While the state presents itself as the tolerant host through formal declarations of welcome, the question “Whose misafirs?” lingers. It is a constant reminder that whether hospitality means a suspension or a performance of sovereignty depends on who the host is and where hospitality stands at the juncture of temporal and territorial borders. It reveals that the contemporary discourses of tolerance, harmonious coexistence and pluralism in the city are all built on the “temporary difference” of the misafir rather than equality of citizenship. Yet more importantly, it shows that the everyday politics of hospitality cannot be easily molded to serve the interests of one particular polity, including the state.
6 Conclusion

Secularism, Talal Asad (2003) argues, is not simply a response to the question of how to ensure social peace and toleration. “It is an enactment by which a political medium (representation of citizenship) redefines and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion” (Asad 2003:5). In an epoch dominated by nation-states that are imagined to be territorially circumscribed and internally homogeneous, the transcendence of difference indeed seems to be a fundamental work borne especially by those who inhabit difference at the national borders.

In the political geography which emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, national Turkish citizenship mobilized secularism as the democratic promise of modernity, equality and liberty, but only by excluding, eliminating, and dispossessing entire populations and religious identifications that had previously held relatively stable positions under imperial rule. As with many nation-states in the past two centuries, the Turkish state endeavoured to cultivate a form of belonging based on national sameness, by discharging the dominant political and cultural institutions of Islam (i.e. the Caliphate, religious orders, schools, language etc) on the one hand, and through the minoritization of its non-Muslim populations on the other. In that sense, secularism operated as a transcendent mediation that sought to free the public from the symbols, power, and strong attachments of religion(s). This process did not necessarily guarantee equal treatment for Muslims and non-Muslims, however. As the religion of the majority, Sunni Islam held a privileged position in defining Turkishness and ensuring national unity, so long as it did not challenge the authority of the nation-state, or citizenship as the primary principle of identity.

The diversity of populations living in Turkey and their multiple attachments have always caused tensions and ruptures in the ideologies of homogeneous nationalism that justified the initial
formation of the Republic. Yet it was not until the past decade that such challenge has become integrated into the dominant political discourse and taken official forms in the shape of a politics of pluralism. Turkey, under the AKP rule, has witnessed a sea change, “an opening” of politics towards previously marginalized groups (i.e. pious Muslims, Sufi orders, Kurds, Armenians, and so on), and a concomitant shift in secular discourse towards its liberal interpretations (i.e. religion as a “human right” and secularism as freedom of religion, and of Islam in particular). This dissertation has concerned itself particularly with this latter move, and examined how religious plurality in Turkey’s margins has become the subject and representation of this shift in Turkish secularism.

Expressed through the concept of hoşgörü (tolerance), this new image of secularism implied a more pluralist and “tolerant” form of national citizenship than was possible under Turkey’s Republican regime. It has opened up new spaces for the political and cultural representation of non-Sunni and/or non-Turkish citizens. Yet as I have argued in this dissertation, it has also reproduced the Muslim and Turkish hegemony in new forms, i.e. by objectifying, domesticating, and regulating religious difference as representable elements of the nation. In other words, freedom of religion in this context, just like freedom from religion, did not necessarily mean an equality of religions. Partially built upon a culture of fear and memories of exodus, exclusion, and the minoritization of Turkey’s non-Muslim populations, the result has been a secular form of governance that conjoins liberal conceptions of toleration with Turkish nationalism and a nostalgia for the Islamic cosmopolitanism of the Ottoman Empire.

Antakya is a particularly significant place to study these entanglements and identify the socio-political and historical conditions that enable, frame, and limit them. The peculiar history of the city, and its locality as a border town, has placed Antakya in an ambivalent position on the
margins of Turkey. The ethnic and religious diversity of Antakya’s population withstood the national homogenization processes due to its particular geopolitical location and the historical process of its incorporation into the republic. Ironically, however, it is precisely this liminal exceptionality that has brought Antakya to the centre of public attention in the 2000s, marking it as a model of Turkey’s cosmopolitan composition and the ultimate exemplar of a very conscious, socio-religious tolerance. Social and religious life in Antakya thus provides a revealing lens onto the shifts in Turkey’s conduct with respect to difference and plurality as a secular and a Muslim country fashioning uneasy and unsettled identities for itself relative to global hegemonies. Through the multiplicity and heterogeneity of its religious landscape, Antakya also reveals how, just as there is not a singular form of secularism, there is also not one response to it.

Accordingly in this dissertation, I have explored the multiple modes and meanings of religious co-existence in Antakya focusing on the heterogeneous sites of encounters and social boundaries between and within different religious traditions. In so doing, I have attended to both the performative representations of religious difference rooted in a pluralist secularism, and the realms of everyday interaction that rework and transcend such political frameworks. The relationship between the mundane relations of difference and the regime of tolerance is multifold. I would pick out three aspects as emphasized in this dissertation.

First, I have demonstrated how tolerance as a new official discourse and a political performance redrew religious boundaries in its very attempt to bridge religious divides in some contexts, as with the Antakya Choir of Civilizations, while it denied the existence of such divides in others (i.e. in matters concerning the Alawi-Sunni, and/or Alawi-Alevi distinction). I argued that this equivocational redrawing obscured already existent and historically conditioned forms of religious engagements. This was especially noticeable in the paradoxes generated by the choir’s
portrayal of hoşgörü with respect to the distinctions between religious difference and national sameness, religion and culture, and “play” and “real” (Chapter 2). This redrawing also characterized the tensions between the old and new discourses on religious cosmopolitanism (Chapter 4).

My analysis of tolerance as a secular form of governance benefited from critical theory, which is less sanguine than liberal theory on the capacity of pluralism to ensure harmony and focuses instead on how liberalism invests in demarcating and policing communal boundaries (Bender and Klassen 2010; Brown 2006; Chatterjee 2006; Özyürek 2009c; Povinelli 2002). Unlike the Western liberal and multicultural contexts which have been the primary focus of both literatures with their cultural roots in a Western melting-pot-versus-mosaic discourse, Turkey in the 2000s presents a case in which liberalism appears less an established and evolving political and legal framework than an incipient and rhetorical perspective on state practice and its history (Tambar 2010). Yet, despite the role of Turkish nationalism and neo-Ottomanism in shaping the appearance and goals of liberal secularism in Turkey, the governance of religious diversity in contemporary Antakya demonstrates the characteristics of what Povinelli (2002) calls “multicultural domination,” namely, “the demand by states and majority populations that minorities—or indigenous communities in settler colonial states—perform and authenticate their difference within the moral and legal frameworks determined by those demanding agencies” (in Tambar 2010:652).

In a similar vein, Antakya’s minoritized communities were invited to represent themselves as tolerated citizens of Turkey by performing and authenticating their difference through/for official representations of hoşgörü, and many chose to do so. I observed during the course of my fieldwork how the language of hoşgörü pervaded many areas of personal, interpersonal and
communal life and influenced Antakyans’ understandings and portrayals of themselves and others in religious and nonreligious contexts. Although people’s positive perspectives on and emotional investments in, the Antakya Choir of Civilizations present the most apparent example of this, the labour put into producing the material representations of hoşgörü (objects, paintings, jewelry, photographs, banners, and so on) are equally noteworthy. People have also started to frame their challenges, criticisms and demands for recognition through the same terminologies. For instance, the institution of a choir within the Alawi Ehl-i Beyt Foundation through the initiative of Mehmet (Chapter 2), and its organizers’ demand for government funding to form a cultural centre/guesthouse complex were all by-products of this vision of togetherness. In that sense, the representation of religious diversity as hoşgörü was never just a representation; it often became a meaningful and powerful way to assert certain forms of being and living together (Chapter 4).

While I find it important to decipher and critique the workings of power in the liberal regime of tolerance, I do not wish to claim that there is no exterior relative to this regime and that all my interlocutors do is to embody, perform and enact it. People also shifted and extended the official meanings of hoşgörü by drawing on their own experiences and understandings of co-existence while performing the state-encouraged roles of the tolerant and tolerated citizens. This constitutes the identification of a second relationship between mundane differences and the tolerance regime.

Attempting to ground their claims about the presence or absence of tolerance in Antakya, my interlocutors often referred back to the mundane relations of hospitality, social codes of reciprocity, daily ethics of neighbourliness, economic forms of solidarity, familial, and communal intimacy, and the material culture around them. This was grounded in the concept of
misafir, indexing local, national and international moralities, binding them not only to certain roles and behaviours but also to a structuring ethic with which they were associated (Chapter 5). In some cases, being tolerated was equated to being a misafir and construed and criticized on the basis of the social expectations of hospitality. In others, hoşgörü was commoditized to be sold in the market, incorporated into a secular conceptualization of cosmopolitanism (i.e. a personal belief in the same God), or narrated as an essential part of Alawi theology of difference (see Emine’s narrative in Chapter 4).

Among other things, my ethnography reports a traditional hoşgörü wherein non-judgmentalism was validated and valorized as an everyday attitude. But this normal, normalizing, supposedly pre-politicized culture of tolerance was also one couched in the use of hoşgörü as a justificatory explanation of Islam to outsiders—or rather, as a counter and corrective to the clash of civilizations thesis—with the presentation of Islam’s universalism and embrace of social harmony. This carried with it a neo-Ottomanesque revisionism, since interpretations of hoşgörü on the ground resonated with collective memories of historical processes of differentiation and minoritization along ethnic, religious, and national lines.

Finally, my ethnographic focus on the daily enmeshments of different traditions has pointed towards a third way in which we can understand the relation between the mundane and the performative, and possibly discourse and practice. People’s daily interactions in the city market, neighbourly visits, business arrangements, and even in the choir are shown to do more than (merely) reshape or extend the local understandings of hoşgörü. They imply “other ways of living together” that can never be fully subsumed by, and often remain beyond the regimes of governance in their imperial, national or liberal forms, “beyond” both in the sense of out of reach and in the sense of more developed, evolved, nuanced—or sophisticated (i.e., cosmopolitan).
These interactions are not always cooperative, equal, or peaceful. In fact, they can be openly antagonistic, hierarchical, and power-laden, as depicted in the tensions in Antakya’s souk space (Chapter 3), as well as the theological debates (Chapter 4), different levels of reciprocal and non-reciprocal forms of hospitality (Chapter 5), interreligious friendships, and generational and denominational conflicts amongst people from the same and different religious traditions (this thesis, passim). By highlighting how these encounters and interactions involve both intimacy and hostility, become sites of both differentiation and relationality, and reside in between the public and private, identitarian and interpersonal, and secular and sacred, this dissertation argued that religious difference is produced at the intersection of multiple discourses, practices and boundaries. As such, it evades both pluralist and dualist models of religious co-existence. People employ sensorial, embodied, and emplaced mechanisms to distinguish their own belief and practices from others’ when religious boundaries appear most ambiguous (denominational conversion, economic interactions, etc.). These shape cultural and religious practices on some occasions, and they cause people simply to “listen to” rather than “sing with” one another on others.

6.1 Afterword: New Directions, Old Problems

Since the time of my fieldwork, Turkey has witnessed the unfolding of a number of overlapping major events. Among the breaking stories were Turkey’s increasing involvement in the Syrian conflict, the summer uprisings of 2013 known as the “Gezi Park Protests,” the corruption

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152 While the welcoming of Syrian refugees in Hatay and other Turkish cities was understood to be the first step of this involvement, the more critical voices addressed the government’s pro-rebel stance. Various concrete repercussions of this stance have been experienced in Hatay, including the explosion of two car bombs in May 2013 in the border town of Reyhanlı killing 51 people. In the local elections of March, 2014, Hatay allegiance basically shifted from the ruling AKP to the traditionally secularist, main opposition party.

153 The Gezi Park Protests, or Turkey’s summer uprisings, started on May 28, 2013 as a reaction to the urban development plan for Istanbul’s Taksim Gezi Park. Sparked by outrage at the violent eviction of a sit-in at the park
crisis in December 2013 related to the opening rift between the Erdoğan government and its important former ally Fettullah Gülen, rising interest rates and exchange rates, the peace process with the Kurds and the loss of interest on the part of both the government and the public in the state of Turkey’s relations with the EU (Alessandrini 2014). Most recently, the opening of a pivotal, year-long election cycle has seen the Prime Minister unremittingly pound a divisive us-versus-them discourse.  

These ongoing developments, with Turkey’s unstable but problematic internal situation and unpredictable but changing relationship to the West and the Middle East, have certainly influenced the relevance and degree of pluralist politics in Turkey. The questions of how to regulate “difference” and when to subsume it into national sameness have nevertheless remained persistent, and will do so into the future (even through as well as following the current period of authoritarianism). Indeed, following the municipal elections of March 2014, which, despite claims of election fraud, ensured the popular support for the AKP, the government has already signalled that a new set of democratization packages are on the way, and will address the state’s 

protesting the plan, the protests spread to much of Turkey and addressed a wide range of concerns at the core of which were freedom of the press, of expression, assembly, and the government’s encroachment on Turkey’s secularism (Alessandrini, Uştündağ, and Yıldız 2014; Yıldırım and Navaro-Yashin 2013)

154 The crisis started with the arrest of the family members of several key people in the Turkish government for bribery, corruption, fraud, money laundering, and smuggling gold (breaking sanctions against Iran), and continued in 2014 with the release of voice recordings of Erdoğan documenting corruption and his personal intervention in media and justice system. Erdoğan introduced new measures to control the Internet, subordinating the intelligence services and justifying his tighter grip by claiming his government is under attack by a “parallel state,” referring to the followers of Fettullah Gülen in state mechanisms (Recknagel 2014).

155 Before Gezi, the “them” referred to traditional secularists and contemporary liberals; in the intervening period it has since widened to include all opposition. In a pre-(local) election interview, for example, Erdoğan referred to the Gülenists as “worse than Shiites.” At http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ccaolQ4qt8
relations with Armenia, Israel, Turkey’s Alevi and Gezi protestors (Sahin 2014). My final thoughts turn to the expression of this problem of difference through violence, not as a feature of the government so much as its governance, that is, as the flipside, as it were, of tolerance. The coupling of tolerance and violence in addressing this question is observed in the following line of events.

On September 8th, 2013, the inauguration ceremony of a civil society project in Turkey’s capital Ankara revived the demonstrations that had started with the Istanbul Gezi Park Protests a few months earlier. As the joint venture of the Islamic Gülen movement and the Alevi Cem Foundation (prior to the rift between Gülen and Erdoğan), the project involved the construction of a worship complex in Ankara’s Alevi populated Tuzlucaayır neighbourhood. The complex would serve as both a mosque (cami) and a cem house (cemevi). Referred to as Turkey’s first cami-cemevi project, the idea was strongly opposed by the local inhabitants of Tuzlucaayır and other Alevi confederations. To them, what was being promoted as tolerance was nothing more than a disguise for assimilation.

As the resistance in Ankara on the day of the inauguration met with the teargas, rubber bullets, and water cannons of the police, the demonstrations spread once again to other centres of Turkey’s summer uprisings. Antakya was one of these centres, and possibly the only city, other than Turkey’s three largest cities, Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara, that had continuously made it to the national media over the summer. The unrest in the city had started after the Syrian conflict in reaction to the Turkish government’s strongly pro-rebel stance. As most Alawis in Antakya were

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156 The most recent development in relation to this has been Erdoğan’s public offering of condolences to the relatives of Armenians killed in WWI by Ottoman soldiers on the 99th anniversary of the start of Armenian genocide (Letsch 2014). Although Erdoğan’s statement did not acknowledge the genocide, and was found unsatisfactory by Armenians in Turkey, in Armenia and in the diaspora, it was still the first time that a Turkish Prime Minister had openly offered condolences.
supporters of Bashar al-Assad, had relatives who supported him across the border, and viewed Turkey’s criticisms of the Syrian government as proof of its anti-Alawi stance, this unrest had manifested itself predominantly through the Alawi-Sunni difference. The Gezi Park Protests in Turkey quickly turned this unrest into organized street demonstrations. Unlike other cities where protests often took place in public squares, the focal point of resistance in Antakya was a residential neighbourhood populated mainly by Arab Alawis. This neighbourhood, Armutlu, was still mourning the loss of two young men, Abdullah Cömert and Ali Ismail Korkmaz, killed by police in the earlier anti-government protests. The protests in Antakya against the cami-cemevi project would become the site of the killing of another, Ahmet Atakan.\textsuperscript{157}

The increasing emphasis placed on Alawi-Sunni relations in both the official language of tolerance and the forms of resistance against it may appear at first sight as the failure of liberal framing of secularism in Turkey. After all, the long waited democratization package that the AKP announced in October 2013 as part of the peace process with the Kurds, not only failed to mention (let alone start to address) the burning issues (some form of regional autonomy being fundamental) threatening a return to fatal conflict (Kurdish guerrilla and Turkish military actions), but also left out entirely the demands of Turkish Alevi Confederations and the Alawi Ehl-i Beyt Foundation for official recognition (e.g., by awarding cemevi charitable status recognizing their institutional role rather than having them operate as private facilities). I

\textsuperscript{157} In the demonstrations that started with the Gezi Park Protests, eight young men were killed by the police and/or counter protestors. All but one was of Alevi/Alawi background and three were from Antakya: Ali Ismail Korkmaz (19), beaten to death by un-uniformed (sivil) police in Eskisehir, where he was a student, and Abdullah Cömert (22) and Ahmet Atakan, shot in the head and killed by Antakya police rubber bullets during the protests. Alevis Mehmet Ayvalıtaş (20), was run over by the car of counter protestors in Istanbul, and Ethem Sarsılışük (26), was shot by a police gun in Ankara, where Turkish Alevis and had been actively involved in leftist political organizations, while Berkin Elvan (14) was hit in the head by a tear-gas canister, sent into a coma, and died several months later.
maintain, however, that actually this exclusion sheds further light on the nature of political power and how the liberal regime of tolerance works in Turkey, by exposing the violence intrinsic to it.

Just as the recent turn to pluralism in the 2000s was not a radical break from but a reworking of the exclusionary nationalism and majoritarianism of the Turkish Republic (this thesis, passim), the retreat to violent suppression and exclusion should be viewed as the continuation of state power in the face of challenge and disobedience. This is a contemporary political history, new forms of the old. Politics, in this framing, is a field of actions that reconfirms the nation and its borders, and employs secularism to transcend the differences that would otherwise fracture national cohesion. Anthropologically, on the other hand, the novel configurations of ideas, relations, and materialities that arise in response, direct our attention once again to the mundane and its potentialities.

When I visited Antakya in the summer of 2013, after the Gezi Park protests and before the demonstrations against the cami-cemevi project, Mehmet gave me a tour around Armutlu in order to show me the spots where there had been clashes with the police and where the residents had established barricades with cast-off pieces of metal, wooden planks, and even old washing machines and refrigerators in an attempt to block the way to police vehicles. One particular spot he was eager to show me was the impromptu memorial that had been erected by the residents of Armutlu on the street where Abdullah Cömert had fallen. The memorial had pictures of Abdullah and other killed protestors placed beside the plants and oil lamps normally used at Alawi graves and shrines. Turkish flags were also hung over the memorial as well as posters and banners and T-shirts with slogans. This heterogeneous amalgamation of political, religious and national iconography was more, however, than a memorialization of the more direct forms of violence.
that the discourse of tolerance had brought to the city. It marked the re-politicization of religion’s public appearance in Antakya beyond the tolerance of this-world, in death and mourning.

In the same afternoon as we walked through Armutlu streets, Mehmet also showed me where Abdullah’s and Ali Ismail’s family lived. He told me that both families had received many visitors wanting to offer condolence from the city and outside Antakya. One such visit had been arranged by Mehmet himself, and included the representatives of different groups within the Antakya Choir of Civilizations. The local news coverage of the visit, which I later found online, quoted the choir director Yılmaz’s remarks of sympathy to the grieving family. The quote was illustrative of the muddy ground between the performative and the mundane, promising, as it did, to reciprocate an actual welcome imbued with grief with a figurative one that reframed suffering as togetherness:

We hope that God will not show you and our city any other sorrow. Antakyans have always been proud of their ability to live together. And unfortunately, they now are also grieving together. We have many choir members of his age. If he had lived, maybe he would also have been one of our members. We are here to support you and would like you also to know that the doors of the Antakya Choir of Civilizations will always remain open to you.
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