

**BETWEEN RELIGION AND SECULARITY IN TURKEY:  
A Qualitative Enquiry into the Understandings and Experiences  
of Turkish University Students**

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A Thesis Submitted to Keele University  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Sociology

July 2015

Keele University



*to my mother*

*who has devoted her life to her children*

*so we might grow up good and live worthily...*

*İyi insanlar olmamız ve güzel hayatlar yaşayabilmemiz için*

*hayatını biz çocuklarımıza adayan*

*anneme...*



## ABSTRACT

This research explores the ways in which young Turkish university students understand, express and negotiate religious practice versus secularism in the public and private spheres as these have emerged in the early twenty-first century, in light of the historical polarization between Islamism and secularism in Turkey. Data was collected using qualitative research methodologies, including participant observation and in-depth interviews with forty-five university students in Istanbul, Turkey. This latter method allowed participants to express their perceptions and experiences about the relationship between Islam and secularity in the context of Turkey's move to democracy, and the success of the AKP religious party in democratic elections. The thesis begins with a review of relevant scholarly literature; first, debates on the relationship between Islam and the secular state, and secularist policies of Turkey; second, social and cultural conceptions of the relationship between Islam and secularity in Turkey; third, philosophical and conceptual debates on Islam and secularity. Examining this issue, I explore (1) the perceptions and views of university students on secularism and Islamism, the secularist state and the Islamic state; (2) their understanding and experience of religiosity and secularity; (3) the impact of religious groups in Turkey on the relationship of university students with religion, secularity and modernity; (4) the divisions or cohesion of Turkish society based on religion, culture, and lifestyle. I then move on to present and examine one of the most prominent public events of Turkish politics in 2013, the Gezi Park Protests, in terms of the subject of my thesis. The thesis concludes that Turkish university students, both secular and religiously oriented, do successfully negotiate the secular spaces of the public sphere, and have developed new kinds of religiosity and Islamic understanding that stress individual choice and shape their attitudes towards the state, politics, and fellow students who choose to embrace different lifestyles.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was made possible with the help and support of too many people for me to mention here individually. I would especially like to record my gratitude toward the following significant advisors and contributors:

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to each of the forty-five university students whose participation and observations form the basis of it.

I will always be indebted to Professor Farzana Shain and Professor Pnina Werbner for their guidance, support and encouragement. Their supervision and feedback were always thoughtful, fair and inspiring.

It is an honour for me to thank the many friends who have loyally supported and helped me in their different ways, and in particular John P. Shann, Salih Yıldırım, Kumru Toktamış, Esra Kendir, Şengül Çelik, Hamdi Saraç, and Yasin Çelik.

I am deeply grateful for the hospitality and kind friendship of a number of families during this study, and in particular Ülkay and Zeki Köse, Sevil and İsmail Durmuş, and Özlem and Erdinç Çelik.

I met so many good people in the course of my research, at the university, in Birmingham, Newcastle-under-Lyme, London, and in the field in Istanbul. Their friendship helped so much to make this time with all its difficulties enjoyable and even fun, as well as productive. It is a pleasure to recollect this and to thank them all.



# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This research explores the ways in which university students in Istanbul understand, express and negotiate religion and secularity in the early twenty-first century amidst historically constituted, politically affirmed and culturally mediated polarization between Islamism and secularism. The outcome of this study aims to make a contribution to the field of social change in the context of secularism and Islamism, the regional field of Turkish studies, and the thematic field of Islamic studies.

Examining this issue, I explore the perceptions and views of university students on secularism and Islamism, the secularist state and the Islamic state; their understanding and experience of religiosity and secularity; the impact of religious groups in Turkey on the relationship of university students with religion, secularity and modernity; if there is division or cohesion in society based on religion, culture, and lifestyle. I present and examine one of the most prominent political issues of Turkish politics in 2013, the Gezi Park Protests, which started on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013 in order to protest the pedestrianisation of Taksim Square, in the context of my thesis. The starting hypothesis for my research is that Turkish university students, both secular and religiously oriented, do successfully negotiate the secular spaces of the public sphere and religiosity; they develop new kinds of religiosity and Islamic understanding that shape their attitudes towards the state, politics, and those who embrace different lifestyles. These innovative ways of understanding have not yet been appreciated in the scholarly literature, as I show throughout this thesis.

Casanova (1994) questions the understanding of modernization as set out by Max Weber, who argued that a key feature of modernity was the relegation of religion – of

religious beliefs, practices and sentiments – to the private sphere. In other words, not only has modernity's relocation of religion into private sphere, i.e. its privatization, has had significant consequences regarding individuals' self-identification and self-representation in public; according to this modernization thesis religion no longer has a role to play in the public sphere. Casanova (2006) disputes this linear view, arguing that religion has had a major role in the late twentieth century in overturning authoritarian regimes (for example in Poland or Spain), and that even modern liberal democratic systems have been unsuccessful in relegating religion to the private sphere. According to Casanova, Tocqueville “questioned the two central premises of the Enlightenment critique of religion, namely that the advancement of education and reason and the advancement of democratic freedoms would make religion politically irrelevant. He (Tocqueville) anticipated, rather presciently, that the democratization of politics and the entrance of ordinary people into the political arena would augment, rather than diminish, the public relevance of religion” (2006: 20). And indeed, Casanova contends, Tocqueville's assumptions have been confirmed by the history of democratic politics: “Religious issues, religious resources, interdenominational conflicts, and secular-religious cleavages have all been relatively central to electoral democratic politics and to the politics of civil society throughout the history of democracy ... Religion itself has now become a contentious public issue” (2006: 20).

Casanova observes that the de-privatization of religion is an ongoing process within modernity negating hegemonic understandings. Evidence of this is the multiplicity of religious practices and expressions and how religions have negotiated their cultural, social and political presence in the public sphere. Indeed, religion has always been part of the public sphere and civic interactions as individuals publicly express and negotiate their social and cultural identities and political representations: “Finally, on empirical grounds

there are good reasons why we should expect religion and morality to remain and even to become ever more contentious public issues in democratic politics. Given such trends as increasing globalization, transnational migrations, increasing multiculturalism, the biogenetic revolution, and the persistence of blatant gender discrimination, the number of contentious public religious issues is likely to grow rather than diminish" (2006: 22).

My findings show that there are multiple degrees of self-understanding, self-identification, and self-representation of religiosity in public among students in Turkey. I also reveal that they also have different self-understandings of piety and religious observation, whether or not they organize their life according to religious principles, and they have different ways of identifying with religion and with religious activities and practices, and diverse ways of representing themselves as religiously observant persons. This lack of homogeneity of what is meant by 'religion', 'religiosity' and religious 'practice' call for a sociological analysis that is capable of capturing this multiplicity and diversity.

My thesis indicates that there is a continuum of religious or secular practices, a spectrum of levels of observation of religious rules. Furthermore, all these social and cultural positions have different political implications for different groups and individuals. Individuals understand religion and the role of religion in their lives at multiple levels yet consider these a profound component of their lives and identities. As Casanova argues, exclusion or suppression of such a constitutive component from individuals' public self-identifications may become a hindrance to their rights and liberties.

Casanova's suggests that we need to discover new forms of religion and religiosity at three different levels of analysis: "the individual level, the group level, and the societal level" (2006: 17). I address this further in Chapter One, the literature review chapter. In

Chapter Two, I explore the kinds of religiosity and secularism defined and practised by Turkish university students at these three levels.

The key research questions I thus address in this study are:

(a) What are the understandings and experiences of Muslim university students in Turkey with regard to the concepts of Islam and secularity?

This question aims to reveal how university students define and position Islam, e.g. as a belief system, as a political ideology or as an organizing force in *society*; whether they define and position secularism as a world view or limit it to the political area. It interrogates how university students understand religiosity in terms of their own definitions and understanding of their practices of religion, and of religious identity in general.

(b) What tensions and conflicts do students perceive between Islam and secularity, the process of secularization and the state ideology of secularism, and how are these experienced?

This question concerns the perceptions and experiences of the participants about their positioning between the requirements of Islam and the secularist characteristics of the Turkish state and public space. Where participants see any conflict and experience tension between Islam and secularity, the chapter aims to reveal how they interpret and rationalise these two concepts.

(c) What are the roles of the major actors struggling to develop and maintain an Islamic consciousness among university students and what influence do non-governmental organizations and religious groups have on the lives of university students in particular, on their religiosity and religious or non-religious sense of identity?

This research question mainly focuses on the role of secular and religious movements and groups in Turkey, in terms of their impacts on the participant university

students. There are a number of religious groups in Istanbul providing accommodation for university students and organizing events for them in line with their worldviews and Islamic understandings and interpretations. These have a significant influence on students with regard to their perceptions of religion, sense of identity, and their conduct in their social life.

(d) To what extent may polarization and conflict be observed between university students, in relation to religion and the variety of lifestyles and worldviews determined by their faith or secularity?

In the final part of the thesis, this question approaches the concept of polarization among university students arising from their understandings of religion and secularity, and their ways of living. I seek to discover whether or not polarization appears to exist in their relationships with ‘other’ students who embrace different worldviews and lifestyles.

My study draws on empirical research, primarily forty-five interviews with university students to look at the relationship between religion and secularity as understood and experienced by Turkish university students. Based on in-depth interviews and observations over a period of more than seven months in Istanbul, my thesis thus focuses on the current condition of political Islamism and secularism in Turkey, the perceptions of religiosity and secularity among university students, the perceived role of religious groups in Turkish society and their impact on university students, the views of students about joining religious groups and being religious in a secular environment, and whether the social situation in Turkey could be described as one of division or cohesion.

I argue that religion in the contemporary period of Turkish democracy, in contrast to the Enlightenment assumptions, has taken its central place in the public sphere, both in politics and civil society. This has revealed new ways of self-identification, self-

understanding and self-representation of the individuals of Turkey. According to these new developments, secularism, secularity, Islam, and religiosity are understood and defined differently according to the previous decades of the country. The struggles of religious groups in the last five decades have had a significant role in Turkish democracy, particularly on that religion and religiously observant people have gained their places in the public sphere. I also argue that although there is an apparent division and differentiation between religiously observant and non-observant Muslims of Turkey in terms of their understanding and practicing religion, and lifestyles, this does not necessarily imply that these different segments of the society cannot coexist in the same public sphere. Religiously observant people have created new ways both developing new understandings and producing their own spaces, in which they practice their values more freely. To build my arguments I conducted qualitative research focusing on Turkish university students in Istanbul.

## **1.2 RATIONALE, BACKGROUND, AND CONTEXT**

As a religion with its own philosophy, legal system, culture and civilization, Islam inevitably is in tension with anti-religious secularity as this has developed in modern Turkey. Indeed, this is tense relationship between Islam and secularity is one of the most conflict-ridden issues in Muslim countries today as evidenced by recent events in Egypt and North Africa. This issue has excited the interest of a range of people for some time, as Toprak notes. “The question of Islam and its impact on Turkish society and politics has been one area of concern for scholars, for foreign policy analysts in major capitals of the West and in the European Community, and for international investors” (Toprak, 1995: 90). The topic is at the centre of debate in almost all countries with majority Muslims populations. The EU has about 18 million Muslims (Gökay and Aras, 2003), and is

witnessing problems relating to its willingness to accept immigrants, some relating specifically to the reception of religiously observant Muslims. This has led to constant debates on multiculturalism, religious pluralism, integration, assimilation, democratic secular governance (Roy, 2007). However, as Bryan Turner has argued, “when serious attention is given to religious movements outside the West, both sociologists and philosophers have given far too much attention to fundamentalism in general and to radical Islam in particular” (2011: 147). Other than radical and political Islamism, there are various forms of religiosity, Islamism, Islamic revivalism and Islamic understanding in Muslim-majority countries, and indeed among immigrants, and this fact calls for qualitative research focusing on the variety of Islamic approaches in different societies. Each society has its own complex historical and contemporary factors that require very specific analysis.

When we consider secularity and Islam in Turkey, we need to begin from the fact that Turkey has a unique position in being the most secular of all Muslim-majority nations (Daver, 1988). Keyman explains why in Turkey Islam and secularity are significant, arguing that “Turkey constitutes a sociologically illuminating, theoretically challenging and politically timely case study for an analysis of the increasing complexity and ambiguity embedded in the historically and discursively unsettled relationship between secularism and religion” (Keyman, 2007: 216). As Göle points out: “The Turkish experience allows for an in-depth analysis of the conflict between secularists and Islamists” (1997: 47). One of the aims of my thesis is to analyse the current condition of this conflict as understood and experienced by Turkish university students.

The relationship of Islam and secularity in Turkey is paradoxical because, Kuru (2009) argues, Turkey is one of the most religious societies and at the same time one of the most secularist states. In the light of this paradox I look at university students in order to come

to a better understanding of how they negotiate and accommodate this tension in their lives.

Turkey's regional and global interconnectedness is unique. Internationally, it has close relations with both the USA and the Arab states. It has attempted to join the European Union since 1987, and tries to establish deep-rooted relations with states in Central Asia, the Middle East, Russia and Africa. In terms of its historical and cultural background, as well as its political and economic relations, Turkey is, a bridge between East and West. Sociological, political and economic developments in such a country are likely to prove of high importance in the world. Turkey is a place in which there are different religions, civilizations, cultures and ethnic groups, and the Turkish understanding and practice of Islam is significantly different from that of other Muslim countries, particularly in terms of its struggle to reconcile modernity and religion. It has Eastern and Western dimensions (Öktem, 2002).

Turkey has witnessed a dramatic change over the last decades in its Turkish-Islamic culture as a result of the impact of globalization and modernization processes, the Internet, political developments, and the increasing size of its educated population. These changes have particularly occurred in the understanding and interpretation of Islam in relation to modern life. For instance, ten years ago, listening to music with stringed instruments was the subject of serious argument among Islamists (Shankland, 2007). Today, even to mention this is generally seen as an out-dated issue. Apart from a limited number of studies that deal with the topic in a comprehensive way (Szyliowicz, 1969, 1970, 1972), studies and writings on youth and student activism concentrate on the political student movements of the 1960s, particularly the leftist movements (Belge, 1994). Avcı (2012) is one of the few scholars focusing on contemporary religiously observant university students. She examines the changing conditions after 1997, and one of her findings is that

while before 1997, the main concern of religiously observant people was *tebliğ* (religious proselytizing), after the military memorandum it has been *temsil* (religious representation). This, she argues, has facilitated the visibility of religion and the increasingly widespread expressions of religiosity. Researching the situation of even a decade ago might lead to wrong conclusions about the present; hence interviewing the new generation who will shape the near future of Turkey was chosen in my study, in order to explore Turkey's rapidly changing socio-political and cultural scope.

In order to better understand the huge changes in Turkey in the last few decades, it will be helpful to look at three areas: economic infrastructure and technology; thought and science; politics, law, and social life. In the past dozen years in particular, Turkey has experienced rapid change both economically and socially, Even before that, as Zürcher explains,

... following the military coup of 1980, the power of the armed forces was used to suppress all existing political and trades union formations, and to introduce a new economic policy, aimed at export-led growth and a free internal market, cutting wages and subsidies. Even after the gradual liberalization from 1983 onwards, political life had to take place within the limits of the very restrictive constitution of 1982. Internationally, Turkey came to be even more closely linked to the United States. (2004: 5)

These changes have affected people's lifestyles, politicization, educational levels, and relationships with others, and they have had to develop new strategies in order to protect their values and to adapt themselves to the new world. With regard to changes related to religion and religious life, Zürcher says,

From 1984 onwards the press, both Kemalist and socialist-oriented, constantly drew attention to the growth of Islamic currents as manifested in the building of new mosques; the enormous growth in the number of *imam-hatip* (preacher) schools, whose graduates were now allowed to enter university; the growing religious content of school books and of the state-controlled radio and television; the growing number of Islamic publications and bookshops and incidents during the month of fasting, *Ramazan*, during which people who were smoking or drinking were attacked. The fiercest criticism was reserved for the explicit way in which members of the cabinet took part in religious ceremonies. All these developments were seen as so many attempts to undermine the secular character of the state, but legally and institutionally Turkey remained (and has remained to this day) a secular republic. (2004: 288-9)

Çarkoğlu and Toprak conducted a quantitative research study in 2006, “Religion, Society, and Politics in a Changing Turkey”. In the study they compared their findings with findings of research they conducted in 1999. The surveys used a nationwide representative sample of the Turkish population, providing an opportunity to assess changes in social conditions in Turkey:

During the seven years between 1999 and 2006, Turkey underwent important changes. The most significant of these changes was the recovery from economic crisis that peaked in February 2001, resulting in massive unemployment and high rates of inflation. During the last two years, the economy has shown high rates of growth and inflation has been reduced from rates in excess of 50% to less than 10%. At the same time, a one-party government came to power in 2002 for the first time in decades, which put an end to unstable coalition governments. Between 1999-2002 and thereafter, a series of reform packages that aimed to comply with

the EU's Copenhagen criteria moved Turkish democracy towards greater consolidation. As a result, Turkey started membership negotiations with the EU at the end of 2005. (2007: 13)

The following are some of the findings of the 2006 study regarding changes in attitudes and preferences in Turkish society concerning secularism, Islam and politics:

Religiosity is increasing in Turkey. Between 1999 and 2006 the percentage of people who consider themselves 'very religious' and those who define their identity primarily as Muslim has increased from 6% to 13% and from 36% to 46%, respectively. Although the percentage of people who approve of religious parties has also increased, this cannot lead to the conclusion that the support for a secular system is on the decline. Both our 1999 and 2006 surveys show that Turkish people do not perceive secularism to be under threat and do not think that there is a real possibility of a Shari'ah-based religious regime in Turkey. Moreover, there is no finding in our study that indicates a rising support for a religious state. On the contrary, when specifically asked if they are in favor of a Shari'ah state, the number of those who gave an affirmative answer has declined from 21% in 1999 down to 9% in 2006. Nevertheless, there is significant tension around the issue of secularism or laicism in the country. When asked to place themselves on a hypothetical continuum that has Islamists on one side and secularists on the other, 20% placed themselves closer to the secularist end, while 49% placed themselves closer to the Islamist side, leaving about 23% in the middle. Evaluating the recent political developments in the country, about 32% indicated that religious fundamentalism that is supportive of a religious state is on the rise, while 23% thought that there is a major threat to secularism in the country. Cross-tabular analysis suggests that a bi-polar distribution defines these evaluations. Those who

are relatively well-off, better educated and live in urban areas tend to be on the secularist end. On the other hand, reactions to strict secularist policies have also declined. Those who indicate that religious people are subject to state repression declined significantly, from about 43% to 17%. However, the findings show that 8% to 11% of secularists, depending on the question asked, believe that religious people threaten their lifestyles. These findings show that the kind of tension mentioned above is similarly felt in the daily lives of common people. Related to the above, 77% of Turkish people believe that democracy is the best form of government, and that secularism can be protected by democratic means (54%). (Çarkoğlu and Toprak, 2007: 13-14).

These studies indicate that the trend of changes in various areas in the society is not consistently with for or against secularism, even though religious activity is less repressed and has become more visible in the public sphere.

In a report, prepared by KONDA Research and Consultancy in June 2014, it is claimed that all our values, knowledge, behaviour patterns, ways of thinking - in other words our whole lives - have changed in the last thirty years. Life, work, social relations and politics have come to be independent of 'space and time' because of new technologies and new kinds of network models. The KONDA report goes on to say that on the other hand, while governments lasted only 10.5 months on average between 1983 and 2002, the AKP has now been in power for twelve years. The economy has grown impressively in recent decades. Sixty per cent of the population lived in the country thirty years ago; today eighty per cent live in towns and cities. This internal migration has had its impact on traditions and customs, values, lifestyles, cultural identities, and social relations. The changes have created tensions and polarization in the society between different political and religious groups, lifestyles, identities, and worldviews (KONDA, 2014; 82-83). In this

situation it would be impossible to adequately comprehend the understandings and perceptions of the new generation using knowledge based in the old social conditions pre-2002. We need to discover both the changing conditions and the perceptions of young people in the new social context. This is the aim of the present thesis.

Leyla Neyzi approaches these changes from a different perspective. Analysing the construction of youth in public discourse in Turkey, she divides the history of the republic into three periods. In the first period, 1923-1950, youth “came to embody the new nation”; in the second period, 1950 to 1980, “youth were reconstructed in public discourse as rebels. Despite the change in discourse, educated young people in these two periods continued to identify with the mission of building a new nation in the name of ‘the people’”. In the third period, the post-1980 period, there is a significant difference, she says, from modernist construction. Hence, “Today, young people are increasingly able to express themselves through the new media, challenging their construction in public discourse, the established hierarchy between elders and juniors, and the mission imposed on them by adult society. This suggests that the construction of age in Turkish society may be changing in the current period” (2001: 426).

A social and intellectual divide in Turkey between Islamists and Westernists existed even in the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Toprak, 2005). This division and conflict continues still, under a variety of designations such as progressivists versus reactionists, public versus state (Berkes, 2002), the forces of tradition against the forces of modernity (Monshipouri, 2004), Islamists against Kemalists (Turam, 2008), and so on. David Shankland mentions two public cultures in Turkey, which were the results of Islam being incorporated into Turkish political parties. One public culture is that a secular lifestyle, which is “[t]he established republican preoccupation with the European foundations of the nation”. Shankland describes the other public culture as “alternative

lifestyle”, one “concentrating on piety; avoiding music, dance and alcohol, it was centred on the mosque, the five pillars of Islam and the Qur'an. Many of its adherents, though they may vary enormously in their orientation, were members of the brotherhoods, still proscribed but largely tolerated” (2007: 364).

This differentiation and polarization is historically constituted because the roots of the modernization and westernization of Turkey go back to the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. *Tanzimat* (reorganization) refers to the period of reformation between 1839 and 1871. In this period, the scope of Islamic, *Shari'a*, law became limited almost completely to family law; new secular laws and institutions were created. Secular schools were founded and education partly secularized. Along with political and institutional reforms came cultural changes. As a result of new relationships with Western countries and new bureaucratic relations, change occurred in the daily life of both elites and the mass of people, with the introduction of Western style clothing, for example translation offices and new kinds of gatherings (Zürcher, 2003). As Zürcher states, “The reform policies of *Tanzimat* had never been based on popular demand” (2003: 66), and this kind of reform inevitably met with opposition from different segments of society, one of which were traditionalist Muslims. Westernist or secular reforms, accompanied by traditionalist or religious opposition continued throughout the final period of the Ottoman Empire and into the new Turkish Republic, especially in its early years.

In the late eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire, just before it's collapse, roughly consisted of Anatolia (modern-day Turkey), most of the Arab world (with the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Iraq, Kuwait, parts of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria) and the Balkans (with modern-day Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and large parts of Romania). These newly established countries embraced different state ideologies, most of which were secular to

various degrees. However, As Wing and Varol argues, “Among the fifty-two majority-Muslim states, the constitutions of only two countries, Turkey and Senegal, prescribe secularism. Indeed, (...), the Turkish version of secularism is arguably the strictest version of secularism implemented by any nation” (2007: 3). The Kemalist-secularist reforms played the most important role in the secularization process of the county (Zürcher, 2003).

After the secularist reforms of the Turkish Republic, conflict between Islam and secularity took a different form. The leaders of the newly founded Turkish state, in order to modernise society, embraced six fundamental policy principles which became part of the constitution in 1937: republicanism (*cumhuriyetçilik*), nationalism (*milliyetçilik*), populism (*halkçılık*), secularism (*laiklik*), statism (*devletçilik*), and reformism (*inkılâpçılık / devrimcilik*). Among these principles, secularism has played a crucial role in the process of creating modern Turkey (Keyman, 2007). To achieve the vision of a modern nation state, various reforms were made, particularly in the areas of law, education and culture, aimed at breaking with the Ottoman past, weakening the influence of Islam in society and becoming much closer to Western civilization (Stirling, 1958; Mardin, 1981). Among related reforms made in the early republican period, the Sultanate was abolished in 1922; as were religious courts (*Şer'iyye mahkemeleri*), the Caliphate, and religious schools (*medreses*) in 1924, the year in which the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) was established, and the education system unified (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat*). In 1925 religious shrines (*türbes*) and dervish convents (*tekkes*) were closed down, and the turban and fez prohibited and replaced by the Western-style hat or cap. In 1926 the Italian penal code was adopted, religious marriages and polygamy were abolished and the Swiss civil code was adopted along with the Western clock and the Gregorian calendar. Western numerals and the Latin alphabet were adopted in 1928, and the constitution amended to remove Islam as the official state religion. Women were progressively enfranchised in the years 1930, 1933 and

1934, and Western weights and measures adopted in 1931. Language reform was instituted in 1932, removing some Arabic and Persian words and making changes to the rules of grammar. The traditional Arabic *ezan* (call to prayer) was replaced with a Turkish one in 1932. All courtesy titles (*Bey*, *Effendi*, *Pasha*) were abolished, except in the army, in 1934, and the use of family names was mandated. In 1935 the official day of rest was changed from Friday to Sunday. And in 1937 the principle of laicism or secularism was inserted into the constitution.

The state adopted secularism as a modernising ideology and as Shankland points out, “the early republican governments attempted to relegate religious conscience as much as was humanly possible to the sphere of the private individual” (2007: 360). According to Göle, the state’s ideology “became a ‘didactic secularism’: moralistic and pedagogical, teaching and imposing a modern way of life” (1997: 49). Accordingly, the secular public sphere was to be controlled by the state.

On the other hand, the state’s strict political control of religion in almost all its aspects was continually challenged from within Turkish civil society (Keyman and İçduygu, 2005). This encompassed a great number of Islamic Sufi orders, Islamic NGOs, and Islamic social movements. These groups or movements have aimed to conserve Islamic values, tradition and culture in society, particularly in cities, and to develop the religious and moral consciousness of their members.

Coşgun (1999) argues that, except a few writers and a few magazines, there was no Islamic youth organization or movement until the late 1960s. 1969 was the year in which the Islamic movement began to take form among university students in Turkey. This was under the umbrella of *Milli Türk Talebe Birliği* (MTTB). Coşgun analyses the movements of Islamic university students after 1980 as constituting four stages. The first stage began in 1980 with the military coup and ended 1987, in which demonstrations and protests

emerged against the prohibition of the headscarf in universities. The second stage was between 1987 and 1992. In this period, movements and protests were concerned with the headscarf affair, while other problems experienced by Turkish Muslims and Muslim world also discussed. Fights were a feature of this stage. In the third stage, from 1992 to 1997, the Islamization policies of the president, Turgut Özal, were felt even in universities. As Zürcher (2003) points out, these Islamic groups and movements strengthened in Turkey in the 1990s. According to Coşgun, the start of the fourth stage with the military intervention on 28 February 1997. After this memorandum, there was huge pressure on all the Islamic movements and almost all of them changed their strategies according to the new condition. At the time of Coşgun's analysis, the results of the memorandum were still strongly felt all over the country. However, since 2002, the Islamic-rooted political party, Justice and Development Party (AKP) came into power and has won three elections so far. This has inevitably influenced all the Islamic movements in Turkey including those of university students. With this research, one of my aims is to examine the influences of this change on the new university students of Turkey, the current conditions of the religious groups in Turkey and their influence on university students in terms of their religiosity and their positioning between Islam and secularity, as seen from both political and sociological aspects.

The form of this aforementioned conflict changed especially after 2002 following the founding of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2001, and its success in the subsequent three elections up to the present day. Until recently, Islamists were the ones to have felt repressed by secularist elites, especially the military. Now it is the turn of secularists to express anxiety at the Islamist threat to their preferred form of society (Zürcher, 2003). During the time the AKP has been in office, as Keyman (2010) points out, particular secular intellectuals, like Binnaz Toprak, have styled

themselves “anxious moderns” because of the speed of cultural and social transformation; the growing power of the AKP in the areas of legislation, execution and jurisdiction; the enhancement of the conservative tendency in Turkish society; and finally because of the ineffective opposition of the secular political parties, CHP and MHP (Göl, 2009). Shankland explains the secularist anxiety regarding an Islamist leader before the presidential elections in 2007, saying “there are pent-up feelings, movements under the surface, in Turkey that give rise for grave concern and are hardly likely to be resolvable in the short term” (2007: 358). The Gezi Park protests that occurred in May and June 2013 can be seen as resulting, to a substantial degree, from these anxieties, regarding so-called Islamic authoritarianism and interference with secularist people’s lifestyles. The Gezi Park protests started on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013 in order to protest the pedestrianisation of Taksim Square. In the beginning, a few hundred activists gathered in Gezi Park. During the demonstration, they set up tents and read books for a few days. Brutal police intervention on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> May provoked protests around the world, and the number of the protestors increased dramatically in the first week, evidently encouraged, rather than deterred, by police brutality. There were a great number of booths of various organisations in the park, mostly secular and leftist as well as few religiously oriented or Islamic, handing out leaflets and discussing their demands, the policies of the government, and the aims of the protest. Thousands more protested across Istanbul and Turkey, some banging pots and pans at their windows, and there were protests by Turkish people in capitals across Europe. At the beginning of June the content of protests changed to more general criticism of the government, and the attitude of the then Prime Minister in particular. During this period, between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, there were a number of clashes between police and demonstrators both in Istanbul Taksim Square and in some other cities of the country, such as Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Hatay, Eskisehir and Mersin. During these

the police used tear gas and water cannons resulting in serious injuries and death cases. Evidence from my fieldwork in the Gezi Park protests showed that the aforementioned tensions are still highly relevant in Turkey today and deserve an in-depth study.

University students provide a good case study for the research because they are drawn from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and geographical areas, and as a result, are more likely to represent the Turkish society demographically. Students take the university entrance exam in their last year of high school, when they select thirty universities and faculties in different cities in which they would like to study. After the exam, they are placed in a suitable university and faculty according to their exam results. There are no fees for students getting good enough exam grades to get into a state university. This results in a great deal of social mobility among the youth of the country, and in a wide diversity of socio-economic, geographic, and cultural backgrounds among university students. For university education, and therefore for research focusing on university students, Istanbul is the most significant Turkish city, with nearly fifty universities, and more than half a million students, which is more than the population of the forty-one other cities in Turkey (Hürriyet, 2014; ÖSYM, 2014). Istanbul's concentration of university students provides a variety of spaces in which religiously observant and secularist students meet and interact. In Istanbul it is possible to find almost all the various religious and secular groups and non-governmental organizations targeting mainly university students.

University students have been chosen for my research focus because they are set to be the major actors in Turkey in the near future. For example, amidst high social mobility, as a growing number of prospective middle classes, young people have come from the periphery to the centre in recent decades, supplanting the older secular urban elite in both power and influence. According to Gökay and Aras, the tension between these two classes

“is one of the key factors to understand the rise and increased support for the Islamist political parties” (2003: 156), as Islamist parties predominantly claim to represent and target lower social classes in the society.

Moreover, the number of young people in universities has increased sharply between 2000 and 2010 in Turkey. According to the Higher Education Statistics published by ÖSYM (Student Selection and Placement Centre), the number of undergraduate students in Turkish universities in the 2009–10 academic years was 3,322,559 up by a third from the 2,106,351 in 2004–5, and double the 1,607,388 number of students in 2000–1 (ÖSYM, 2001, 2005, 2010).

When we talk about social, political and religious activism by young people in Turkey, university students are the first group that comes to mind. Student activism has always played a significant role in the political mobilization of Turkish society. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, for instance, was himself an idealistic university student, gathering around him Turkish nationalist youth groups, whose members became known as *Jön Türkler* (Young Turks) in the late Ottoman period. He attended one of the schools intended to modernize higher education founded by Sultan Mahmud II (1784–1839). While the Sultan conceded primary education to religious institutions, he adopted quite the opposite policy regarding higher education.

According to Berkes (2002), the establishment in 1834 of *Harbiye* military academy was the most important phenomenon in the history of secularization in Turkey, eventually enabling the army to form much of the basis of the established order of reformism and revolutionism. Berkes argues that the major events in the later period cannot be understood without considering the impact of the education provided by this academy. Its graduates included Mustafa Kemal Atatürk among a host of powerful and influential people setting much of the tone of military, political and cultural life for Turkey

from the later Ottoman period down to today. He says,

In addition to having a wholly secular base, the new army tradition had evolved from within; it had not been superimposed by European officers. Therefore, the Turkish military had roots in the society. From Mahmud's time to our own, Turkish officers have been in the vanguard of social, political, intellectual, and educational progress. Failing to be satisfied with the civilian preparatory schools and unable to reform them, the military developed an autonomous system. The military pioneered the simplification of the Turkish script which led to the adoption of the Latin alphabet, exceeded all other bodies in mass educational activities, and contributed some of the outstanding educationalists. (Berkes, 1998: 111)

The state ideology of secularism was exerted on the society through both coercive and consensual means, in the guise of modernization and secularization. In this context, education was one of the most important instruments, which Althusser (1971) includes in the ideological tools of state. According to Althusser, the state maintains itself and its power through certain institutions such as the army, courts, and police, through which the state applies pressure on the people and punishes dissenters when it sees it is necessary in order to maintain its power. However, employing pressure and punishment would be a weakness. Therefore, “[t]he effective state uses ideological state apparatuses such as the church, schools, and the mass media to ensure that people think the right way and do not want to deviate or dissent” (Bruce and Yearly, 2006: 144). In the Turkish experience, this was all the more so regarding the indoctrination of the youth with modern nation-state ideals, as young people were considered to be the future architects of a stronger secular nation.

University students worldwide have found various ways through which they are able to express themselves. Groupings like student clubs and unions have had a similar

function among Turkish university students for the last five decades or so. Political youth movements are generally affiliated with leftist and rightist ideologies, reflecting tensions between revolutionary and pro-status quo forces. The range of youth movements, both leftist and rightist, had support on university campuses. The first organized political opposition by young people in Turkey was of leftist university students against Adnan Menderes, who was the Prime Minister between 1950 and 1960. There were further such activities in 1968, inspired by Marxist ideals, and from time to time since. *Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi* (THKP-C) [People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey] and *Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu* (THKO) [People's Liberation Army of Turkey] are the best-known societies founded by young leftists (Başer, 2001). Although religious groups have had some support among young people, especially university students, they have tended to remain largely 'invisible', owing to government pressure on religiously observant people. During my fieldwork, when I looked for representative students of religious groups at universities, it was almost impossible to find them through an official channel. As Toprak says, the aforementioned pressure "pushed the Islamist opposition underground" (2005: 32, 33), among other oppositions. The Islamist groups chose other ways of reaching young people with their ideas and ideals, establishing student hostels, founding private universities, and organising Qur'an courses. For these reasons, in researching the views and practices of university students, it is important to look beyond the on-campus unions in order to be comprehensive, and this very fact necessitates doing qualitative research in which the researcher can reach the target groups and samples, through gatekeepers, and conduct interviews with their help.

Turkey, having substantially suffered from political polarization and violence in the 1960s and especially in the 1970s among university students, workers, police, teachers and even bureaucrats, ended up with a military intervention in 1980" (Şimşek, 2004: 111).

Until the late 1980s there was strict control over all social movements. From that time, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been tolerated by the state. Contrary to 1960s and 1970s, these movements and NGOs have many dimensions: “Since the mid-1980s, the most widespread movements have been Kurdish ethnic nationalism, Islamism, feminism, the Alevi cultural movement, environmentalism and human rights activism” (Şimşek, 2004: 112).

The tension among the university students regarding secularism versus Islamism has emerged and has been visible at Turkish universities in the last two decades. The most important and prominent issue that has caused this tension has been the headscarf affair. Since 1981, female students who wear headscarves have been prohibited from attending schools in Turkey. They “began to demonstrate in various ways to protest that the authorities were keeping them out of the campus. Although the issue was of direct concern mainly to women, male students made up the majority of the protestors” (Şimşek, 2004: 121). They defended the protests saying, “I cannot practice my faith as I wish” (Çayır, 2000: 66).

My review of the literature in the following chapter shows that there is no single definition of secularism: American secularism, Anglo-Saxon secularism, the French style of secularism, and the Turkish each has its own characteristics, while sharing features with other state ideologies. As is seen in this chapter, scholars generally hold the view that Turkish secularism aims to secularize the country in both its institutions and culture. It has been successful in secularizing institutions such as education and law, while less successful at secularizing ordinary people’s consciousness and culture. Tension between state and society has arisen especially in this second area. The wearing of the headscarf, Qur'an courses, İmam-Hatip religious high schools, are the best-known examples expressing this tension in the political area. Scholars generally liken Turkish secularism to French

secularism, seeing the main difference between them as the existence in Turkey of the *Diyanet* or Directorate of Religious Affairs, which is generally seen as the Turkish state's dedicated tool for control of religion. In addition to the *Diyanet*, a great number of reforms were introduced at the founding of the Turkish republic in order to westernize and secularize the country, from the abandonment of Arabic script to abolition of the Caliphate and certain religious institutions, including the Ottoman legal system. There is no consensus on the roots of secularism in Turkey. Some scholars view it as deriving from the Ottoman time, while others see it as a Republican innovation. It is the present author's view that westernizing and modernizing reforms in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire led on to the far more thoroughgoing and systematic secularization of the Republic.

A review of the scholarly literature indicates that the present thesis has a big gap to fill, there being no study using qualitative research to investigate the condition of religion and secularity in Turkey, examining the tension and accommodation between them from the viewpoint of university students. This research approaches the issue from a variety of perspectives, and each empirical chapter presents interviews, observation and analysis.

### **1.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

Chapter Two sets out the major theoretical debates concerning Islam and secularity in Turkey. I also review the literature that has explored young people's experiences of the relationship between religion and secularity. I organize the literature related to the subjects of this study into three categories: debates on the relationship between Islam and secular states; sociological and cultural conceptions of the relationship between Islam and secularity in Turkey; and philosophical and conceptual debates on Islam and secularity.

Before analysing pertinent statements of research participants in the subsequent empirical chapters, I introduce and summarize earlier arguments on the topic of the thesis, and reveal the gap in the field that I aim to fill with this study.

Chapter Three outlines the qualitative research methods, interviewing, and observations used for the empirical study, and explains why the methods chosen are the most suitable for the study. Application of these methods to my research is explained, such as conducting forty-five in-depth interviews with male and female university students, and the observations made over a period of nearly seven months in Istanbul. Consideration is given to the rationale behind the use of systematic and purposive sampling, rather than random sampling, and how research participants/interviewees were accessed. After clarifying details of observation methods used in the fieldwork, I introduce my position as both insider and outsider to the society, and the advantages of this position, and consider ethical issues arising in the course of the research.

Chapter Four examines the relationship between religion and secularity as experienced by university students in Turkey politically. Drawing on my informants' responses, I explore the extent to what polarization between religion and secularity still exists in contemporary Turkish society and, in particular, what changes are to be found in the views and ideals of students who are religious. An answer is sought as to whether Kemalist secularist and Islamist projects may be deemed to have thrived or failed in their aims. An analysis of university students' experiences regarding tensions and other difficulties they experience in practising their religion in the public sphere is the core theme of this chapter. Also discussed in detail are the current perceptions of political Islam and the views of my research participants on this.

Chapter Five examines religiosity, religiousness and secularity as understood and perceived by today's university students in Turkey. Endeavouring to explore the religiosity

of Turkish university students, I put certain specific questions to them and observed them going about their daily lives. I also examine the secularization thesis as applied to university students in Turkey. The approach to this issue adopted is to consider the beliefs and values of Turkish university students, rather than by examining such metrics as the percentage of them attending prayers at mosques, for instance.

Chapter Six considers religious groups in Turkey and their place in both the private and public lives of Turkish university students. After considering who the main targets are of the various religious groups, I look at the issue from the students' point-of-view, considering their views and experiences; the object being to elucidate the perceptions university students have of Turkish religious groups, and the ways these groups affect their lives in terms of religiosity and secularity; how they influence the students' political attitudes towards the secular Turkish state; the impact on the students' lifestyles publicly and privately; and what students think of the religious groups, for good and for ill.

Chapter Seven looks at the extent of divisions between secular and religiously observant students, explores their origins, as seen by the students, and assesses the debate from conceptual, political, and social angles. Another aim of this chapter is to explore whether the differentiation in Turkish society results in extreme polarisation or whether it is a natural consequence of a pluralistic society. At this point, important questions arise: What is the essential character of change in Turkish society? Should differentiation of the king exists in the society today be termed "division"? If we can speak of "division", is this something novel, and if it is, is it harmful?

Chapter Eight addresses the main topic of my thesis through the data gathered from the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul. The protests occurred during the period of my research. When the protests took place, in May and June 2013, Turkish society generally, and religiously observant people in particular, were uncertain as to the exact nature of the Gezi

Park protests. Observing developments through the various media including social media, much of the population was unsure whether the protesters were engaged in democratic action against the government and some of its policies, or whether theirs was an objection rather to the religious identity of the Prime Minister and the religiously observant people whom he claims to represent. Were religion, and the Islamic revival in the country the main issue? And were these protests headed for a crisis in Turkey, with who knew what consequences for the traditionally religious population? Did these protests demonstrate that religion cannot co-exist with secularity, and that there is a deep-rooted and irresolvable tension between religious and secular Muslims in Turkey? Analysing the data from the in-depth interviews I conducted during the protests with both the protesters and the people who were against protests, and the observations I made in the field in Istanbul, I try to answer these questions in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Nine summarises the main findings of my research and states how the study contributes to the literature on the relationship between Islam and secularity, with particular reference to Turkey, university students, Islamic movements, secularism, and the place of religion in modern countries.

#### **1.4 DEFINITIONS OF THE KEY TERMS**

*Islam*: In this study, I conducted my interviews with forty-five Turkish university students who defined themselves as Muslims. According to the Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World, “Islam is the name identifying the faith tradition and community of those who believe that there is one God and that the prophet Muhammad was God’s messenger, and the person who submits is a ‘Muslim’” (Voll, 2004: 359). There is no single Islamic understanding and practice common to all Muslim societies. The various Islamic sects,

brotherhoods, philosophical schools, and movements, each has its own understanding and practices. Some groups are very similar, some very different. Sunni and Shia Islam, for instance, as the most well known major sects, have different interpretations of the Qur'an, different methodologies of Islamic law, and different doctrines. Although Turkey mostly embraces Sunni Islam, it is very difficult to assert that there is only one Islamic understanding in Turkey. Among Sunni Islamic sects, the majority of people in Turkey adopt the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools (*madhhab*), while others adhere to the teachings of Alawism, about which there has been a great deal of debate as to whether it is a religion, an Islamic sect, or just an Islamic interpretation.

*Islamism*: Islamism is the most common term for political Islam, the aim of which is to Islamize the country whether by winning political power through the ballot box or through a revolution. This is how the term is understood in the present study. Turkish Islamism is generally discussed in the context of reaction to the top-down secularist policies of the state. Although its roots go back to the beginning of the Turkish Republic, it is generally argued that political Islam in Turkey only got seriously underway with the works of Necmettin Erbakan (1926–2011). He established a religious movement, *Milli Görüş*, and political parties, in order to promote Islamism. The governing party at the time of writing (2013) is the AKP (The Justice and Development Party) that is seen as owing its inception to the works of Erbakan. Because of their distinctively different goals and methods, the majority of Turkish religious movements are not categorised here, or in most other studies, as Islamist. In addition, along with the *Milli Görüş* movement, there are a number of small political Islamist groups in Turkey. In this thesis, by “Islamist” I mean those wanting to apply Islamic political principles and rulings to the state and the legal system, focusing on the political aspect of Islam rather than Suf mysticism and the philosophical aspects of the religion.

*Religious*: In this study, in order to express the Turkish word “*dindar*”, the terms “religious” and “religiously observant” is used interchangeably referring to those who believe in Islamic doctrines, observe Islamic values, principles and rulings, and want to practise them both in their private and public lives, as far as possible. Those who wish to practise are included in this category, even if they are unable to do so fully. Other terms such as pious, faithful, and devout can translate the Turkish term *dindar*, but here the preferred words are “religious” and “religiously observant”. In Turkish, the word “*muhafazakar*” (conservative) and “*dindar*” (religious) might be used interchangeably in some cases.

*Secularity*: In this research, I use the term secularity as a general concept, which comprises the political ideology, secularism, the social process, secularization, and being secular, that is, not pious.

*Secularism*: The term secularism is used in this study to mean the state ideology of Turkey. As an ideology more broadly there is no single definition of the term; there are different kinds of secularism: American secularism; Anglo-Saxon secularism; and the French style of secularism, are the main ones. Each has its own characteristics while sharing features with other state ideologies. While it is seen as similar to French secularism, Turkish secularism has distinctive characteristics. As is seen in Chapter Two, scholars generally hold the view that Turkish secularism aims to secularize the country in both its institutions and culture, and to keep religion and religious activities under state control, while keeping religious practices in the private sphere. In Chapter Four, I explain how secularism has been understood and applied in Turkey and what the characteristics of Turkish or Kemalist secularism are. By “secularists” I mean those who embrace secularism and Kemalism – i.e. the beliefs of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk – and Kemalist principles in their public and private lives. All Turkish school students, as mentioned, are taught that there are six fundamental

principles to the ideology of Kemalism: Republicanism (*Cumhuriyetçilik*); nationalism (*milliyetçilik*); populism (*halkçılık*); secularism (*laiklik*); statism (*devletçilik*); and revolutionism (*inkılâpçılık/devrimcilik*).

*Secularist*: In this study, because of its different meaning in the Turkish context, secularist (or *laik* in Turkish) does not imply unbeliever, atheist or non-Muslim. The term applies as well to Muslims who believe that religion is more about faith, morality and worship than about the legal system, religious rulings, commandments and prohibitions applying to public and private life; implied is that religion is to be confined to the private sphere. Although secular Muslims may believe in Islamic doctrines and practise religious observances such as attending Friday prayer and fasting during the month of Ramadan, they do not accept all rulings related to politics and the legal system. Nor do they organize their daily and public lives according to religious rules and principles. They may not accept wearing of the headscarf on religious grounds, or the religious prohibition of alcoholic drink. In this thesis “secularist” and “non-observant” are used interchangeably.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

“On empirical grounds there are good reasons why we should expect religion and morality to remain and even to become ever more contentious public issues in democratic politics. Given such trends as increasing globalization, transnational migrations, increasing multiculturalism, the biogenetic revolution, and the persistence of blatant gender discrimination, the number of contentious public religious issues is likely to grow rather than diminish. The result is a continuous expansion of the *res publica* while the citizen’s republic becomes ever more diverse and fragmented. The penetration of all spheres of life, including the most private, by public policy; the expansion of scientific-technological frontiers giving humanity Demiurgic powers of self-creation and self-destruction; the compression of the whole world into one single common home for all of humanity; and the moral pluralism that seems inherent to multiculturalism—all these transcendent issues will continue to engage religion and provoke religious responses.”

(Casanova, 2006: 22)

This chapter combines and organizes literature related to this thesis: literature concerning Islam; secularism; Turkey; and the position of people between religion and secularity. As this study approaches the issue from multiple perspectives, the literature and the discussion of other studies are split into three categories, which are debates on the relationship between Islam and the secular state, social and cultural conceptions of the relationship between Islam and secularity in Turkey, and philosophical and conceptual debates on Islam

and secularity. I organize and present the debates on the issues related to Islam and secularity mainly in the political, sociological and philosophical areas.

In this chapter, my aim is to introduce and review earlier findings and arguments on the topic of the thesis, and summarize them, before analysing pertinent statements of my research participants in the data chapters (Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight), and to show the gap in the literature that this study is intended to fill.

The geographical scope of the literature extends beyond Turkey since other states and societies have experienced comparably similar tensions before and now. The literature on the relationship between religion and secularity is mostly from and concerning the West. Terms such as secularization, modernization and sacralisation emerged first in the West, and this necessitates consideration of their meanings in their original context, in order to establish their significance in modern Turkey.

The first section, about debates on the relationship between Islam and secular state, especially Republican Turkey, combines writings and studies looking at secularism as state ideology, particularly in Western countries, before explaining the characteristics of Turkish secularism. An outline is provided of the history of secularism in Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, and of views and arguments of scholars on political Islam, Islamism, and Islamic organizations in Turkey since the time of President Turgut Özal (PM from 1983 to 1989). A summary of university-student activism in Turkey forms the last part of the first section.

The second section looks at the arguments of scholars concerned with Islamization and secularization considered sociologically and anthropologically. The problem of secularization and sacralisation is discussed for the West as well as Turkey. The place of religion, Islam in particular, in Turkish culture and society is considered in this section. I discuss here civil religion in the context of Turkey and the cult of Atatürk. After indicating

various Islamic views and movements in Turkey, consideration is given to the tensions and struggles of religious Turkish Muslims, in their private and public lives, from the viewpoints of researchers and writers. Finally in this section I look at new Islamic lifestyles which have come about in recent decades.

The third and final section looks at philosophical problems and debates related to the relationship between religion and secularity. Definitions of the key terms, *bid'ah*, *tajdid*, *ijihad*, *'ibadat*, *mu'amalat*, and *hudud* are briefly considered, and the problem of the compatibility of Islam and secularity is discussed by reviewing previous studies. The salient question in Islamic thought is addressed: reform or renewal? Renewal in Islamic thought, with its principles and limits, is a central concept in the context of modernity and secularity. Consideration of the principles of the concept of renewal should lead to an answer to the question of whether Islam and secularity are compatible. The principles of Islamic jurisprudence are important here. Key debates in the area of Islamic jurisprudence are outlined here, covered more fully in the data chapters. During the fieldwork all these issues were discussed with the research participants either directly or indirectly.

## **2.2 DEBATES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISLAM AND THE SECULAR STATE**

Within the scholarly political strand, some analysts consider the varieties of secularism and differentiate Turkish style secularism from that of some other countries. These scholars see the roots of Turkish secularism in the nature of the Ottoman Empire and its conclusion, and state policies and dispositions such as Atatürk's reforms, including the formation of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and the power of the army (Karpat, 1959; Daver,

1988; Berkes, 2002; Zürcher, 2003; Gökay and Aras, 2003; Keyman, 2007; Roy, 2007; Gözaydın, 2009; Kuru, 2009).

Scholars taking a political approach are generally aware of the diversity of types of secularism possible, even though they give them different names. For example, Ahmet T. Kuru divides secularism as a state policy into two types: assertive and passive. Assertive secularism implies actively excluding religion from the public sphere and limiting it to the private sphere. On the other hand, passive secularism accords the state a passive role with state allowing “the public visibility of religion” (2009:11). While Islam is incompatible with assertive secularism, it is compatible with passive secularism. Kuru makes a significant observation: “Secularism is perceived as an antireligious ideology in several Muslim countries. The main reason for that is the dominance of assertive secularism in countries such as Uzbekistan and Tunisia... These Muslims may rethink secularism if they recognize the alternative passive secularism, which is dominant in some other states with Muslim populations, such as Senegal and Indonesia...” (2009: 246). He also argues that the assertive secularism of Turkey violates religious freedom.

Fuat Keyman looks at two aspects of secularisation, differentiating between ‘an objective social-structural process’ and ‘a subjective cultural process.’ Objective secularisation refers to the separation of state and religion. By contrast, subjective secularisation “implies the secularization of consciousness, meaning that the modern, emancipated self relates to nature, interacts with the other and looks upon its own life through secular reason rather than traditional religious codes” (2007: 218). Keyman evaluates Turkey’s success and failure in terms of these two secularism projects: “It has become clear that while it has been successful in establishing and maintaining objective secularization both institutionally and constitutionally, Turkish secularism has been weak

in creating a secular social ethos strong enough to achieve subjective secularization" (Ibid, 223).

Secularist state policies are also considered, as they exist in key countries, prominent among them France, Great Britain and the USA. Generally, French-style secularism is termed "laïcité", and is seen as protecting the state *against* religion, while Anglo-Saxon style secularism is seen as more inclined to protect religion *from* state interference. Whereas the state is tolerant of religion in the USA - while establishing a strict separation between religion and state - in France it tries to confine religion to the private sphere (Kuru, 2009). Secularism in Turkey is generally thought to be closer to French laïcisme than Anglo-Saxon secularism, with an emphasis on protecting the state from religious expansion, influence or penetration (Göle, 1997; Toprak, 2005; Roy, 2007; Kuru, 2009).

Although French style secularism became a prototype for the founders of the Turkish republic, it has taken a different form in Turkey. Turkish secularism differs from laïcisme and other secularisms in that not only are Islam and the state separate and the power of religion much limited in the public sphere; there is, in addition, control of religion by the state; in Karpat's words, secularisation in Turkey "also aimed at liberating society from the hold of Islam, and bringing about a new type of free individual" (1959: 288). Using Keyman's terms we can say that Turkish secularism aims at both objective and subjective secularization. Casanova approaches this characteristic of the Turkish Republic by questioning the possibility of a proper democracy as long as these policies of the state towards religion exist:

The 'six arrows' of Kemalism (republicanism, nationalism, secularism, statism, populism, and reformism) could not lead towards a workable representative democracy. Ultimately, the project of constructing such a nation-state from above

was bound to fail because it was too secular for the Islamists, too Sunni for the Alevis, and too Turkish for the Kurds. A Turkish state in which the collective identities and interests of those groups that constitute the overwhelming majority of the population cannot find public representation cannot possibly be a truly representative democracy, even if it is founded on modern secular republican principles" (Casanova 2001: 1064).

Fuat Keyman adds another statement: "for non-Muslim minorities Turkey is too Muslim" (Keyman, 2010: 143).

Scholars discussing this issue focus on different aspects of Turkish secularism. Özbudun and Keyman (2002) consider the aims of the founders of the republic, arguing that their main aim was to break with the Islamic and Ottoman past and to 'catch up' with Western civilization. According to them, secularism in Turkey, therefore, does not mean only separating state and religion; it means excluding the sacralised tradition in order to prevent it from overwhelming the state. As Berkes (2002) and Subaşı (2004) point out, the main aim is seen as deactivating religion in the areas of economics, politics, education, science, and the public sphere.

Some scholars focus on the methods used by the state to secularize the country. The outstanding agent is the army, acting alongside state top-down prohibitions and restrictive policies. In this respect, Gökay and Aras argue that "From the start, the Turkish republic emerged as a state with a military backbone, possessed of an official ideology—known as Kemalism after the founder of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk—committed to statism and a tight information policy, and administered by a militantly secular small modernizing elite" (2003: 150-1).

When Turkish secularism is discussed, the first feature that comes to the forefront is the control of religion by government institutions, particularly the *Diyane İşleri Başkanlığı* (the Directorate of Religious Affairs) that was established in 1924 after the abolition of the caliphate. The aim of this institution was both the control of religion and channelling of religious affairs and movements (Gözaydın, 2009). Zubaida argues that in this way “Religion is bureaucratized as a department of state...” (2003: 159). Instead of criticizing the policy of state control of religious affairs, Daver (1988) and Berkes (2002) argue that removing the traditional religious institutions, such as *Tekkeler, Zaviyeler* (Islamic lodges and monasteries, which were abolished in 1925 as one of the republican revolutions), *Medreseler* (Islamic schools), and establishing *Diyane*, was a necessity of historical circumstances.

Some scholars (Mardin, 1981, Berkes, 2002; Karpat; 2009) seek the roots of the Turkish secularization process in the Ottoman Empire: “The historical context also brings out features which are crucial to an understanding of the future of laicism in Turkey” (Mardin, 1981: 191).

Daver argues that Turkey started to be secularized after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, because the Empire was “mainly theocratic in character and outlook” (1988: 32). This line of argument is based on the fact that the Sultan of the Empire was, at the same time, the head (caliph) of all Muslims, and Islam was the state religion. However, even the system of customary law (*örfi hukuk*) in the Ottoman Empire is seen as essentially a secular system by some thinkers; if this point is accepted it can be seen that secularisation was already in existence in the Ottoman period (Berkes, 2002). Secularization, in the sense of Westernization and modernization, only really became apparent during the times of the Sultans Selim III (1761–1808) and Mahmud II (1784–1839), when the Empire lost much power after military defeats and had to accommodate to the new power of Europe,

particularly with the Treaty of Karlowits in 1699. The Empire was no longer able to give direction to socio-political developments, which were now dominated by the European powers, especially France (Feldman, 2008: 59). *Tanzimat Fermanı* (the Imperial Edict of Reorganization) in 1839, *Islahat Fermanı* (the Imperial Reform Edict) in 1856, and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 were only some outcomes of this weakened state. The fall from dominance came as a big shock to Muslims and particularly those of Turkey, and stymied attempts to make new legal arrangements in the sphere of Islamic law in the light of changing economic and political circumstances.

After these developments, Toprak argues, “Ottoman opinion was divided into two camps about the route to be followed in order to ‘catch up’ with the West.” (2005: 29). These camps were the Islamists and Westernists. As she says, the second camp, the Westernists, won out over the Islamists in the establishment of the new state. Yet the conflict still continues. Inspired by the concept of the “two Frances”, adopted after the social division in France in 1905, Hanoğlu (2011) refers to the “two Turkeys” in order to explain this long-standing division in Turkish society.

Political writers on Islam and secularity in Turkey have dealt with the history, ideas, leaders and processes of Islam-inspired political parties or organizations, including political Islam and Islamism, and so forth (Mardin, 1981, 1989; Yavuz, 1997, 1999; Meeker, 1994; Gülpalp, 1999; Fuller, 2002; Keyman and İçduygu, 2005; Kara, 2011a). Several scholarly works are concerned with Islamist political parties and Islamic movements in terms of their challenge to the secular state. Despite the state not attacking Islam as a faith, but rather attacking religious leaders such as the *Ulema* and religious institutions, religiously observant people were uncomfortable with the Turkish government’s policies, except in periods of government détente with Islamic movements. Adnan Menderes (PM from 1950 to 1960), Turgut Özal (PM from 1983 to 1989) and R.

Tayyip Erdoğan (PM from 2003 to 2014) are prominent Prime Ministers of such governments.

Believers who want to live in an Islamic state or who criticize the state for its restrictions on Islam are generally referred to as “Islamists”. ‘Islamism’ and ‘Islamists’ usually refer to political Islam. Göle explains this difference between Islamist and Muslim saying; “‘Islamism’ indicates the reappropriation of a Muslim identity and values as a basis for an alternative social and political agenda to that of the state. ‘Muslim’ is not synonymous with ‘Islamist,’ in the sense that the first expresses a religious identity and the latter implies a political consciousness and social action” (1997: 47). For this reason, Turam (2007) for instance, in order to separate political and apolitical movements, refers to the latter as “Islamic”. I also use the terms Islamism and Islamist in this thesis to mean political Islam and political Islamism.

The narrative promoted by scholars of political Islam is that the state implemented its secular reforms in such a thoroughgoing, not to say harsh, way that it broke the power of Islam and religious leaders. This gave rise to an Islamist opposition, which at first operated underground (Toprak, 2005). When the country democratized, this opposition then surfaced. Although the state tried to stop the Islamization of society, even to the point of staging military coups and interventions, Islamic movements and parties continued to exist in one way or another.

When political Islam in Turkey is discussed, Necmettin Erbakan (1926-2011) and his parties are sure to be mentioned almost immediately. Erbakan was the leader of a series of Islamist political parties - a series, rather than one single party, because they were seen as a threat by the secular elites of Turkey and successively banned.

Toprak, in considering the background to political Islam, writes: “Overtly religious people were not accepted into the political, social, or intellectual elite circles. The republic marginalized them, caricatured them as fanatics, and considered them uncivilized. It was these marginalized groups that later formed the backbone of political Islam” (2005: 32).

Apart from religious political parties and a number of religious movements, such as the *Milli Görüş* movement that was founded by Necmettin Erbakan in 1969, other Islamic movements have not generally been associated with politics. However, in some periods they have been accused of having a hidden Islamist agenda, meaning that although the Islamic movements do not appear to work in the political sphere, they nevertheless want to revolutionize the state and make it Islamic in the manner of Iran. Gökay and Aras, for example, explaining the concerns of the secular elite, argue that the state placed Islam, “at the core of its cognitive map of threat perception” (2003: 154). Göle (1998) has almost the same opinion; according to her, Islam has been one of the major phobias of Turkish nationalism. Although they have not been apparently active in the political sphere, educating primary, high school and university students and establishing charities and societies in various areas of the society, Islamic organizations and movements are influential in politics both directly and indirectly. So elucidating this issue is crucial for my study, because of the fact that university students have been one of the main target groups of the Islamic movements in Turkey.

Despite the fact that most of the scholars of Turkish origin are opposed to the aforementioned attitudes and policies of the state, Kara’s (2011b) analysis seems to corroborate the state’s anxiety. He locates the Islamic opposition in two categories: active and passive oppositions. According to him, the former refers to political Islam, and the latter refers to the attitudes of other religious movements and people. He argues that religiously observant Muslims do not want the religious sphere to be an area of political

fight and conflict, and that they prefer to wait until conditions are suitable. For him, this is a vernacular/local opposition and, therefore, resistant and functional.

Writing on Islamism or political Islam generally focuses on Islamist parties, probably because power, organizations, ideas and processes are relatively easy to observe and measure. There are various other movements which challenge the control of the secular state and the secularization of society or the adoption of a modern lifestyle. Most such movements are ‘underground’ and it is therefore difficult to estimate their power, numbers, or impact on society. Qualitative research by way of in-depth interviews and participant observations work will help disclose more about these groups and movements.

### **2.3 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONCEPTIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISLAM AND SECULARITY IN TURKEY**

The second group of scholars concerned with secularism concentrates on the sociological aspect of the secularity-religion issue. Some authors within this category trace the theoretical background by drawing upon Weber’s secularization thesis. Weber theorized the separation of different types of expertise within the modern state, an end to the ‘enchantment’ of the world, and the impact of globalization, capitalism and modernism on contemporary society (see Bellah, 1958; Berger, 1973, 1995, 1999; Smelser, 1995; Asad, 1999; Beriş, 2003; Monshipouri, 2004; Giddens, 2008).

The ‘secularization thesis’ is one of the most central in sociological theory. According to this thesis, societies will secularize in parallel with their modernization, i.e. the power and impact of religion will decline as they modernize. The founding fathers of sociology, Weber, Durkheim, and Marx, all subscribed to this thesis (Giddens, 2008: 553). However, others argue that the development of late-modern societies shows that religion

will continue to have an important place in society; only its forms will change to accord with new social conditions. Berger does not agree with the founding fathers of sociology, especially when it comes to the post-modern times. He argues that sacralisation is characteristic of post-modern times, supporting this argument by saying, “Secularization on the societal level is not necessarily linked to secularization on the level of individual consciousness. Certain religious institutions have lost power and influence in many societies, but both old and new religious beliefs and practices have nevertheless continued in the lives of individuals, sometimes taking new institutional forms and sometimes leading to great explosions of religious fervor...” (1999: 3).

As evidence of a powerful religious revival became impossible to ignore, a number of scholars rejected the theory of secularization totally. In contrast, Casanova (2006) proceeds by drawing an analytical distinction between three meanings of the term. He argues that there are different connotations to the notion of secularization, and suggests that we need to distinguish between three of them. According to him, the first meaning of secularization is “the decline of religious beliefs and practices” in modern societies. This is the most common description of the term in academic debates. “The privatization of religion” is the second meaning, and “the differentiation of the secular sphere (state, economy, science)” is the third one. After presenting these three connotations, Casanova highlights the importance of “the examination of the validity of the three propositions independently of each other and thus refocus the often fruitless secularization debate into comparative historical analysis that could account for different patterns of secularization, in all three meanings of the term, across societies and civilizations” (2006: 8). He then argues that differentiation remains the defensible core of secularization, while religious decline is empirically false.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Casanova suggests that we need to discover new forms of religion and religiosity at three different levels of analysis: “the individual level, the group level, and the societal level” (2006: 17). Following his suggestion in this thesis I explore the kinds of religiosity and secularism defined and practiced by Turkish university students at these three levels in this research.

As an example of analysis at the individual level, Casanova gives the concept of “individual mysticism” introduced by Ernst Troeltsch as one of the types of religion. Thomas Luckmann calls this “invisible religion”, religion that is difficult to see and measure when sociologists try to gauge the degree of religiosity in a society. According to Casanova, modern people have an opportunity to know and choose among various meaning systems in a way that formerly was available only to elites. “What is certainly new in our global age is the simultaneous presence and availability of all world religions and all cultural systems, from the most “primitive” to the most “modern,” often detached from their temporal and spatial contexts, ready for flexible or fundamentalist individual appropriation” (Casanova, 2006: 18).

His group level includes collectivities such as cults, religious communities and voluntary congregations. As we have seen, Casanova criticizes the theory of modernization that holds that in the process of modernization tradition and *Gemeinschaft* (community) will lose their power and influence in society. On the contrary, following Tocqueville, he says “modernity... offers new and expanded possibilities for the construction of communities of all kinds as voluntary associations, and particularly for the construction of new religious communities as voluntary congregations” (2006: 18). Along with instances in other religious communities, he sees some forms of Islam, such as *Tablighi Jamaat*, and Sufi brotherhoods, as voluntary congregations.

Casanova's "imagined religious communities" fall within the scope of the societal level. He argues, "secular nationalism and national 'civil religions' will continue to be prominent carriers of collective identities, but ongoing processes of globalization are likely to enhance the re-emergence of the great 'world religions' as globalized transnational imagined religious communities" (2006: 19). He criticizes Samuel Huntington's thesis of "The Clash of Civilizations", as Huntington's concept of civilization is geo-political, whereas globalization breaks the boundaries and de-territorializes all cultural systems.

The popularity of new religious movements in the West may be viewed as a great challenge to the classic secularization thesis and a significant new research area in sociology. The USA is an example of religion having a significant role in a modern, indeed in many ways the most modern, country. Considering this and being aware of the differing conditions of countries, Asad (1999) also suggests that the secularization thesis needs to be reconsidered. I consider that the main reason for the variety of views on this topic arises from the various types of secularization being considered: cultural, sociological, philosophical, institutional, and political. So that while political secularization may be much in evidence in a country, sacralisation may nevertheless have power in the area of culture.

Debates on secularization and the place of Islam have become popular in Turkey in recent decades. Since the beginning of the Republic, the aim of the state has been to reduce the influence of religion in the areas of economics, politics, education, and culture, while globalization and modernization have spread a secular lifestyle across the world. In these circumstances, changes in the power of religion in society, the changing faces of Islam and Islamic organizations have been major concerns of sociologists in Turkey.

Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu (2009) claim that Islam has had a very important place in Turkey in the sense of forming Turkish identity, and that religiosity is widespread

among the population. Keyman says “Islam has been a significant symbolic system, giving meaning to human existence and thereby forming an effective cultural basis for individual and communal identity in Turkey” (2007: 224). According to Göle (1997) Islam has been a vitally important component of Turkish identity, especially as a symbolic force and cultural reference. Indeed, after outlining the ontological, psychological, political and ideological significance of Islam, Mardin (1981) criticizes Kemalism for not understanding the role of Islam in Turkish society.

Although some scholars, like Daver (1988), Toprak (2005), and Keyman (2007) believe that the secularisation of society and its modernization are a continuing project, a recent survey conducted by Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu (2009) gives a surprising picture of religion in contemporary Turkish society, showing that the practise of religious worship and attending religious activities are very common; and that in the case of a law made by parliament conflicting with a religious ruling, two thirds of the population tend to favour following the religious ruling.

Whether the state ideology of Turkey is a kind of ‘religion’ and the founder of the new state, Atatürk, is a ‘cult’ are among the most discussed issues in the debates on Turkey, secularisation and the society. Bozdoğan (2001), Navaro-Yashin (2002), Bellah (2005), Özyürek (2006), and Kucukcan (2010) are among the prominent scholars who discuss this issue.

Beginning from the time of Mahmut II, modernising the state and the society was a key project even in the Ottoman Empire. However, the founders of Turkey embraced another way of secularising the new country. They considered delinking Turkey from the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, because of their belief that the latter was shaped by Islamic values. “Three main areas were identified to establish a secular state and a nation: The first area to undermine traditional strongholds of Islam was secularization of state, education,

and law. The second target was the replacement of religious symbols with the symbols of European civilization. The third area was the secularization of social life and removing the impact of popular Islam in everyday life” (Kucukcan, 2010: 964). Kucukcan applies the notion “civil religion”, coined by Bellah, to Turkey. He argues that Turkey was established in this way in order to preserve the new nation-state. For that purpose, “new cults, myths, symbols, and rituals were created. One striking example is what one might call the Cult of Ataturk and Kemalism” (2010: 966). Other scholars use the term ‘cult’ for Atatürk as well. Bozdoğan, for instance, argues that Atatürk began to be a cult in his own time. He looks at the architecture in the republic period and gives some examples: “Public spaces, squares, schoolyards, and parks throughout the country were rapidly filled with statues of Atatürk sitting, standing, on horseback, in military outfits, or in civilian clothes, and every public building displayed busts and portraits of the national hero” (Bozdoğan, 2001: 283). He also argues that the mausoleum of Atatürk, *Anıtkabir*, is “the ‘holiest’ site of modern Turkey” and the target of building it was to complete the “Atatürk’s elevation to the status of ‘deity’”. For him, it was the “monument to the casting of the nation as secular religion, the nationalist substitute for a space of religious ritual, prayer and spirituality” (2001: 282-286).

Navaro-Yashin (2002) and Özyürek (2006) look at the issue from a different standpoint. For them, the productions that are related to Atatürk and the nation-state have been commercialized and become an industry in the country: “In recent years, production of Atatürk icons and figures has become a major industry in Turkey, akin to the production and sale of religious icons and materials in areas where there are sizeable Catholic and Orthodox populations and shrines, and thus his image has been commercialized and even used in large scale advertising campaigns by private companies” (Özyürek, 2006: 119–122).

The nature of this religiosity and how people understand Islam needs to be clarified. First it has to be said that there has been little research on this issue. People in Turkey might be secular in, for instance, their economic and political lives, while they are religious in their private lives. It is a fact that not all Turkish religiously observant Muslims are in favour of an Islamic state; something similar can be said about secularists, that they are not all anti-religious. Classifying people in familiar categories is not so easily done, and evaluating Turkish society using the same terminology used to describe Western societies may lead researchers far astray. In order to avoid this we need qualitative research that looks at people closely and analyses them in depth. This sort of work is very rare in the literature. My thesis addresses this weakness and gap by offering an original empirical study of religiosity and secularity in Turkey.

Scholars within this sociological and anthropological cohort concentrate more on the everyday life and significant events in Turkey. They generally do not focus on theorising the mobilization of Islamists and secularists, the struggle of religiously observant Muslims to combine Islamic practices and institutions with the realities of modern secular society, the new Islamic lifestyle, culture and consumerism, the situation regarding Islamic symbols (see Göle, 1997, 1998; Mardin 1997; Shankland, 1999; Neyzi, 2001, 2005; Navaro-Yashin, 2002; White, 2002; Toprak, 2005; Çınar, 2005; Henkel, 2007; Turam, 2004, 2007, 2008).

Sociological and anthropological studies have defined the issue of what is meant by Islamism in various ways. For instance, while most other scholars argue that Turkish society has been divided into two camps, Islamists and secularists, Shankland (1999) criticizes this view and argues that Turkish society is rather heterogeneous. There are various types of religiously observant Muslims as well as non-observant or secularist people in Turkey. Placing them in just a few categories can mislead researchers. Fuller

(2002) draws attention to the same point, saying: “The Islamist phenomenon is hardly uniform, however; multiple forms of it are spreading, evolving, and diversifying. Today one encounters Islamists who may be either radical or moderate, political or apolitical, violent or quietist, traditional or modernist, democratic or authoritarian.” (2002: 49).

Although not always in agreement on classification, a number of other writers have remarked on the internal diversity of attitudes in Turkish society with regard to religion, among them Toprak (1995), Göle (1997), Berger (1999), Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu (2009), and Bulaç (2011). Kuru, for example, comments on this differentiation in Turkish Islamic society saying: “... there are various identities (Sunni and Alevi), associations (the Diyanet, *tariqats*, and movements), and political views among Muslims in Turkey that make establishment of one single interpretation of Islam almost impossible” (1999: 241). About this, Bulaç (2011) takes a different approach and argues that there are three main groups of Muslimism (*Müslümanlık*) in Turkey: political, social, and intellectual. According to him, political Islamists belong to the first group, Islamic movements (*cemaats*) and religious orders (*tariqats*) belong to the second group, and intellectuals and writers belong to the third group.

Some sociologists and anthropologists address the problems of piety in a secular state and modern society. Heiko Henkel, for instance, is concerned with the question of how contemporary religious Turkish Muslims, particularly in Istanbul, create Muslim spaces and what roles in the Islamic revival these play. Visiting old and modern neighbourhoods in Istanbul the author reached the conclusion that although there are many Islamic references in the old neighbourhoods of Istanbul, e.g. Fatih, they are integrated and intermeshed with secular society and institutions. In modern areas, although there are few visible references to Islam in institutions, such as mosques, and people’s lifestyles, Islamic tradition still exists there. Henkel argues therefore that Islam exists “in a way of living

rather than in a territory” (2007: 59). By contrast with the time of the Ottoman Empire, in modern Turkey social groups are no longer confined to particular neighbourhoods: it is possible to find people from completely different cultural backgrounds even sharing an apartment. However, considering my own empirical research I would argue that there are exceptions: in some areas, almost everyone is secularist, while in others a substantial majority practise their religion. Sometimes ten or fifteen people with a similar background may combine their resources and build an estate of flats; some of these projects are of a substantial size. According to Henkel, practising some traditions referenced to Islam such as taking off shoes at the door, if considered in a broad way can be the means of creating a “Muslim space”. Practices of the Prophet Muhammad may be used in the same way. He suggests that contemporary Turks use their modern houses, furniture and other things in a Muslim way. Although state-enforced secularism makes it difficult, they may endeavour to create space to practise their religious tradition.

Jenny White (2002), through conducting research in a large working class district of Istanbul, Ümraniye, set out to explore Islamist mobilization in Turkey. She argues that although there are some similarities between secularists and Islamists, especially in interpersonal and institutional relations, Islam-inspired groups are more successful in mobilizing people. This is, according to her, because of the secularists’ belief in the Kemalist form of modernity, which is against the traditional forms of fundamental social institutions and some norms of society. They believe society must change in accordance with “modernity,” with state power if necessary. In sum, they do not practise “vernacular politics.” White also draws attention to a significant point: The source of the strength of the Islamic movement is the belief of their adherents that when they struggle in those movements, they do not consider themselves doing politics; they consider themselves “practising community” even when they struggle in the political sphere.

Developments in the economic, political, and social spheres have inevitably caused some changes in understandings and attitudes of Turkish people towards a new way between Islamism and secularism. It is argued that there has been a significant transformation in the social behaviour of both religiously observant and non-observant people. According to Turam, the majority in Turkish society do not base their lives on either religious *or* Kemalist ideas. She says, “The majority of Turkish citizens do not associate with either Kemalist or Islamic actors. Hence, they do not mobilize or organize collectively with any of these groups.” (2008: 41). Toprak agrees with this view: “They [religiously observant people and religious groups] have integrated themselves into the centers of political power, economic wealth, social status, and intellectual prestige.” (2005: 37).

A survey in 2000 concluded that the majority of Turkish people (77.3 per cent) believe that the early republican reforms were responsible for much progress in the country (Çarkoğlu and Toprak 2000). Recent political reforms by the AKP are crucial new factors in a changing society. According to Turam, “In addition to political reforms, AKP’s pro-free-market attitudes have precipitated the rise of an Islamic bourgeoisie” (2008: 40). The importance of this statement can be understood much better when we remember Berger’s (1973) suggestion; he believes that independence in the economic sphere causes secularization much more than independence in the political sphere.

Related sociological and anthropological studies were conducted in the last two decades, using qualitative research methods, such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews. However, using qualitative research methods is quite new in Turkish and Islamic studies in Turkey. Interestingly, although there are a great number of sociology and theology faculties in Turkey, there has been little participant observation based research investigating the condition of Islam in Turkish society and the tension (or lack of

it) people find between Islam and secularity. One reason might be the state's partial suppression of Islam. Another reason, researchers might have difficulty in finding participants willing to be involved and talk freely about their experiences and ideas.

## **2.4 PHILOSOPHICAL AND CONCEPTUAL DEBATES ON ISLAM AND SECULARITY**

From a philosophical perspective, the topic of the relationship between Islam and secularity is approached in terms of their different worldviews, value systems, and, their perceptions of a universe and knowledge. They are also discussed in terms of their compatibility with each other (Kara, 1993, 2010; Davutoğlu, 1996, 2000; Casanova, 2001; Paçacı, 2008; Ramadan, 2009).

Secularization has various definitions. As I have argued, it has philosophical, sociological, and political aspects, and interpretation depends on which aspect the writers consider. Larry Shiner, drawing attention to the fact that secularization has not only one dimension but rather covers different spheres, distinguishes six forms of secularization: “Decline of religion, conformity with this world, disengagement of society from religion, transposition of religious beliefs and institutions, desacralization of the world, movement from a ‘sacred’ to a ‘secular’ society” (1967: 209-217).

Smelser remarks on some factors contributing to the secularization of society. According to him the chief factors are the development of science, nation-states, capitalism, compromises on religious matters, the loss of collectivity in community, and the commercializing of some religious institutions (1995: 324-6). Berger (1973) suggests that the economic independence of a society is a major factor driving secularization. Differentiation in social structure and privatization of religion are also on his list.

Using ‘secular’ and ‘Muslim’ as adjectives in reference to a nation-state is interesting in itself. The view is advocated by some Muslim scholars that Islam’s doctrines relate to all aspects of life, and it expects believers to fulfil certain deeds in their economic, social, and private lives (Daver, 1988). It is not only a belief system of doctrines, rituals and worship; it is, according to this view, as Mohammed Natsir has argued, “a ‘total’ system intended to regulate the whole of human life” (Hefner, 2000: 116). When we look at the Qur'an, it is argued, we see a wide range of rulings on both moral and judicial matters, from issues of belief, worship, hygiene, marriage and divorce, to interpersonal relations, inheritance, war and peace and more. Nevertheless, despite these claims, the majority of Muslim law is in fact personal law or laws relating to ritual observance and purity and pollution, rather than laws relating to state governance.

Davutoğlu is a prominent scholar claiming that Islam and secularism are incompatible because, according to him, the perceptions of existence, knowledge, and value must mesh with social, political, and economic institutionalization, otherwise the incoherence among them may cause a crisis of civilization. This is a common view in Turkey among some scholars, the argument being that the relationship between Islam and Turkey is existential. Kara (1993), for instance, suggests that laicism or secularism does not consist of separation between religion and state. The separation is only a political result of it, and it causes a replacement of religion by science, so they are definitely not compatible with each other. Asserting the idea that Islam has its own value system, Ismail R. Al Faruqi (1982) is another outstanding scholar dealing with the principles of Islam in history, knowledge, metaphysics, morality, social order, community (*umma*), family, political order, economic order, the world order, and aesthetics. He bases his ideas on the core belief of Islam: *tawhid* (the oneness of God).

However, there are those who argue that nothing in Islam is incompatible with modernity. Fazlur Rahman (1979) and Tariq Ramadan (2009) are well-known scholars among the defenders of this idea. Ramadan advocates the idea of the compatibility of Islam and modernity saying, “Nothing in Islam is opposed to modernity and we can firmly state that the Muslim thinkers and ‘ulama (savants) who are opposed to this notion and to the idea of change and evolution that it covers often confuse it with the model which is current in the West. Clearly, they confuse *modernity* with *Westernization*” (2009: 307). He gives some examples of modernity such as individual engagement, social reform, progress, and well-being; and suggests again that they are not opposed to Islam. On the contrary, according to Ramadan, they are the natural result of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*Usul al-Fiqh*).

It may be considered that there is ambiguity in the philosophical and theological discussions of these scholars in terms of their definition of essential notions of the relationship between Islam and modernity or secularity. For example, what scholars mean by modernity, modernization and secularization is quite subjective and they generally do not explain their understandings in detail. Similarly, they need to explain which aspects of Islam and secularization they are comparing. It can be argued that almost all Muslim scholars would accept that secularization in consciousness and in the understanding of existential issues of life and death, as well as in the system of moral values, are not compromised by Islam. Nevertheless, there would be some controversies in cultural, political, economic, and legal areas.

The reform and renewal in Islamic thought and the possibility of change in the Islamic legal system has provoked controversy. Islam has a legal system and there are a great number of legal rulings in the Qur'an and in the sayings of the Prophet. Whether these should be regarded as immutable or not, is one of the most challenging questions for

Muslim scholars (Rahman, 1979; Karaman, 2002, 2003; Qadhi, 2003; Güngör, 2005; Kamali, 2010).

Protecting Islamic belief and acts of worship from innovations (*bid'ah*), and implementing its main principles and values in new circumstances in worldly transactions have been found necessary by Muslim scholars. These two concerns have been the main issues in the history of Islamic thought and are called *tajdid* (renewal). *Tajdid* is generally defined as the struggle to revitalize Islamic faith and practice (Çelik, 2012).

Renewal movements in the classical and modern period of Islamic history have three common issues which have become the concerns of the *ulama*. The first issue is returning to the basic sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, and seeing them as the main authorities for Islamic belief and practice. As a result the main doctrines, principles, and values are derived from these sources and applied to new conditions in all times and places (*ijtihad*). Rejecting alien ideas and customs which are against Islamic values and principles is another common subject of renewal movements. This rejection implies reaffirmation of the authenticity of the Islamic message. However, protecting the Islamic message has been attempted in different ways, by intellectual and political struggle, for example, depending on where the threats came from. Al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyya are the best-known scholars who struggled to save the purity of the Islamic message (Çelik, 2012).

The differences between renewal movements are mainly dependant on the circumstances they encounter in their time and place. For instance, John L. Esposito explains the main differences in character of the classical modern movements thus: "While premodern revivalist movements were primarily internally motivated, Islamic modernism was a response both to continued internal weakness and to the external political and

religiocultural threat of colonialism. Much of the Muslim world faced a powerful new threat –European colonialism” (1991: 124).

The legal aspect is significant in terms of the relation between Islam and secularism because one of the main questions is one of the sacredness and historicity of the legal system and legal rulings. While some scholars argue that the important thing about the rulings of the Qur'an is the values and principles which lie behind them, the majority think that all the rulings of the Qur'an and Sunna are divine and hence immutable; we cannot make any change in them. This includes marriage, divorce, inheritance, and penal law. This disagreement is a cause of great dissension among Muslims. It is impossible for the defenders of the second view to be satisfied under a secular state and legal system (Çelik, 2012).

The most problematic issue in this debate is which part of the *Shari'ah* is mutable and which part is immutable. There is unanimous agreement on the distinction between acts of worship ('ibadat) and worldly transactions (*mu'amalat*). It is believed that acts of worship cannot be changed by reference to personal opinion, because while the reasons for worldly transactions are known through experience, the reasons behind acts of worship are known only through divine revelation (Omar, 1998). However, there are big debates on the rulings stated clearly in the Qur'an and Sunna. For example, although the penalties declared by the Qur'an (*Hudud*) are seen as immutable by the majority of Muslim scholars, some modern scholars claim their mutability (Rahman, 1979; Kamali, 2010).

These problems have been discussed until now with the notions and realities of the Middle Ages, because people rejected the realities of modern times by equating them with atheism. They did not think of living Islam in secular Turkey in real terms, and they suppressed serious problems evident in applying Islam to a modern state. For instance, when we look to Islam for answers concerning modern economic problems, it is very

difficult to find them in Islamic texts and books. In my view, as seen in the following empirical chapters, this condition will change in the near future because, with religiously observant people having been in power since 2002 in Turkey, they have started to embrace the Turkish state with its secular features, and are now seeking solutions in order to live Islam in Turkey in the ‘real world’, that is, the contemporary world. The AKP government has the power to change the constitution, to choose a new president of the republic directly. While religiously observant people were choosing to be conservative in order to protect their values and lifestyles against an authoritarian state, they are now facing secularity in their private and public lives. My research is thus timely; drawing on new empirical data in which, during the fieldwork, I spoke to the new generation of young Turkish people and asked them questions about their understandings, perceptions, ideas, and problems about the relationship between Islam and secularity that are explored from the perspective of Muslim university students both religiously observant and non-observant.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has summarized and synthesised academic arguments and research concerning the relationship between religion and secularity. As the thesis concerns the relationship between Islam and secularity in its various aspects, related works and writings are brought together. The subject is considered from the points-of-view and experiences of Turkish university students. There being very few comparable studies to the present one, in order to establish a sufficient framework, the attempt is made to consider related literature in perspective. Though this is not a study in political science, the policies of both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic intersect in the experiences that are lived by university students. Consequently, the arguments discussed in this chapter are directly related to the issues that are discussed in the following chapters.

Religiously observant students are active in education, in organizing religious groups and social events. According to some studies, political activities among Turkish youth dates back to the time of the Ottoman Empire, in the nineteenth century. Both the Empire and the Republic aimed to modernize the country, beginning with the students. There has been a change in the style of activism of university students in the last few decades; this is detailed in Chapters Four and Six, including interviews and observations made in Turkey.

A variety of methodologies are used by sociologists and anthropologists in discussing the secularization thesis. A definition is the first thing sought. There are different definitions even for Western experiences. Most scholars approach the issue from one angle. Some approach it politically, some philosophically, some sociologically, and so on. Each country has its own experience of religion and secularization. For Muslim countries, it is very difficult to compare Turkey with Iran or Saudi Arabia, for instance. In order both to examine the secularization thesis with regard to Turkey and to understand the place of religion in Turkish society, there are a limited number of quantitative sociological studies. According to these and to some scholars, as was found in my research, even many politically secularist Turkish people identify themselves as religiously observant. This necessitates developing a new definition of the secularization and Islamization of Turkish society.

This study shows that there is a wide range of Islamic groups and understandings among Turkish people, beyond the well-known sects and beliefs, like Sunnis and Alevis. These groups are discussed in this chapter and Chapter Six.

Among the struggles of religiously observant people, there are those in the philosophical area as well. The first question in this area is the compatibility of Islam and secularity. The answers vary among scholars. Traditionalist scholars, for instance Hayrettin Karaman,

argue that Islam is a whole system and cannot be divided into religious and secular, nor modified to accommodate new secular circumstances (Karaman, 2007). Other scholars, for instance Ali Bardakoglu, divide Islamic rulings and principles into two parts: *'ibadat* (rituals and modes of worship) and *mu'amalat* (worldly transactions) (Karaman, 2007). Modernist scholars generally suggest that religion is concerned with the first, and not the second. Some scholars, while agreeing with this division, do not accept fully the view of modernist scholars. These scholars see Islam as an efficacious religion in all areas of life. Nevertheless, the principles of Islamic jurisprudence allow for changes to the *mu'amalat* according to new circumstances, on condition that the changes are not contrary to basic Islamic values and principles. The views and reactions of religious university students on this, are presented and analysed in Chapters Six and Seven.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

For a sociological study, the question of people's perceptions, desires and narratives are equally as important as investigating what religion and secularity is. Sociology is not simply an exercise in collecting data on a particular topic. It is also an effort to find out why and how things occur (Giddens, 2008; Fuller, 2002). Weber describes sociology as a "science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order to arrive at a causal explanation of its cause and effects" (1947: 88).

Because my study is concerned to interpret the meaning and significance of social action, I drew on qualitative research methods rather than quantitative. This was more relevant for my work because in qualitative research, the point of view of participants and their experiences are more important than statistics. Such research also requires that the relationship between researcher and research participants be closer in order to deeply understand their views on a range of topics, in a variety of contexts. Considering the actions of participants, the social settings in which they live and operate, and the context of particular activities are all crucial variables. For this reason, this method is unstructured and the theory used for it is inductive. Investigating people in their natural context to get reliable data about them is a major principle of qualitative research (Halfpenny 1979; Bryman, 2008).

Bryman gives three main features of this strategy. For him, qualitative research "predominantly emphasizes an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research, in which the emphasis is placed on the generation of theories." This is an approach that "has rejected the practices and norms of the natural scientific model and of

positivism in particular, in preference for an emphasis on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world; and embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals' creation" (2008: 22).

### **3.2 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS**

In-depth interviewing, which includes asking open-ended questions, listening, recording, analysing and interpreting the answers, are one of the main data gathering techniques in qualitative research. Through this technique, the researcher aims to get a deep understanding of the views and ideas of the interviewees, and also their relationships, perceptions and evaluations. Qualitative interviews have some characteristics: For instance, the approach, in qualitative research is much less structured compared to quantitative research; rather than researchers' interests, the interviewees' points-of-view are much more important; in terms of both times and structures, qualitative interviews are flexible (Bryman, 2008; Kümbetoğlu, 2008).

There are some principles in qualitative interviewing which I respected in my work: interviewees should be informed precisely about all the relevant details of the research project and the researcher should get their permission; questions should be suitable for the interviewees in respect of their experiences, conditions and activities; they should be sensitive to the interviewees' needs, rights and sensitivities; they should focus on the research questions; the array of the questions should be organized in a reasonable way to be able to get accurate data (Kümbetoğlu, 2008: 84-94).

I conducted semi-structured interviews. In this type of interview questions are prepared in a general form for the interview guide. Sequences and the frame might change and vary in the process. In addition, questions are generally asked in an open-ended style.

As Willig indicates, “The semi-structured interview provides an opportunity for the researcher to hear the participant talk about a particular aspect of their life or experience. The questions asked by the researcher function as triggers that encourage the participant to talk” (2001: 22).

According to Patton, there are six kinds of question groups in qualitative interviewing: demographic questions (date and place of birth, education, marital status); experience questions (housework, daily affairs); opinion questions (worldviews, faiths, ideals, etc.); questions aimed at understanding participants’ feelings about different affairs and problems; knowledge questions; and sensuous questions about what they saw, heard, experienced and so on (1992: 115-9). The question list of my study includes all of these various kinds of questions. I asked my informants about their age, place of birth, where they live, which university and faculty they study in. I wanted them to talk about their daily lives, the places they generally visit, and whether they celebrate some particular days, like religious days, birthdays, and the new year. The place of religion in their lives, their good and bad experiences related to religion, whether they practice certain religious rituals, whether they drink alcohol, if they attended a Qur'an course, their relationship and views about religious groups in Turkey and about Muslim scholars. Related to secularity and particularly secularism as a state ideology of the Turkish Republic, I asked them if they experience a tension between religion and the secularist state, whether they have any difficulty when they want to practise their religion, their views about the future of Islam and secularism in Turkey, and whether they perceive a polarization in the society, particularly among young people, in relation to religion and secularity. I also asked them how they understand religiosity and what are the major factors that contributed to their religiosity in the case of religiously observant people. Women's rights and their being visible in the society was another issue we talked during the interviews. Finally, I asked

some questions about their personal feelings and wishes, such as marriage, the organization of their wedding parties, their views on boyfriends and girlfriends, favourite authors, role models, and their favourite political parties and Islamic scholars.

With the help of gatekeepers, after preparing an interview guide or form, I conducted interviews with forty-five university students in Istanbul. To meet university students, Istanbul was an ideal location in Turkey, due to the fact that it has taken in millions of immigrants, from all over the country. It has more than fifty universities and more than 500,000 university students.

### **3.3 SAMPLING**

In qualitative research, the researcher engages in systematic or purposive sampling, rather than random sampling. Through this type of sampling, participants are selected from certain areas according their relevance to the research questions. Qualitative researchers do not study social realities in order to generalize the findings in a simple way. On the contrary, this kind of work is a struggle to discover and understand the people and their social context in detail. “The goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed. Very often, the researcher will want to sample in order to ensure that there is a good deal of variety in the resulting sample, so that sample members differ from each other in terms of key characteristics” (Bryman, 2008: 415).

Considering that there is not just one type of Islamism and one type of secularism, I made a particular effort to find and meet with as wide a range as possible of religiously observant students associated with different Islamic movements, such as *Nakşibendilik*, *Nurculuk*, *Milli Görüşçülük*, *Süleymancılık*, visiting their places in Istanbul and getting the

help of gatekeepers who had friends in these groups. I made the same effort with secularist students, seeking to meet with a range of secularist students associated with different secular organizations and having different views, such as *Ülküçüler, Aleviler, Kemalistler*. Most Turkish young people are not associated with any group or movement on either of these two sides. As Turam argued, “they do not mobilize or organize collectively with any of these groups” (2008: 41). So I made the effort to meet with a reasonable number of these non-joiners for my study as well, in order that their views will not be overlooked or downplayed. In other words, I was particularly concerned to locate a wide-ranging sample of university students to interview, in order to best represent the society at large in the country in terms of different worldviews and political views. Nevertheless, although I aimed to give equal space in my study to both religiously observant and secularist students, students who identified themselves as religiously observant ended up contributing more than secularist ones to this study. This is because their background gave them more experience of the tension between religion and secularity, as they reflect upon the rulings and principles of their religion and try to practise them in a mostly secular context. Despite the fact that I conducted interviews with both religious and secular students equally, I needed to give more space to the views of religiously observant participants, rather than secular participants, in some chapters of the thesis. The Gezi Park chapter, Chapter Eight, was the exception because it was the secularist students who experienced the greatest tension between religion and secularity there, as they felt their secular lifestyle was under threat from the authoritarian attitude and policies of the Islamist or religiously observant Prime Minister. Perhaps it is worth mentioning once again how very difficult it is to describe a person as unequivocally religiously observant or not in Turkey.

I tried to seek detailed answers to a number of specific questions that I mean to analyse in order to ascertain the range of similarities and differences between participants

on specific issues in society. I asked the details of students' personal stories to ascertain if their backgrounds have influenced their ideas. Rather than structured and/or unstructured interviews, the semi-structured interview seemed the best method for achieving my aims, since it allows respondents to express complex thoughts while nevertheless providing a basis for comparison (Silverman, 2009).

Since I planned to ask certain questions of all my participants and ask other, more specific questions according to individuals' particular conditions, the semi-structured interview format was the most appropriate one. The chief advantage of this kind of interview is flexibility as compared with the entirely structured format using standardised and very specific questions (Bryman, 2008; Bell, 2005).

In order to achieve purposive sampling properly, I also got the help of gatekeepers, asking them about the worldviews and political views of the informants, and their relationship with religious and secular organizations.

During my fieldwork in Istanbul, I conducted, as mentioned, qualitative interviews with forty-five university students. Twenty-one of the interviewees were male students; and twenty-four were female.

### **3.4 ACCESS**

I accessed my research participants or interviewees through gatekeepers, many of whom I already contacted before the fieldwork. The gatekeepers were the people who helped me as a researcher to meet possible participants and interviewees (See: Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003). The majority of the gatekeepers themselves studied at various Turkish universities, especially those in Istanbul. In addition, I contacted some other gatekeepers who promised to link me with student groups with various ideological tendencies and

worldviews, i.e. the liberal democrat *Genç Siviller* (Young Civilians), the Islamist *Anadolu Gençlik* (Anatolian Youth), and the secularist *Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği* (Kemalist Thought Association).

I asked the help of my informants to introduce me to some of their friends who were suitable interview subjects in terms of my research and sampling criteria. I met some of my informants, especially the Gezi Park protestors, in the places they were active in. When I spent two weeks in Gezi Park in June 2013, along with making observations, I visited all the tents and talked with the protestors about the objectives of the protests and so on.

Another access method I used during my research was using social media effectively. I searched and followed some university students through the social media, Facebook and Twitter in particular. Telling them about my research and considering the ethical issues, I offered those who seemed the most suitable the possibility of being interviewed for my research.

When I met the students, firstly, I asked their permission to interview them and observe the events they attended, to enable me to be a participant observer in these events.

I started with observations that enabled me to have an overview of the field and this potentially helped in finding more relevant people to interview and useful questions to address. Then, in the next stage, I conducted the interviews.

### **3.5 OBSERVATIONS**

To be able to understand social and cultural facts, conditions and processes, and also the meaning of the behaviour of my informants, only asking questions and listening to the answers is not sufficient on its own. As the subject of the thesis is closely related to the

current condition of Islamization and secularization of Turkish society, and the meanings of the views and reactions of the Turkish Muslim university students, I needed to make observations in order to understand the situation through their daily practices and their ways of socialization. In addition to interviews, observing the participants in their daily lives and in the events they attend was crucial for building a case study. “The most widely used strategy for humanistic field study is participant observation, a method by which researchers systematically observe people while joining in their routine activities. Researchers choose participant observation in order to gain an inside look at social life in settings ranging from nightclubs to religious seminaries” (Macdonald and Plummer, 2012: 76). However, I was not a full-time participant observer. Gold (1958) classifies the roles of the participant observers into four categories: complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer. My situation was much more suitable for the third group. As an observer-as-participant, the researcher is mainly an interviewer. Although he or she makes some observations, these observations do not necessarily involve complete participation in participants’ lives. In this external observation, the researcher might not attend all the activities of groups and people, and the level of attendance might vary in time (Kümbetoglu, 2008).

In order to make observations and to conduct qualitative interviews, I visited Istanbul twice. My fieldworks took place from 18 March 2012 to 14 September 2012, and from 6 June 2013 to 24 June 2013.

Where possible in my research, observations took place in the organizations of the participants, and the interviews were augmented as much as possible by observations achieved by attending communal or associational events in which the interviewees were involved. I attended meetings and events organized by all the groups studied – both religious and secular - in order to gain a deeper understanding of the place of religion and

secularity in the lifestyles and views of my research participants. In this respect, I attended some organizations, including religious meetings and conferences, with the participants that were organized by their schools, societies, or themselves.

In Turkey, almost all universities organize spring festivals (*Bahar şenlikleri*) in April or May. During these festivals, universities organize markets, competitions, exhibitions, cultural and sports activities, and musical concerts of famous singers. I attended at four universities' festivals and observed students and the details of the organizations convening the events, including whether there is alcohol drinking, the groupings formed, prayer rooms, whether female students wear headscarves, male-female displays of intimacy, the foods served, and the behaviour of the participants.

I went to particular cafés during the fieldwork at At Pazari Square in Fatih neighbourhood, which are well known in that the majority of the customers are religious university students. I also went to other places in Beyoğlu area that secularist and leftist university students frequently. When I went these places, I found an opportunity to spend time with the owners of the places and my participants for long periods.

I visited the university campuses and student houses of some of my research participants and observed their daily lives in their places. During the Gezi Park protests in May and June 2013, I went to the park and spent two weeks in and outside it in order to make observations and to conduct interviews with the university students among both the protestors and the people who were against the protests. I took hundreds of photographs in Gezi Park and wrote down all the slogans in the area.

### **3.6 INSIDER AND OUTSIDER**

I had the good fortune to be able to undertake this study as both an insider and an outsider in the society. I am a born-and-bred Turkish citizen who lived in the country until the age of twenty-two years old, and am conversant with both the modern-day Turkish language and Ottoman Turkish. I have relatives, friends and acquaintances in Turkey from various backgrounds, including secularist Muslims, nationalist Muslims, practising, conservative and religiously observant Muslims. With this background, it was easy enough to find participants in my research, representative of the religious, social and ideological spectrum of Turkish society. There being various religious and secular groups in Turkey, an outsider would find it quite difficult to make the necessary contacts; and especially as people can be shy of advertising their views and affiliations, owing to long-standing state restrictions on social and religious organizations and long-standing factionalism in the society. To be able to identify people's social groups, a researcher should have an appreciation of such signals as key words, phrases, and clothing styles. This requires one to have lived in the country for a long time as a native speaker and is crucial for a sociological study. This is important in both person-to-person interviews and observations, and in gathering data from the communications media.

As a person who studied Islamic Studies at university including classical and modern Islamic thought at Master's Degree, I am very familiar with the problems and tensions of contemporary Muslim societies, and particularly the Muslims of Turkey. With the advantage of this familiarity, I was able to find and ask relevant questions to my interlocutors. Because I am also a member of the society who experienced the condition of living between Islam and secularity, I had personally looked for answers to the questions related to this problem.

Having lived in Europe for twelve years now, I have developed something of an outsider's perspective on my native land. Turkey has experienced dramatic social, economic and political changes in these last ten years and I have been following these developments, as mentioned, on visits back home, as well as in the Turkish and foreign media. This has given me a keenly concerned but at the same time a detached view of the situation in the country, free of partisan affiliations. This insider/outsider situation I perceive as enhancing for my proposed research.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There were ethical issues involved in the research, especially as regards the protection of participants and interviewees from adverse consequences of their involvement, both during and after the research. An appropriate strategy for ensuring fully informed consent is the main ethical consideration. I used the following to ensure completing ethical principles:

Participants were informed of all aspects of the research that might reasonably be expected to influence their willingness to participate. This information included, but not was limited to, the use of their contribution for the purposes of a doctoral thesis. All participants were provided with such information in a standard written form with the opportunity to provide or withhold their written consent.

The investigation did not involve observing participants unawares. The confidentiality of all participants was maintained. It also did not involve the analysis of data that participants would not realise might be used by me for research purposes, e.g. confidential criminal, medical or financial records. Care was taken to avoid the disclosure of any confidential information to other participants.

I debriefed participants in order to ensure that they understood the nature of the research and to monitor possible misconceptions or negative effects. Participants' confidentiality was safeguarded during and after the study. The data is stored securely on a password-protected computer. It is encoded. I will retain the data for at least five years. The longer-term arrangement for keeping the data is that they will be securely placed in a repository. All names given in the thesis are pseudonyms.

I applied for and received ethical approval before going to the fieldwork from the university, included in Appendix Seven.

## CHAPTER FOUR: SECULARISM AND ISLAMISM IN TURKEY

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, based on my empirical study, I examine the relationship between religion and secularism as experienced by Turkish university students. Drawing on my interviewees' responses, my aim is to explore whether Turkish society today remains polarized between secularists and Islamists. My aim also is to find an answer to the question of whether or not Kemalist secularist and Islamist projects have thrived or failed in terms of their goals. An analysis of students' experiences regarding tensions and other difficulties they experience in practising their religion in the public sphere is another aim of this chapter. Finally, I will evaluate the findings of this chapter in terms of their compatibility with José Casanova's theory of the 'de-privatization' of religion and its continued significant role in the public sphere.

In order to elucidate these issues, first I summarise the literature regarding secularism and Islamism in Turkey. I then proceed to present the analyses of the responses of my interviewees with particular emphasis on their political thoughts and experiences about Islamism, the Islamic state, secularism, Kemalism, and the secular state.

The chapter consists of seven sections, each of which covers an underlying political issue related to the tension between Islam and secularism.

In the first section, I address the following questions: How do Turkish university students understand secularism and what kind of government do they prefer? As Muslim students, are they happy with a secular state?

In the second section, I focus on the problems that religiously observant university students identify in their experiences of the education system of Turkey. I analyse their complaints

about the ideas that the secular Kemalist state has imposed on them, especially Turkishness and modernity; the problem of religious high school (*İmam-Hatip schools*) students in terms of entrance to the universities; religion lessons in public primary and secondary schools; and problems with places of worship in schools.

In the third section, the headscarf ban imposed by the secular state is examined, in order to present some aspects of the tension university students experienced, and the views of the students about the issue.

The fourth section considers the effects of state-imposed secularism on university students, including issues such as the changing meanings of religion, self-alienation, fear and hypocrisy in relation to a secularist state's policies.

The fifth section is on Islamism in Turkey and outlines the views of students with regard to applying Islamic rulings and principles to the Turkish state, whether these are tending towards the Islamization of the state or not, and what kind of ideals they have.

The findings about the AKP's role in Islamization and secularization of the country are analysed in the sixth section.

The seventh section examines the views of university students desiring neither oppressive secularism nor oppressive Islamism but rather a synthesis of both, with freedom of expression for all religions, lifestyles and opinions. The expectations and demands of the students regarding this new "civil constitution" are analysed in terms of religiosity and secularity.

Before moving into the research findings, it would be useful to remember the literature background of secularism and Islam in Turkey shortly. As I indicated in Chapter Two, secularism in Turkey has characteristics distinguishing it from other types of secularism, Anglo-Saxon style secularism and French style secularism, for instance.

Turkish secularism is not only based on the separation of religion and state, but also aims at modernisation of the social and cultural sphere by purifying these milieus of religious dogmas and superstitions (Daver, 1988). With its goal of ‘liberating’ the society from Islam through its positivist and modernist ideas, the state puts religion and religious institutions under its control. According to Karpat, this “violated the principle of secularism” (1959: 288). However, the enemy of Turkish secularism has not been Islamic faith, but rather the political power of Muslim scholars (*ulema*), and superstitions (Daver, 1988).

Keyman argues that elites of the state have used the secular state to control religion with the intention of delinking it from the Ottoman heritage (2007: 234). According to Subaşı (2004), Turkish modernism can be defined as the struggle to delegitimise the visibility of religion in the daily life of society. In the new social order of the republican period, Islamic institutions, scholars and leaders lost their previous power (Gökay and Aras, 2003).

Contrary to the majority of writers, Berkes sees the new nation-state as a necessary result of both internal and external events. Using the terms modernization and secularism interchangeably, he argues that the issue is not only one of separating religion and state, but of modernization and being secure from sacralised tradition (2002: 19). In his view, the essential issue in secularism is withdrawing religion and the sacred from the areas of economics, politics, education, sex and knowledge (2002: 23). This view refers to the history of secularism in the republican period of Turkey. The governing elite has worked to secularize the country, focusing on these fields and making a great number of reforms. As discussed in Chapter One, clothing, the calendar, the alphabet, the judicial system, the education system and the religious education system all lost their Islamic character and adopted a Western identity (Zürcher, 2003). Compared to the other Muslim countries in the twentieth century, which embraced modern and unitary state law, “only the Turkish

Republic rejected the *Shari'a* outright and declared an entirely secular legal system. Even advocating the application of *Shari'a* became an offence in Turkish law" (Zubaida, 2003: 158).

Kuru (2009: 236) describes Turkish secularism as "assertive", in line with Keyman's point that "the state's top-down act of creating a secular national identity by initiating strict political and institutional regulatory mechanisms on religious communities has been challenged by Islam and its powerful symbolic and cultural role in the constitution of societal relations and social identity formations of Turkish people" (2007: 216). The challenges in the country have included, as mentioned, religious movements such as *Nurculuk*, *Süleymancılık*, *Milli Görüş*, and their activities; and also unofficial Qur'an courses both by these groups and individuals.

#### **4.2 DISCONTENT OF RELIGIOUSLY OBSERVANT STUDENTS WITH TURKISH SECULARISM**

The Turkish university students were seemingly unanimous in seeing secularism in Turkey as different from secularism in, for example, the United Kingdom, the USA, and France. The students were uncomfortable with Turkish secularism whilst not being opposed to secularism in itself. Even secularist students objected to the strictness and dominance of Turkish state-imposed secularism, but were inclined to see secularism as safeguarding religion. Adem identified himself as a secularist person, and argued that secularism was a good system, which protects religion:<sup>1</sup>

I think that secularism is important. Secularism protects religion.

*How does it do it?*

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<sup>1</sup> The quotations of my informants are included without using quotation marks and not in italics.

The people who are in power can change in time. Secularism is necessary in a democratic state. If I live in an Islamic state, how could I live my life? How can I be “I”? Tayyip Erdoan wants a religious generation (“dindar nesil”) that is 99 per cent of the population, but I do not want to be religious...

*How can secularism protect religion?*

Think about the possibility that if the rulers were Christians or Jews and if they wanted all people to live according to Christianity or Judaism, what would have been the situation in the country? If the state is not secular, you also cannot practice your religion. (Adem, Male, International Relations, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 24/4/2012)

A religiously observant student, Emre, did not believe that the state wants to “fight” their citizens and oppress them. He argued that secularism began with good intentions but has turned into a tragedy, with state and nation in some measure becoming separated.

The aunt of my father told me that the people in the 1940s learned to read the Qur’ān in stables because it was forbidden. But this society has learned it, although it was forbidden and the state oppressed religiously observant people. The Kemalist ideology is an elitist ideology that wants to change the society. An elitist ideology cannot be a state ideology. A state must understand the society so that it can prevail over society. On the other hand, the state cannot change society; the social changes should change the state. If the society does not want the change it will react strictly, like the Prime Minister Menderes issue. Adnan Menderes won the election in 1950 as a result of the reaction of the people to the former governments. (Emre, Male, Computer Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

According to Göle (1998), the Turkish modernisation project excluded traditional and native values, and saw Islamic law (*Shari‘a*) and Kurdish nationalism as threats to

Turkish nationalism. This view finds support in the last few decades of the political history of Turkey; during my fieldwork the most heated debates were on the Kurdish issue and Islamism. Can, a Kurdish religiously observant student, argued that the problem is the policies of the state. According to him, it was important to say that there is no serious conflict observable between citizens on these matters.

I've got Kurdish, Armenian and Christian friends. They are not my enemies because of my religion. We share our breads. We share our money. It is not OK that my Kurdish friend is not allowed to speak his native language and has to deny his history. My girlfriend wears a headscarf, and therefore she has got problems. These problems are the results of a secular state. (Can, Male, Chemistry, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

Kudret was a religiously observant person studying law and being active in a religious group. He also worked for a Turkish newspaper. We met at a café in Fatih neighbourhood and agreed to conduct the interview in the building of the newspaper. He told me a lot of stories about the difficulties of being religiously observant student in secular schools. Kudret saw Kemalist secularism as having succeeded in some aspects but failed in others; in addition he blamed Kemalism for the people's understanding of religiosity:

I think that this project is broadly successful. You can measure the success by the extent to which people can show their religiosity in public or not. A judge who prays, a prosecutor who prays - These things are still not "normal".

*Is Kemalism successful?*

Yes. You may not be religious. You may not participate in the Friday prayer publicly. But on the other side, Kemalism is not successful, because people are still

religiously observant and conservative parties are still in power. Leftist parties came to power only during “special regimes”, the society does not give them the power. The society is conservative, but not religious. It is an empty religiosity. It had become only a cultural Muslimhood. From this perspective, Kemalism is successful. All opportunities that enable this religious ascendency are excluded. Religious movements and orders (*cemaat* and *tarikat*) are declared as illegal, for instance. I know these because of my father; he is an imam [Muslim religious leader in a mosque]. I know that Kemalism wants to keep even the religious sphere under control. Until recently, it was so that “*hutbe*”s (*khutbahs* - sermons) were written centrally and that all over the country, both in the metropolis in the Sultanahmet Mosque, and in the village mosque the same *hutbe* has been recited. There is no sense and no function in this. The system of *Diyonet* is very problematic, not only the fact that the Alevis are marginalized, but also because of the fact that Sunni Islam itself is emptied [of any meaning]. It was founded not to teach the real religion. From this perspective, Kemalism has been very successful. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

Most of the students interviewed did not see a contradiction between genuine secularism, as practised elsewhere, and Islam, considering oppressive Turkish secularism to be the cause of social problems. Bahar was a practising religiously observant student, who believed that Turkey was not a proper secular state.

I am troubled by the secularism which is implemented in Turkey. Otherwise, there is no problem with normal secularism. If normal secularism was implemented in the country, anybody could do what he wants, could wear what he wants, could study and work in public offices. If you still have problems when you want to pray in public places or in universities, if one is spied upon and blacklisted when you

visit a mosque, then there is no secularism in this country. If there were the right [sort of] secularism, then we would not have these problems. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

Ali was a student who worked for a student society of the *Milli Görüş* movement, which sprang from the former Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) that, in turn, can be seen as the origins of the present ruling party, the AKP. Ali was the head of the society in one of the campuses of Istanbul University. Although he was a political Islamist and activist in a political Islamist movement, he believed in the compatibility of Islam and secularism in Turkey:

In the future Islam will prevail in Turkey *inshallah* [God willing]. Secularism can stay, but it depends on how you understand and how you implement secularism...  
(Ali, Male, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

For “genuine” secularism, students generally referred to European examples or to the constitution which defines secularism as freedom for all to choose and declare any faith. Contrary to the constitution, people who were especially religious are apt to experience some difficulties, even finding themselves blacklisted in certain areas of life if they practised their faith with any degree of ostentation, by wearing a headscarf or going to a private school with strong religious connections, like having financial or organic relationship with religious NGO's, groups, or movements.

There are still exclusions because of religion. The best examples are the women who wear headscarves. These people could have not been faced these problems, and some people could not be blacklisted due to praying five time a day. We are not admitted to graduate programmes at the Istanbul Technical University [a state university] because we are from the Fatih University [a private university founded

by religiously observant people]. It does not matter if you have a very good academic record, if you can speak very good English, if your scores are very high. You will not be accepted. If there was a secular state, then all people could study wearing a headscarf, then there would be no exclusion. There is still exclusion and blacklisting in Turkey. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

#### **4.3 THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE TURKISH SECULARIST STATE AND RELIGIOUSLY OBSERVANT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

Vergin (2003), referring to Durkheim, argues that formal education is the chief pillar of a nation-state and of secularism, and that the governing elite of the Turkish republic realized from the start the significance of the education system. As a result, they made crucial and dramatic changes in this area by closing all religious schools, establishing in law the unification of education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*), banning the Arabic alphabet and replacing it with a modified Roman alphabet, as well as other changes. Some changes which may be seen as contrary to Islamic values and Turkish culture, have produced difficulties within society.

Faruk was a religiously observant student who studied in secular public schools. He told about his experiences about the secularist and western ideology of public schools in Turkey, giving examples from his primary school teachers, which, although they are individual cases, can be considered as evidences presenting the implementation of state-imposed secularism.

I remember my elementary school years. We had a picnic with our teachers. Our teachers did drink alcohol. Beer, I remember. We had a teacher in the third grade. He told us that there is no God. “We only believe in God, because we imagine that

He is there. But He does not exist. You cannot see Him.” I remember it very well. It was very surprising and strange for us... We had, for example, a literature teacher, Muhittin. He was old. One day he came and wrote on the chalkboard, “Arap” [Arab]. He said, we should read it reversed: “Para” [money in Turkish]. He said that the most important thing for the Arabs is money. He tried to talk about the “beautiful West”. He said that the family structure is very good in the West. Better than ours. The reason is development and scientific studies, he said. (Faruk, Male, International Relations, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 23/3/2012)

Even a secularist student, Adem, declared that his distance from religion was the result of the Kemalist education system:

*When did develop your attitudes towards religion, in the university years?*

Not at university. I had these thoughts before. But at university I voiced my opinion more. I was never religiously observant. I hated those people who are religiously observant. I think this is because of Kemalism. Our teacher was a Kemalist... (Adem, Male, International Relations, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 24/4/2012)

Under these circumstances, religiously observant students struggled to protect their religious and traditional understandings and lifestyles. Buse, a religiously observant student in her final year, thanked God for being able to keep her “identity”:

And, *elhamdilillah* (thank God), we have protected our identities. (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/8/2012)

The desire to preserve their lifestyle, as I will explore further later in Chapter Seven, produced some ‘alternative solutions’. According to a World Values Survey in 2007, between leaving primary school and leaving university, the number of students who

identified themselves as religiously observant declined dramatically from 92 per cent to 59 per cent (Kaymakcan, 2012).

Henkel (2005) analyses the role of the five daily prayers (in Arabic *salat*, in Turkish *namaz*) in the lifestyle of Muslims. As he declares, “together with the Muslim headscarf, it is also the most visible and perhaps most provocative aspect of everyday Muslim religious practice in Turkey” (2005: 487). In spite of the fact that praying five times a day in a particular way is one of the essential and compulsory (*farz*) rituals of Islam, there is a difficulty posed by the lack of prayer rooms (*mescid*) in schools and at some universities. Kudret mentioned about his own experiences related to this issue:

A lecture took place exactly at the time of the Friday prayer at the university. We were there in the first hour, but in the second, we went to the mosque. The professor of course realized this. The first hour was full, the second hour half were missing. He asked where we were. After the response he said, “You can repeat the Friday prayer, but not my lecture.” He is a professor, but his knowledge and relationship with religion is weak. He does not know even that you cannot repeat the Friday prayer. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

*Are there any problems that you have experienced as a Muslim?*

Actually, no. As a man, I have no problems. But... Actually, yes. The prayer times. You have lectures in the prayer times. The noon prayer is at 12:00 o’clock. The afternoon prayer is at 14:30 o’clock. So you have 2.5 hours for the noon prayer. If you have lectures at this time, then it is very difficult. That's a problem. In the lectures, you can join the lecture late. But if one is a civil servant? That would be impossible. (Muharrem, Male, Mathematics, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 1/4/2012)

In the curriculum of the Turkish education system, there is only one lesson a week – *Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi* (Culture of Religion and Knowledge of Morality) – on religion in primary and secondary schools; this was unsatisfactory for religiously observant people in terms of both the time allotted and the content. At the time I was conducting my fieldwork, the governing party was proposing two more elective courses on religion to be added to the curriculum; one on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (*siyer*), and the other on the Qur'an.

*Do you think that the religion lessons are sufficient?*

No, they are not sufficient. If we could learn religion through only religious lessons, we're toast! It is quite softened and unsatisfactory. Someone who wants to pray, who wants to read the Qur'an, must be able to read the Arabic letters. But that is not taught in schools. To understand the meaning of the verses which are recited during prayers is significant, but they are not taught as well. Religion lessons are so superficial. It is only, as the name implies, “religious culture and moral knowledge”.

*What kind of Muslim is it that is being raised through these lessons?*

Someone who knows something about religion, morality and the culture, he has got just cultural religious knowledge. If you use the word culture, you are emptying religion. Culture is something for the museum. Something you look at and analyse from a distance. We look at religion from a distance in those lectures. We cannot look at it as believing and practising Muslims. Of course, they are beneficial to some extent, but definitely unsatisfactory. (Berna, Female, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/12/2012)

The most visible Islamic symbol and one of the most problematic issues dividing Turkish secularism and Islam is the headscarf. As women became active in the public sphere, both working and studying, problems occurred, especially after the adoption of the 1982 constitution (Gallala, 2006). Although the AKP (Justice and Development Party), which has a conservative and religious identity, came to power in 2002, matters were not resolved during my fieldwork. Almost every student I met had an account of his or her own, or of a relative's who had suffered on account of the headscarf ban. Buse was one such example:

We all learned English in the preparatory year and had intensive English classes. Once a day a teacher came in and went out again immediately, because two friends and I were sitting with headscarves in the classroom. He came back and said that we cannot attend his class with these clothes and that we have to leave the classroom. It was the first time I was expelled. It was a very bad day. I can never forget that day. In addition, I really love English and my English was very good when I graduated from the primary school. I was expecting to improve very much at the high school. In the first two months, I followed the lessons at the door.

*At the door, in the classroom?*

No, outside the door. I could not go into the classroom because of my headscarf. I could hear the teacher's voice behind the closed door. In addition to that I was noted down as absent. I was constantly sent to disciplinary punishment. We were three girls. Then the father of a friend took her from the school because she was very emotional. The other bought a wig. I was the only one in the school. Ablalar [elder sisters] supported me during this time. With some, I still have contact and I respect them. I do not judge anyone by why she wears the headscarf or why not. I have no right to do it. I had my own test [*imtihan*]. Most of the time I was hiding in

the toilets. There were the Turkish national anthems on Mondays. I always came so late, but on Fridays? We usually hid in the toilets or laboratories in order not to participate in this ceremony on Fridays. But the school board started to close the toilets. If there was nothing important in the lesson, I hid myself in the toilet in the last lesson. The caretaker unlocked me, after the ceremony ended. He helped me so much. I still pray for him. (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

While some students insisted on not taking off their headscarves, or went abroad to study, others found a way round the ban on headscarves in school by, for example, wearing a hat over their headscarf or by wearing a wig so as not to show their real hair. Fatma was one of the students who wore hat:

I have experienced the headscarf problem personally in high school, and even now.

*Did you wear a headscarf in high school?*

No. I took off the headscarf in school. At university I wore a hat. That was stupid.

*Until recently?*

Yes. For two years. One year in the preparation class and then one year at the faculty of architecture.

*Did you wear the hat on top of the headscarf?*

Yes. Totally stupid. But now the situation is better. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

My sister graduated from İmam-Hatip high school, and she came up with similar problems. She didn't take the matriculation exam after she graduated from the high school, on the grounds that after taking the exam she would have to study in the university with the ban on the headscarf, and would have to take off her headscarf

otherwise she couldn't study in the desired department of the university. She didn't take the exam for two years, and then she made a decision to take it. She had to take her headscarf off as a solution, and then she took the exam. She studied at the Theology Faculty but even if you study in such a religious school, it is prohibited to wear a headscarf. She studied taking off her headscarf and using a wig. But now she cannot be a teacher... (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

While my research was in progress, the headscarf ban was lifted at universities, from June 2010, but it was still in force at primary and secondary schools.

In 1989, a Constitutional Court (*Anayasa Mahkemesi*) ruling became the basis of the current headscarf ban. The ruling meant that Islamic veiling in public institutions, especially universities, was prohibited. Since then, especially because of its visibility, the headscarf has become a symbol of the pressure of the Turkish secularist state on religiously observant people, and it has also been regarded as a political symbol by secularists (Saktanber and Çorbacıoğlu, 2008: 519). In Chapter Seven, I examine the separation between religiously observant and secularist people in terms of discourse and language. An aspect of this division is the headscarf issue and the discourse of the two sides is very clear. While Islamist activists and media prefer the word “*başörtüsü*” for headscarf, secularist people and the media have generally used “*türban*” until quite recently. Galip was head of the Istanbul youth branch of *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP) (Republican People's Party); he argued that they do not oppose the term *başörtüsü*, but were against using the word *türban* because of its “political symbolism.”

*It seems that the CHP supporters go against the headscarf?*

No, I cannot agree with that. It is presented to the society like that. In Turkey, there is a headscarf fact. The CHP supporters have a problem with the “turban”, which

acts as a political symbol, not with people wearing a “headscarf”. In Anatolia, the women, who are 60-70 years old women wear headscarves. You can see their hair easily. You must distinguish the headscarf and turban. No one says ‘no’ to the headscarf. The turban is a cover: you can’t see the hair. The Islamists wear the turban as a political symbol. The turban is a French word. It is something that is not ours.

*You say symbol? For what is this symbol used?*

To show herself.

*Herself? Their political background?*

Yes, of course. This is a form of politicization. Politicization is made through symbols. Symbols have meanings actually. (Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

The aspects of the secularist and Kemalist state, which university students typically were troubled by, were not limited to the issues above. Both secularist and religiously observant students were sensitive to the problems of ethnic, denominational and religious minorities: the Kurds, and Islamic and non-Muslim foundations (*vakıflar*). As a religiously observant student, Hakan complained about the situation of ethnic and religious minority rights:

What has been experienced? If I summarize it according to my perception of religion: In this country, minorities have been deprived of their citizenship rights. Armenians, Kurds, Alevis... They have been disregarded completely. Things happened which look like genocide. Their places of worship, mosques, were closed. The values of the people were disrespected. The headscarf was banned. The right of getting public education has been taken from religiously observant people.

The worship practices of minorities, the foundations - everything was confiscated.

The state has taken over everything. The secular state has suppressed everything that did not fit in their ideology. The system is a problem from start to finish.

(Hakan, Male, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

Sema is an interesting example, because she was a student who experienced a sense of multiple victimhood. Because she had suffered as a woman, as Kurdish, for being religious, and for studying at a religious secondary school, *İmam-Hatip Lisesi*. Although she covered her head at primary and secondary schools, she had to give this up when attending university because of the headscarf ban. She could not go to university at the due time owing to restrictions on the intake from religious İmam-Hatip schools. She had social and political problems because of her Kurdishness. She complained that the secularist and Kemalist policies of the state wasted and destroyed at least one generation.

The headscarf ban, the Kurdish issue, women's rights, İmam-Hatip high school problem... I have had to deal with all these problems and I could not enjoy my life to the full. I have been exposed to psychological violence. I'm even in such a defensive position that if someone confronts me, I say, jokingly: "If you attack me, it would mean you commit violence against a woman, a Kurd, and a religious person; and you would commit a treble crime." (Sema, Female, Photography, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 25/3/2012)

#### **4.4 THE EFFECTS OF TURKISH SECULARISM ON STUDENTS**

In this section, I review the effects of Turkish style secularism with regard to university students through their statements made during interviews. One of the problems I encountered was ambiguity. Almost all the religiously observant students with whom I

spoke were uncertain as to whether they want a completely Islamic state or a genuinely secular state. Banning headscarves at primary schools and civil institutions; upholding Islamic law (*Shari'a law*); media censorship; religious education by the state educational system; and the institution of the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Directorate of Religious Affairs) were all matters that cause ambiguity. It was clear to me that they were doubtful and uncertain about these issues. I asked the interviewees whether, if Turkey was an Islamic state, they would like censorship of, for instance, television programmes deemed un-Islamic. Ali's answer reflected well the general ambiguity:

If it was a Muslim country, then the secular media could perhaps try to act oppositionally, but they would have to abide by certain rules. You could not, for example, publish images of women on the second page of the newspaper. Censorship is necessary, but I am not sure, I do not know. Can people freely find the right way? Is that better? Or censorship? Or if people are forced from above...  
(Ali, Male, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

Muharrem was a student who was working for one of the most prominent Islamic groups. Devoting his evenings and weekends to group his aim was to educate students in an Islamic way. The group wanted Turkey to be more liberal and respectful to Islam and Muslims. In spite of this fact, he was not decided whether the headscarf ban was right or wrong, whether secularism should change, and whether an Islamic system should be adopted by the country:

The headscarf is a real problem. You have to deal with this problem from the age of puberty. You wear a headscarf, but cannot then continue your education, which is also a religious obligation. That's a problem. But I am confused regarding it as well. I do not know if it is good if the headscarf is allowed everywhere. If it was up to me, secularism is a good system and I would like it to continue, and I do not

want a religious society. I saw someone at the university entrance exam of my sisters with a headscarf. My sisters do not wear a headscarf. This girl could not really participate with her headscarf. I do not really know if I want that the headscarf to be everywhere. I realized that I want the headscarf in schools, but not in public institutions. Maybe I've got prejudices and a wrong perception, like the fact that it is an out-dated cloth. I do not know. (Muharrem, Male, Mathematics, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 1/4/2012)

I met with a theology faculty student, also experiencing the same ambiguity with secularism. At the time, she was leading a group working towards a civil constitution in Turkey, preparing an outline proposal to submit to the government. She argued that the main problem was trying to adopt a type of a secularism of foreign origin, not suitable for Turkish society. As a consequence, she said, Turks were living in an everlasting conflict bringing about disintegration in their lives:

From a general point of view, secularism is a dress that does not fit us. We are forced to dress in it, but the fact is that it does not fit. Therefore we do not feel well. This leads to dilemma and conflict in people's own rights. Secularism does not fit these people. People are in a bind; you have to fight with yourself. I experience it too. I cannot say, for example, with a clear conscience that I want an Islamic constitution in Turkey. I feel it is not good. As a result of the imposition of secularism, we always have to make the choice between the religious and the irreligious in life. This is the consequence of secularism in Turkey. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

Buse argued that the Republican People's Party (CHP) and some of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) grassroots, who are secularists, represent the "success" of the secularist state policies of Turkey:

There's a part where Kemalism is very successful: the supporters of the CHP. 30 per cent of the population wants secularism in all places and in all spheres of life. (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

Through the education system, the state has shaped the point of view and attitude of people towards 'the other'. But the system is not even-handed in its treatment, even of Islamic sects, much less of other religions. The state does not behave equally towards all ethnicities and cultures. As Casanova argues, "ultimately the project of constructing such a (secular) nation-state from above is likely to fail because it is too secular for the Islamists, too Sunni for the Alevis and too Turkish for the Kurds", and moreover, "a Turkish state in which the collective identities and interests of these groups cannot find public representation cannot be a truly representative democratic state, even if it is founded on modern secular constitutional principles" (2001: 1064-5). One of the results of this has been, as two coordinators of prominent Islamic institutions conceded, that religiously observant people generally have not been aware of and sensitive regarding the problems of 'the other', for instance, Kurds (Uşşak, 2011; Aktay, 2013). Hale was a theology faculty student and she complained about the statist attitudes of religiously minded people, arguing that they have been influenced by the state ideology and education:

The Theology faculties are another case of its own. There are many religiously observant people who are statists. I think we religiously observant people also live with a Stockholm syndrome. When I talk about the fact that it is wrong to say: "Ne mutlu Türküm diyene! (How happy is the person who says I am a Turk) [Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's statement. This is recited by all Turkish primary school students every morning], then there are many among the religiously observant people who argue that this is a sign of tolerance, that all ethnic minorities are included in Turkishness. I definitely do not agree. In Turkey, there are many conflicts of

identity. Defending the opposite means burying your head in the sand. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

A student of law also argued that the secularist system forms the attitudes and views of the people so that they do not even wish for, much less struggle for, change in society:

The system constructs the people year on year, from primary school to university. It shapes the people. As a result, there is no consciousness of a desire to change anything, for example the legal system. Nobody says that he studied law and at the same time wants to acquire knowledge of Islamic law and then wants to change the system.

*You think that the education system causes that?*

Yes, of course. It shapes the minds of the people. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

For Yahya, excluding religious principles and symbols from the public sphere has led religiously observant people to become introverted and illiterate:

(In state secularism) There were damages in terms of two points. On the one hand, it damaged democracy. On the other hand, conservative people were kept away from education. They have turned in upon themselves. The girls have not been sent to school. They were treated as second or third class citizens. This caused the “negro” Turks. (Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

In the Islamic literature there is a particular term for an act done in the face of danger or oppression: *takiyye*, often translated as “dissimulation.” In such a situation, people may hide their faith and thoughts (Ruthven and Nanji, 2004: 203). This tactic was employed especially by some Shi‘ites, starting when they were faced with Sunni

oppression in past centuries. However, it became common later in some countries, especially when there was no freedom of belief and speech. Aydin (2009) argues that a significant number of people today still apply the principle of *takiyye*, owing to a deficit of democracy and liberal political atmosphere in their country. According to him, there are some issues that cannot be thought and discussed in Turkey and this gives rise to dissimulation. This is not unique to Turkey. On the contrary, this state of affairs exists in all Islamic countries in varying degrees. If there is no adequate defence of human rights, freedom of speech, liberty of conscience, but instead, despotism, with oppression by force of arms, he argues, *takiyye* is an appropriate ethics in politics. Especially among religiously observant students, dissimulating their worldviews, their being members of Islamic groups, their worshipping and articulating opinions on some issues, was quite common. Berna's statements below reflect this situation very well:

*Are there problems in your everyday life in terms of practising your religion, except the prayer time and location problems? Or do you think that everyone can live out his or her religion, as he or she wants?*

I think you have to be brave if you want to practise your religion. Whoever wants to, can live his religion. But I also see what my friends, who wear headscarves, experience. There are people who ridicule and despise them. There are places they cannot enter. The families do not want their daughters to wear headscarves. My family would say no, if I would want to wear headscarf. They worried so much when I mentioned it once. They say that you can pray, but do not wear a headscarf, you should live your youth, and then cover your head when you get old. They are anxious of my being excluded from the society, being marked or blacklisted, and being blocked in my career and social life. It is normal. This is common among families in Turkey. Now, I can go in and out of all environments, and nobody can

know what I believe and what I actually am. First, the career, then the headscarf. Because with the headscarf a career is difficult. Prove yourself, get your career, and then you can wear the headscarf.

*You do not wear a headscarf for this reason?*

Yes. The family is important. For my family it is not normal for a young girl to wear a headscarf, only after having a career or after getting married.

*What is it about the exclusion from society? To government agencies, it is obvious, but in the social community?*

There are many people who approach women with headscarves with great prejudice, and who think that they are close-minded. I do not judge these people. This is normal in this society. There are people who have enjoyed a very high education. They have got books at their homes like Mesnevi, Mukaddime. Some of them think that there is no headscarf in Islam. There are people who snipe at girls with headscarves in a bus and say: "We are believers, but we do not cover our heads like a spider!" There are many intolerant people... But it will change for the better in time. Most of them are over fifty years old. Young people are better. I have hope. The biggest problem is in universities and workplaces. Secularist people often think that I think like them, just because I do not wear a headscarf and that's why they tell me what they think.

*You hide the fact that you pray, fast, do not you?*

No, I do not conceal it. But I do not tell anyone, unless I am asked. That should be so. (Berna, Female, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/12/2012)

Yahya affirmed the argument of Aydin (2009) about dissimulation or *takiyye* of religiously observant Muslims:

*Is there any tension due to the secular state and secular social life?*

Yes, there are tensions. These tensions, these fears are especially in our subconscious, because the problems that happened in the past might come again.

*What does cause this fear?*

There are people who conceal, hide themselves. These people do not show that they are religious. They are turning in upon themselves because of the fact that there are attacks against religion and religiously observant people in Turkey. (Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

In the political arena, the term *takiyye* was discussed regarding the governing *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP). The party was founded in 2001 by defectors from the political Islamist *Refah Partisi* (the Welfare Party of Necmettin Erbakan). In spite of its religious roots, its moderate attitude to the so-called “adultery crisis” and the headscarf issue, and its serious efforts to gain admission for Turkey into the European Union (EU), suspicions remain that they are hiding their true intentions (*takiyye*) and have a hidden agenda (Çarkoğlu and Toprak, 2007; Duran, 2008; Yavuz, 2009). Religiously observant people too, like the AKP, are seen as combining democracy and silence. However, it is difficult to know whether it is because they have embraced the secularism and democracy or because of some worries. Buse mentioned the attitudes of religiously minded people about the political issues:

The society says: Be quiet! You live your religion in some form anyway. Be content. When we asked for the new civilian constitution, we got those reactions.

*From religiously observant people?*

Yes. They believe that they are now doing well and you should accept it. But that is our right, in my opinion. (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

Although the AKP government has been in power for more than ten years, according to a student, Fatma, direct or indirect ‘secular’ oppression still continues at a certain level in public life:

The professors at the universities, for example. They exclude us because we are wearing headscarves. They criticise everything we do. Twice as much, because we wear headscarves. Therefore, we are not supported through the career to be at the university.

*Is it that obvious?*

Yes. There are some professors who address it directly. But when you have a course with this professor, then the whole day goes badly. You think that you are striving for nothing. And there is also still the case that the faculty of architecture “belongs” to the Kemalist leftists. You have the feeling like you have to prove yourself to them. “Look, I can do it, too!” That isn’t nice.

*Is there a fear, that they could prevent your success?*

Sometimes, I do not know. Maybe.

*What percentage of the professors is like that?*

So mostly the older professors are like that. The new professors are not the problem.

*Do you have this problem also with the students?*

No. You notice something, but they say nothing to your face. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

#### 4.5 ISLAMISM IN TURKEY

“Islamism” has different connotations from “Muslimhood”. The word “Muslim” and “Islamist” are not synonymous. While “Muslim” implies a religious identity, “Islamist” denotes a distinctive social and political consciousness and agenda (Göle, 1997). Although some theologians behind the Muslimhood model object to these definitions (White, 2012), the term “Islamism” is generally used to include its socio-political connotations. However, the term does vary in meaning from country to country and from one Islamic movement to another. Sunni and Shiite sects, for instance, have very different principles in the political area. This is reflected in the political agenda of the revivalist movements in each sect. Likewise Islamic or Islamist movements vary from country to country. Because of their relationship with politics, these religious movements embrace different agendas according to the particular conditions – the particular problems internal and external – of each Muslim country. Another factor is the nature of their relationship with modernity (Berger, 1999). As Fuller argues, there are different kinds of Islamists, being “either radical or moderate, political or apolitical, violent or quietist, traditional or modernist, democratic or authoritarian” (2002: 49).

As regards Turkey, the country is home to groups, movements and individuals with a great variety of Islamic views. At the time of the Ottoman Empire there were various Islamic institutions and groups in Turkey, notably the dervish orders (*tarikat*), and new Islamist movements appeared after the abolition of the caliphate (*hilafet*) in 1924 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Sayyid, 1997). The abolition of the caliphate created a religious and political hiatus in the Islamic world when it came to legitimate authority, and as a result, even though the secularist state oppressed Islamic movements, they went underground until democracy emerged in the country in 1950. After that time, some

Muslims used the democratic system and opposed the secularist Kemalist system through party politics. Toprak says “Overtly religious people were not accepted into the political, social, or intellectual elite circles. The republic marginalized them, caricaturized them as fanatics, and considered them uncivilized. It was these marginalized groups that later formed the backbone of political Islam” (Toprak, 2005: 32). Göle argues that political Islam in Turkey has been resisting the secular, nationalist, authoritarian and exclusionist politics of the state (2012: 16). Islamic party oppositions and movements in Turkey have not worked only in the political sphere. As Kuru indicates, “... there are various identities (Sunni and Alevi), associations (the *Diyanet*, *tarikats*, and movements), and political views among Muslims in Turkey that make an establishment of one single interpretation of Islam almost impossible” (2009: 241). Bulaç (2011) classifies Muslimhood in Turkey into three interacting categories: political Muslimhood, social Muslimhood, and intellectual Muslimhood. In this part of the thesis, I focus on political Muslimhood and the current condition of political Islam and Islamism in Turkey.

Islamism or political Islam in Turkey is a new term that promotes the political, social, economic and judicial parts of Islam, as a result of the necessities of the time and contextual conditions. According to Kentel (2011) Islamic movements have passed through four stages, and each stage has different features. The first stage is “coherence” or “modernism”. This was towards the end of the Ottoman Empire. In that period, the Islamist movement struggled to save the Empire from the modern West. The approach attempted at that time was to take technology from the West, but to preserve Islamic culture. The second stage Kentel terms “withdrawning” and involved inclining to Sufism (*Tasavvuf*). The third stage was “articulation”, which involved the adoption of rightist politics, following the initial emergence of democracy in 1950. And the fourth stage was “purification”. This period started after 1960 and lasted until the 28 February military

intervention in 1997. In that period the Islamist movement was in conflict with modernization and Westernisation. Its aim was to capture the modern secular state. However, the 28<sup>th</sup> February military intervention changed dramatically both the state's and the Islamist movement's destiny. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) won the election in 2002 with a victory, and the party also won the following two elections by still greater margins. The AKP today remains in power in Turkey and this has been seen by both Turkish and Western media as a victory for Islamists against secularism (Toprak and Uslu, 2009).

In this part, I analyse the condition of Islamism in Turkey, especially among young people, using the interviews I conducted with university students.

Along with other diversities in the country, the main polarisation has been between secularists and Islamists. Islamization, Göle argues, “can be seen as a counter-attack against the principles of the Kemalist project of modernization and the vested interests of the Westernized elites. The concept of an Islamist elite is itself antithetical to secular elites who see it as anachronistic” (1997: 57). Both secularist and religiously observant students accepted this. The head of the Istanbul youth branch of *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP) (Republican People's Party) told me:

In Turkey, the Islamists have a certain potential votes, 8 per cent, 9 per cent, maximum 15 per cent. Not 45-50 per cent. But at the moment there are two sides. Either you belong to one side or to the other. There is not another side out of these in Turkey, only one party, the nationalist MHP (the Nationalist Movement Party), but in reality, it does not exist. The MHP has passed the election threshold by means of the CHP. The secularist CHP (the Republican People's Party) has supported the MHP because they hoped to form a coalition government if the MHP was elected. (Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

Although the definitions of the terms “Muslimhood” and “Islamism” underline the political aspect of Islamism, Islamists generally do not accept such definitions. For them, “Muslimhood” already involves the features of Islamism, and every Muslim is already an Islamist, both necessarily and naturally (Bulaç, 2012b). Emre was an activist and manager for Anadolu Platformu, a religious society. He thinks like Bulaç:

We have to discuss religiosity, of course. What is religiosity? Egypt is a religious society, but how far does this country have the characteristics of a Muslim society? A Muslim is not just someone who prays and worships to Allah. A Muslim is one who defends right against wrong. He is not someone who just rebels against tyrants. He prays and performs his worship regularly at the same time. This balance is important.

*So political and social awareness is important?*

Exactly. Therefore, we do not use the word conservative in our society, *Anadolu Platformu* (The Anatolian Platform). *Anadolu Platformu* is not a conservative movement.

*What is it then?*

It is a Muslim movement. Only ‘Muslim’. We define ourselves as a Muslim student movement. Turkish society, in my opinion, is not a religious society. The actual religious are only 10 per cent. Maybe even less. Among students, the percentage is lower. It must be said also, that the proportion is rising; not a linear increase, but an increase. (Emre, Male, Computer Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

An Islamic consciousness among religiously observant students was easily observed. However, their major dislike was not that they lived in a secular country, but rather, in a secularist-Kemalist country. Although in principle they wished Turkey to be an

Islamic country, they did not actually believe this possible. For many, like for religiously observant students, Sema and Faruk, that was a utopia:

*What do you think about an Islamic state, Islamic education system and the Shari'a law?*

These are utopias. I do not think such things are possible. The so-called Islamic countries are not like that. Is there any country where you can say, there exists Islam, as presented in the Qur'an? How can that be possible in Turkey? Very difficult. Impossible. But if the state wants to encourage Islam, then it can stop the discrimination against the İmam-Hatip high schools... (Sema, Female, Photography, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 25/3/2012)

Of course the current law bothers me. There are injustices. We have not got a good judicial system. Ours is an aggregated system, with the desire to understand the West. There must be an Islamic approach, in the sense of justice. For example, the hand of the thief must thereby cut off. That is the Islamic jurisprudence. The key criterion is the Qur'an in Islam, isn't it?

*You want Turkey to be like that, then?*

Perhaps this is our utopia. (Faruk, Male, International Relations, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 23/3/2012)

Among my interviewees, only one student declared that he wished for Turkey to be an Islamic country. Others spoke about wanting liberty for all religions and some of them wanted trials to be conducted according to Islamic law. If it were to be allowed in England, despite its secular and Christian character, it might be regarded by such students as an ideal country:

*Does it bother you to live under the rule of a secular state?*

Of course. I am a Muslim. I want to live according to Islam. I should live in a country where there is Islamic jurisprudence. Even England has *Shari'a* courts, for instance. A Muslim can choose to be judged in accordance with *Shari'a*. But it is not possible in Turkey. Some people exploit secularism. It depends on how you define secularism. Of course, there are rights of non-Muslims in Islamic law, yes. But in a country where 99 per cent of the population are Muslims, it is incomprehensible to implement secularism... Nevertheless, we do not need an Islamic intervention like in Iran. (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

In order to observe Islamic rulings and live by Islamic values in their daily lives, religiously observant Muslims demand a change in Turkey. Details of the desired change vary from group to group, but the shared desire is to live in a liberal, social, and democratic country. Rather than a revolution, as in Iran in 1979, they want change in response to the demands of the citizens.

Buse was one of the active members of Anadolu Platformu. She declared that *Anadolu Platformu* (The Anatolia Platform) was founded in order to practise Islam both in Turkey and in the world. In the best way, according to Islam and the Prophet. I asked her about how an Islamic state would be accomplished; through a revolution or democratic politics:

*If the goal is an Islamic state, how will it be accomplished? With a revolution, a political party?*

Why not a revolution? (That would be) quite possible. It should develop in a political party first. The path of the revolution is not necessarily political. Another way is a social one. In my view, revolution should be from within, and bottom to top. Society needs to be educated. If the society and politics go together, it would

be better. Not a revolution like in Iran. In 2001, a kind of revolution or a change already happened. Especially the military has changed recently, I think. (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

In addition to the demand for democracy in the country, religiously observant people were also concerned about public life. Especially after the AKP came to power, some religiously observant people put their discontent into words publicly, in newspapers, and social media. The last time religious or Islamist people were in power was during the Ottoman Empire. Even then there were many discussions and much conflict about Islamization and Westernization of both the state and the society. And there were changes in the country's politics, economy and education. These changes affected the culture and lifestyle of society. Now, after nearly a century, religiously observant people had the possibility of changing some conditions in the country again, from the women in state service to the sale of alcoholic drinks, from building mosques to allowing or prohibiting Alevi places of worship (*Cemevi*), and even the constitution of the state. Nevertheless, coming from the periphery to the centre – leaving the opposition and coming to power – was not an easy situation for religiously observant people to get accustomed to. Ambiguities and contradictions were easily discerned in the views and statements of religiously observant people.

In my interviews, I asked the students if they would like to change anything in the country in terms of Islamization. There were various uncertainties in their answers. For example, Birol was a religiously observant student who wanted to practise his religion by observing the rules of Islam. He did not want to see around him any woman dressing defiantly against Islamic principles. He wanted the city to be organized like it was in the time of the Ottoman Empire.

If we lived under a *Shari'a* system, secularists would live in a neighbourhood and religiously observant people in (an)other, Jews in another district. I would not see these people. Everyone could live at will. I think that would be nice. It is a question that has concerned me (for) one and a half years... I would like to ask Hayrettin Karaman Hoca: How about if we live in a *Shari'a* system? What would happen to women who wanted to wear (a) mini skirt? Would we allow that? Would we allow people to visit pubs? I want to ask these questions. I am not sure, but I think we would allow them. If people want to go to a pub, then they should be able to go. If they want to wear a mini skirt, then they should. Ultimately, I will not see them if I live in another neighbourhood. However it seems impossible in the current system. It is utopian. So I know I have no right to judge other people because they wear a mini skirt or drink alcohol. But I do not like it. I think that Professor Hayrettin Karaman also has similar thoughts. I think that would be a beautiful way in order not to oppress each other. (Birol, Male, Sociology, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

In the time of the Ottoman Empire, a city quarter (*mahalle*) was not only an administrative unit but also a community (*gemeinschaft*). A *mahalle* contained its own primary school, mosque, institutions for birthday celebrations and marriage ceremonies, as well as Islamic institutions for moral control of the neighbourhood residents. In these institutions, the separation between men and women was strictly maintained. Mardin developed a thesis that the secularizing reforms of the Republic "are linked by the underlying common denominator of the liberation of the individual from the collective constraints of the Muslim community" (1981: 213-4). That kind of city plan with its system for overseeing the morals of the population is still desired by some religiously observant people. Here is an article related to this subject written by a very well known

Muslim scholar in Turkey, Hayrettin Karaman, whom Birol mentioned in his response.

Karaman addresses his recommendations to Muslims living in a secular society.

A Muslim would like to live, as far as the circumstances permit, in a society where the Islamic rulings and moral views are respected. Also, if possible, a Muslim is obliged to prevent and intervene, under certain circumstances, people who are immoral. People who do not believe in Islam have the right to live the way they want. But if this lifestyle affects Muslim life in the application, morality and piety, then Islam compels these people to have a space, which is assigned, in which they can live however they want. If a Muslim does not have the opportunity to live as outlined above, but lives in a multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-ethical society, how should he act then? As the circumstances (allowing) for intervention are not given, he cannot do so. If circumstances do not allow that he relocates, he cannot do this too. What remains is to live with these people together. We live in apartments, streets, neighbourhoods together with homosexuals, alcoholics, fornicators, almost-naked people, and people who hate Muslims. What should be the attitude of Muslims in their hearts and externally? Let's start with the inner attitude: a Muslim can never accept such behaviour; he or she would try to prevent it. But he has no way to prevent it. He keeps his inner desire to prevent them (these anti-Islamic modes of behaviour), if possible. As external adjustment, Muslims should avoid the acts that might legitimize the behaviours of people who act against religion, morality and tradition. They should at least deny their smiles to them when they witness such acts. I do not prefer to use the word “tolerance” [hoşgörü] for the behaviour that is exhibited by Muslims who have to live in pluralistic societies; I prefer the word “endurance” (*tahammül*). I know that some people will react to this article and call it discriminatory, separatist, and harmful to unity and

solidarity. However, a Muslim person should be aware of the differences between him or her and the “others”. The major danger in terms of religiosity would be the disappearance of this awareness. Tolerating diversities, as the demands of the circumstances, and respecting rights and liberties, are different from tolerating unpleasantness. (Karaman, 2011).

Inspired by these ideas, although the more religious were inclined to favour the separation of social groups by locality, there are uncertainties in their minds regarding the new situation in Turkish society. There was the question of how to define a secular or a religiously observant Muslim. Separation was relatively easy at the time of the Ottoman Empire because there was social agreement and harmony in terms of appearance, of clothing at least. Now, as I will indicate in the following chapters, it is very difficult to recognise a person as religiously observant or secularist by their appearance, generally.

*There is Çamlıca where religiously observant people reside, Çarşamba likewise, or Başakşehir, I mean districts where mostly religiously observant people live, they even constitute buildings complexes...*

True but more than a district, something like a city for example; something larger, I mean. For example, there is the schools’ side of it. That’s the thing: a system that I am not able to formulate at the moment, which would provide me with encountering Muslim people at school, when I come home there are Muslim people and where I reside, seeing Muslim people. This probably requires the state being a *Shari‘a* regime, but even if it would be, people who want to live as they want to live should be left alone.

*Is that possible then?*

No it is not. How could it be? Like someone would want to attend Boğaziçi University and you would say “no you can’t”... I am constantly giving the mini skirt example but this is just a cliché. When I see people wearing mini skirts around me, I do not mean, going and telling them by dressing like this you first and foremost are tyrannizing yourself. Rather than that I do not want to look at them, she is tyrannizing me also but that is another matter. I mean, I also do not want to see them, that is to say. Why should I take another test upon myself? She should not be around me. (Birol, Male, Sociology, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

A religiously observant student, who defined himself as “radical Islamist”, complained about the same problem:

What disturbs me most is that I cannot walk down the street comfortably. No matter where we go, there is "haram" everywhere, [women, especially those who do not wear a headscarf] even if you are in Fatih [a neighbourhood that is well-known with its religious population]. I cannot raise my head in the street in order not to look at haram. Supposedly 99 per cent population of the country is Muslim. But you cannot walk with a clear conscience in the streets. This is one of the biggest problems. (Mahmut, Male, International Relations, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 24/4/2012)

Another area of ambiguity was Islamic law (*shari‘a*). It was generally accepted that Islam is not compatible with a completely secular state and society, because religion does not only consist of a set of rituals and worship; its principles, values and rulings cover all aspects of life. Berna was one of the religiously observant students believing the incompatibility of Islam and secularism:

Islam is not suitable for secularism. This religion encompasses all areas of life. It has rulings regarding political and social lives. There is Islamic law. Your

relationship to the state is determined. Your personal relationships are governed. We cannot say that we accept some rules and we do not accept the others. Religion is a package, and you cannot disintegrate it.

*Can you actualise it, for example, Islamic law?*

It was implemented in the time of the Prophet. So it's possible. Otherwise God would not have sent it. But I do not think it would be possible today. Circumstances do not permit. This cannot be done through a revolution simply from the top. Indeed, there are many people who are against *Shari'a* law. It is possible to make arrangements according to the demands of the people. It does not have to be necessarily congruent with religion. It is enough if it is not contrary to religion, and if it gives me the opportunity to practise my religion.

*Is it the ideal or what is sufficient at the moment?*

For now, it is the ideal. Let people practise their beliefs freely and comfortably first.

*Later?*

Everything should develop naturally. We should have respect for freedom of belief. A religious state is the dream of many, and the nightmare of some others. It bothers me that everything is politicized. The power struggle. That's not nice. Mutual acceptance and respect are necessary. This is missing on both sides.

*But you spoke of Islamic law. This has implications for the constitution. For this to take place, it needs to be implemented politically, or not so?*

There is politics in the nature of Islam. Yes. We cannot deny it. It is not for me to say I do not want *Shari'a*. A Muslim cannot say that. Today, *Shari'a* is the ideal.

But people tend to interpret everything differently, and to be speculative. (Berna, Female, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/12/2012)

Although religiously observant students believed that Islamic principles should be implemented in the country, they were not certain of the feasibility of this in the immediate term or, indeed, ever. The same student, Berna, explained the difficulties and the reasons behind them.

I do not believe that we can build a reliable *Shari'a* system. Freedom is not necessary only for pious people, but for all people. That's the ideal, but I do not think that would happen wholesomely. It has the potential to become a tyranny. The conditions have changed. Not a local world, but a global world.

*Do you not trust Erdogan, for example?*

No. Because everything in a globalized world is under too much influence (from outside). The price of bread is determined by conditions in the United States. In this capitalist world, everything is based on (material) benefits. We cannot just set up a *Shari'a* state and act upon Islamic values easily. There are certain power relations in the world. We can implement the *Shari'a* as long as it would serve some powers... Policy implies benefit ratios. The global conditions needs to be changed first. All people think about money. I do not believe in idealistic, pure changes. But the Qur'an tells me to believe in it. It happened before.

*What can one say in conclusion? What are the limitations in Turkey which prevent the implementation of the Islamic law?*

I'm worried about its implementation because it might be exploitative for some and victimizing for some. Diversity is an obstacle. The prejudice in the minds of people is an obstacle. There are alternative values for some people to the religious values.

We think in a modern way. We have a modern education. We have some pictures in our minds when we think of the *Shari‘a*; it is a monster for many people. It is old and dark. People are scared. (Berna, Female, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/12/2012)

In order to see the current condition of Islamism in Turkey we need to look at the role the “conservative democrat” AKP has been playing in power.

#### **4.6 THE AKP’S ROLE ON ISLAMIZATION AND SECULARIZATION**

The AKP (Justice and Development Party) had great success in the 2002 elections in Turkey. The election was very significant for the history of secularism in the country. A military intervention took place on 28 February 1997, which had a negative impact on religiously observant people and institutions. In February 1997, the military members of *Milli Güvenlik Kurulu* (the National Security Council) presented an ultimatum and, as a result, the *Refah Partisi* (the Welfare Party) and the *Doğru Yol Partisi* (True Path Party) coalition governments resigned. The main target of the ultimatum was “*irtica*” (‘reaction’), which the military officers saw as “Islamizing tendencies” in government agencies. The 28 February military intervention (known as ‘28 Şubat’), in Silverstein’s words, “came to be used as a euphemism for the beginning of a crackdown led by the military against ‘political Islam’” (2011: 106). The following are only a few examples of the actions of the military intervention leaders: a strict headscarf ban was instituted in all universities; compulsory primary school education was extended from five year to eight years, thus making it almost impossible for a child to attend religious high schools, İmam-Hatip Schools; a great number of Qur’an courses were shut down; and Sufi orders (*tarikat*) were abolished. The current President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was at that time mayor of Istanbul; he was given a prison sentence and banned from politics forever for reading publicly a

nationalist poet whose work nevertheless included Islamic words. In spite of these obstacles, Erdoğan and his party later achieved great success in parliamentary elections, winning 34.26 per cent of votes in 2002, 46.58 per cent in 2007, and 49.83 per cent in 2011. This is read by some as a success story for Turkish democracy (Toprak, 2005), and by others as a victory for Islamism against secularism (Toprak and Uslu, 2009).

Secularist participants tended to see the success of the AKP as a victory for political Islam, with a suspicion that the party's primary goal is the destruction of the secular Turkish republic. Galip, as a secularist student, complained about the government arguing that they are trying to destroy the secularist state:

Because, for example, what is the goal of the Islamic groups and the external powers in Turkey? To weaken this system! They work for it. That's why the secularist journalists are silenced in various ways. Therefore, there are journalists who are in prison now. Therefore, some members of the military are in jail. It is trying to minimize enlightened and secularist thinking. This means that the system is successful. That's why they are trying to destroy it by force now. The power of Turkey is in the hands of some particular groups. It is in the hands of the people who are close to particular religious groups and beliefs. (Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

Another student, Can, argued that the process of liberation from oppressive regimes in the Muslim countries of North Africa, known as the Arab spring, actually started in Turkey in 2002 with the coming to power of the AKP. In his view, Kemalism is the authoritarian regime that was overturned.

An “Arab spring” has been effective in Turkey. However, the spring came to Turkey between 2000 and 2002, when the AKP came to power. A dictatorship,

namely Kemalism and Mustafa Kemal went with the spring, and then the Arab spring started. (Can, Male, Chemistry, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

In addition to the economic and political problems Turkey faced during the 28 February period, one of the major reasons for supporting the AKP was its religious and social conservatism combined with a democratic programme (Toktamis and Celik, 2014). I talked with Bahar about this issue:

*Why has Turkey selected the AKP?*

In my opinion, because the AKP is Muslim. Because people want their values to be respected, and the AKP does it. The people have a need of respect for their religion, especially (in) Anatolia. Anatolia is the greatest power of Turkey. Anatolian people are more religiously observant and not like the people in Istanbul and other western cities. There can be people who are not religiously observant. But in Anatolia religion is needed. Anatolia expects that from the state. They say that the men at the head of the state have to understand us and act accordingly. Therefore, the AKP has been in power for twelve years. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

The student's statement below revealed her satisfaction at seeing her expectations met by the government.

The more women are "modern", the more they perform in public life, for some people. I can be part of social life, but that was almost impossible 10-15 years ago. The women who wear a headscarf were not even accepted in some hospitals. For women, there is an extra exclusion from the society, because when you look at us, you can easily tell that we are religiously observant people. For example, I heard somebody saying to me, "What are you doing in Taksim?" There is already discrimination against women, and if you wear a headscarf, the discrimination

becomes much greater. In Turkey, a person can only be integrated into society when he or she becomes “modern”. With this appearance I have an extra position. I mean, it is not only men who exclude me from society, but women also who do not like Ottoman culture and Islam. We are so divided. But with the AKP government there can be found a great change. It (the headscarf) has been normalized. The supporters of the AKP live and practise their religion and show their religious identity as well. While veiled women were excluded before, ten years ago, it is not like that now. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

Nevertheless, the most problematic issue for religious women, the headscarf ban, has not been completely resolved; although the ban has been removed in universities, this has not yet the force of a constitutional amendment, and the ban still applies to those in public office.

I think it is still a problem. Most of my friends are saying, thank God banning the headscarf does not happen anymore... But what I see is that none of us has any guarantee and if a problem comes up in future like, say, another government takes over, this issue is going to come up again, it still may and this still scares me, to be honest. I have this problem. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

The AKP's role in the destiny of Islamization and secularization, and Islamism and secularism in Turkey, is one of the matters most frequently discussed by commentators both Turkish and foreign, and by sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists. Has the party caused a change in Islamism or secularism in Turkey? Has the struggle between the two sides finished in both the political arena and society? What is the future of Turkish secularism and Turkish Islamism? During my fieldwork, I observed that secularists were very concerned about the Islamization of the country and any change this would imply for their lifestyles. Some political decisions, some new laws in various spheres and the

statements of some religious politicians, have increased their fears. The Gezi Park protests, which will be presented and analysed in Chapter Eight, can be considered as the expression of these fears (Çelik, 2015). Those who were religiously observant, although generally pleased with the conservative government, criticize it over not recognising human rights, not having a new constitution, and the Kurdish issue. Some of those who criticize the government from the religious point-of-view argue that the party has been secularized and has embraced the principles of the Kemalist state.

We can say that Kemalism has become successful in the last twelve years during the AKP government. Hakan Albayrak, an Islamist author, is not a person that I like, but he said something very nice: "Fortunately there is America (as a threat), fortunately there is Israel, otherwise religiously observant people would not have listened to our advice." These threats encourage religiously observant people to conserve their values. Similarly there was also Kemalism as a threat, which caused mobilization of religiously observant people. However it has nearly disappeared now. Let's see what the Muslims are doing now. Twelve years have passed. Kemalism is succeeding now in doing what it wanted to do. (Can, Male, Chemistry, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

Religiously observant people have been integrated into the system through the AKP government. They have become statists of a secular state now. I am regretfully saying that. When you talk about a constitution, it would mean a regime. And when you talk about bringing in Islamic law, it would mean to change the regime of the state. If there is demand regarding it, I cannot do anything except think to myself (that nothing has been achieved). I do not think our society is ready for that. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

The Islamists have been integrated into the system through the AKP... Therefore, Kemalism is successful. People have embraced the secular state. For example, the soldiers who died in the East of Turkey during the firefights against the Kurdish terrorist group, PKK, for example, are called “şehit” [martyrs]. (Osman, Male, 21, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

*Why did you criticize the AKP?*

The role of the AKP was to eliminate Ergenekon and Kemalism, and it succeeded in that. The Muslims should not have expectations from the AKP anymore. It is dangerous that Muslims are integrated into the system. I mean the Turkish Republic. Embracing the secular state, and especially the nation-state system... The headscarf is also a kind of bribe. “Now you can wear your headscarf and you can do with a headscarf everything you want, so get your nose out of my business!” they say. That kind of situation bothers me. The AKP provides this. They cause Muslims to be integrated to the system. (Osman, Male, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

I suggest that the demands of the Islamists regarding the judicial system and the state changed after the 28 February military intervention, and the AKP government has accelerated that process of change towards democratization during the first and second cabinets (November 2002 – June 2011), in particular. The AKP, being in power with almost 50 per cent of the vote, has changed the state's view of Islam and religious institutions. It seems that there will be reconciliation between the two sides but with some concessions made to the secularists.

In September 2011 the then Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on a visit to Egypt made a number of comments worthy of note. In an interview with the TV channel

Dream, he surprisingly recommended the Egyptians to adopt a secular constitution. He said that secularism does not mean atheism and is not the enemy of religion. He urged them not to be worried about secularism and said he expected that the new regime would be secular and that the viewpoint of the Egyptians towards secularism would change after his speech. In Egypt, he declared, as the Muslim Prime Minister of a secular state, there is no conflict involved in his position (Egypt Independent, 2012). In the same month, the AKP organized a congress celebrating the tenth year of the party in power. In his speech there, Erdoğan said that his party “showed everybody that democracy can work very well in a country with a Muslim-majority population”, and thus Turkey was “an example for all Muslim countries.” Although these statements were criticized by Islamists both in Egypt and in Turkey, the majority of the Turkish population and the supporters of the AKP did not manifest any serious disapproval. On the contrary, when the then Prime Minister said, “We will raise a religious generation (‘dindar nesil’)", religious media and activists did not greet the statement with any enthusiasm, arguing that this is not a proper function of the state, and that such activities ought properly to be carried out by NGOs (Akyol, 2012). This seems to demonstrate that the conception of the state and secularism is changing in Turkey, from authoritarian to liberal.

I asked my participants their ideas about the future of secularism. Religiously observant students agreed on that the Turkish style of secularism would change.

Due to the fact that secularism (in the radical Turkish sense) could not complete itself, I think, it will have disappeared soon. At least, it will soften; it will take a passive form. (Sema, Female, Photography, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 25/3/2012)

*What do you think about the future of secularism in Turkey?*

I think secularism will continue in Turkey. I do not think the conservatives will take steps backward from secularism. The system will be softened in the hands of conservative, religiously observant people.

*What about Islamization of the state?*

I do not think so. The state will not be Islamized, but it will make peace with Islam.  
(Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

With regards to the abovementioned facts and conditions, Kuru (2013) describes the AKP and its policies as not been assertive and authoritarian, but adopting passive and moderate secularism; being not Islamist, but Muslim; being not radical, but pragmatic.

#### **4.7 ACCOMMODATIONISM WITH ISLAMIZATION AND SECULARIZATION**

According to surveys conducted by Çarkoğlu and Toprak, religiosity is becoming more widespread in Turkey at the same time as secularism and the secular state are becoming more universally accepted. The study indicates that the number of Muslim people who describe themselves as very religiously observant (*dindar*), increased between 1999 and 2006 from 6 per cent to 13 per cent, and the percentage declaring their identities as primarily Muslim also increased from 36 per cent to 46 per cent. This increase is also seen in the approval ratings of religious political parties. Çarkoğlu and Toprak declare, “This cannot lead to the conclusion that the support for a secular system is on the decline. Both our 1999 and 2006 surveys show that Turkish people do not perceive secularism to be under threat and do not think that there is a real possibility of a *Shari‘a*-based religious regime in Turkey. Moreover, there is no finding in our study that indicates a rising support for a religious state” (2007: 13). According to their survey, the percentage of people who request an Islamic (*Shari‘a*) state dramatically declined between 1999 and 2006 from 21

per cent to 9 per cent. My findings from the interviews and observations support these results. The following quotations belong to religiously observant students from different groups:

I think that Islamic law and secularism are applicable simultaneously. Because secularism means that state affairs should be separated from religion. The religious groups should be able to express their opinions, but should not go into state affairs. They should help with their thoughts, but not through interference. I support that. It was so in the Ottoman Empire. (Baran, Male, International Relations, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 24/4/2012)

This secularism already exists in the *Shari'a*. (Ali, Male, 22, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

*Is it not important to apply the Islamic law then?*

Muslims should be sentenced within the legal system, whichever he or she chooses (it) to be. Christians within Christian law, the Jews within Jewish law, and seculars within a secular or liberal law; one should have a choice. We have seen, above all, a judicial system in the Madina model, rather than an Islamic state. And if something comes again, it should be justice, not an Islamic state. The state can have no religion. The religion of the state is justice. (Emre, Male, Computer Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

*Now, Turkey is a secular state, do you think it is problem, to live as a Muslim under a secular state?*

If it was to be applied properly secularism might not be a problem. Secularism makes trouble when it interferes with lives of individuals. If it is interfering with my life, with the community's life, this is not right. Secularism does not

require that, you know. Secularism is everyone's freedom to live their religion, so separation of the religious and governmental affairs, affairs of religion and the state shall be separate, there is no problem with that. But when it gets into the person's life and starts telling you: you must not pray, you must not wear hijab, so and so, then there is trouble. (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

Bulaç (2012a) says that there have been three Islamist generations in the history of Turkish Muslims. According to his chronological classification, the first Islamist generation was between 1850-1924; the second one was between 1950-2000; and the third generation started in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is still continuing. Bulaç argues that in the last period, although it maintains its liveliness in the intellectual area, the political form of Islamism has transformed into conservativeness and is also secularizing and Protestantizing in itself. As evidence for his argument, he cites embracing liberal philosophy and the individualization of religious life. In spite of the fact that I do not totally agree with his arguments, the differentiation between the generations may be observed very clearly. The expressions of the students below reflect well the distinction between two generations, theirs and their fathers' generations of Islamists.

If you ask, then none of us would say that we do not want the *Shari'a*. We want it, but in a different way from our fathers' generation. We never have a discourse expressing a demand of *Shari'a*. Because the Islamic state is perceived as something formal. But my concern is not the form. Does anyone have an economic or social problem? My concern is to have a critical and oppositional attitude towards the mechanisms of cruelty... (Osman, Male, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

Not to have arrangements according to Islam, but in whichever country a person should be tried (in a court of law), (this should be) with the laws of other religion

and with compliance to a universalist constitution and universalist legal rules. As for me, anyone should be tried as they wish, according to the laws they wish, if this is what we call democracy this should be so.

*So are you saying that for a state governed by Islam, having this kind of order would be sufficient?*

I mean everyone should be tried in a court as they wish [according to the jurisprudential system they choose]. Everyone shall live as they wish. Everyone shall receive the education they wish. I think the majority of conservative people think also in this way, if we exclude the marginal radicals; radicals are a very small proportion of this, 30 per cent [of self-identifying Muslims] among the university youth. (Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

I think of the state as this, the state must have just a single task, like the work of people, at the end living together collectively is a hard task, the thing that will facilitate this living together is the state, like the state should provide us with that, this must be their first and only task. The state does not need to educate people by directing them, I think. It mustn't do things like that, like the relations among people, like if someone infringes on the other's right it should defend the one whose right was violated. To protect, to provide justice. Yes, it must provide justice for sure.

*Islamic law, criminal law and so, is it necessary?*

Islamic law... When you say Islamic law, it is not the cliché of Afghanistan hand amputation, the person who lies shall be stoned, so and so, that is not what I understand from Islam, that is not *justice*. Yes it is sufficient if it provides justice. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

We are not Iran. We have no *Shari'a*, which I think we should not have anyway.

More tolerance, synthesis...

*No Shari'a?*

No, we should not have *Shari'a*. Perhaps it was possible before. The society would have supported it. But the present society cannot tolerate *Shari'a*. Definitely not. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

Even though they had some concerns about their lifestyles in the new period of the country, secularist students spoke of being generally satisfied due to the fact that Turkey is much more liberal compared to the other Muslim countries. Galip mentioned his own experiences in Tunisia and said people could live their lifestyles freely in Turkey, arguing this was the success of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk:

In Turkey, it is not like in the other Muslim countries. You can comfortably drink alcohol in Turkey during Ramadan in Taksim, Nişantaşı, Yeşilköy, and so on. No one interferes. Of course there are some radical youth, but such a thing is not possible in Turkey.

*Is this the success of Atatürk?*

Yes, of course. (Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

With respect to Islamism and political Islam, I asked some questions to the students about Islamic (*Shari'a*) law. It emerged that religiously observant students neither hope for an Islamic state nor Islamic law in Turkey, as these answers indicate:

*Should it be implemented in Turkey soon or later?*

Of course, but efforts are not for it, because there is not a society you can implement the *Shari'a* on. I do not have such a divine struggle. Maybe twenty years later, but not now... (Osman, Male, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

*Do not Muslims have concerns about Islamization of the legal and education system?*

Well. I do not think that the people under 40 years old have those kinds of concerns.

*The students?*

No. I do not think so. (Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

*No Shari'a?*

No, no *Shari'a!* *What is the Shari'a?* I think that the *Shari'a* is strict and rule-based. Maybe that could be before, because people were suitable for it. But now, there is modernity or understanding of modernity. People have changed their ways of dressing and thoughts; they have started to be more liberal. If the *Shari'a* comes no one can follow it. Everybody's life would be restricted with so many orders and prohibitions. Nobody can afford it, me as well...

*Do you think, Shari'a means that the religious laws are implemented more toughly?*

Yes. Have you ever been to Iran, for instance? All tourists must wear headscarves. I think that's wrong. It gets reactions. For example, people cover their heads, but have night parties in their houses. The present society is not suitable for *Shari'a*.

*Later?*

Impossible. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

The accommodation between Islam and the secular state is seen in the works of a new constitution. In 2011, all the political parties (AKP, CHP, MHP, BDP) in parliament, representing 95 per cent of the whole population, agreed on working for a new constitution and establishing a specific committee for it. Along with secularism, there were some other crucial problems which were expected to be solved in the new constitution, including the Kurdish issue, reforming civil-military relations, and women rights. Various NGOs, societies, and other institutions have worked on preparing a constitution draft and presenting it to the Grand National Assembly (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*). Among my interviewees, four of them, particularly Emre and Bahar, were very active on this issue.

*Can you tell me about the brochures and signatures related to the new constitution?*

We and our past generations have some demands. First, full independence. Second, the state is for the people, not the other way round. Third, this oligarchical bureaucracy must change. Fourth, the state has a problem with religion. This must stop. Why does a state have a problem with religion and why does it struggle to transform it? The other matter is about the military. The military should stay away from politics. We want a strong military, because we believe that any country that does not have strong military would be destroyed. But the military should know its place. Sixth, we (in this region) are not enemies. We want to live in peace in our region. The Arabs are not our enemies, the Greeks are not our enemies, and the Armenians are not our enemies. We are people who lived together in historically. Arabs and Kurds are not minorities. They are the essential elements of this nation. Seventh is the dignity of human beings. You have to protect the freedom of people. A state is only a state when it protects the freedom of people. We always wanted

these, and we have a great opportunity now with the new constitution. (Emre, Male, Computer Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

*What was your starting point?*

I do not believe in formulae like human rights, but unfortunately we had to base all our constitutional work on human rights. There is the Kemalist ideology in Turkey and the current constitution is completely based upon it. We had to find an equivalent word for it, a word that is recognized throughout the world. The constitution which we have prepared has focused on human rights and freedom of the individual.

*There is nothing regarding religion?*

There is...

*Is it just in terms of freedom?*

Yes. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

The Abant Platform, an annual gathering, is one of the major significant events in which Islamists and secularists in particular, alongside various identity groups, sects and belief groups get together in order to discuss the main issues of the country and to make a declaration to the society, particularly to the policy makers. The sponsor of the platform is the Gülen Movement, also known as *Hizmet Movement*, which is the biggest faith-based organization of the country. Some of my informants belonged to this movement and followed declarations of the Abant Platform. Since 1998, the platform has brought together intellectuals, politicians and representatives from different ideologies and beliefs, every year several times in the mountain town of Abant, in Bolu. The topic of the year 2013 was the new constitution. In the final declaration of the three-day-long meeting, the following articles are closely related to Islam and secularism:

“The state should be in equal distance from all religions and sects. The status of the Directorate of the Religious Affairs should therefore be re-defined.” “Turkey’s multicultural reality, including but not limited to different sects, religions, and ethnicities, should be officially acknowledged.” “The state should be in equidistance to all beliefs and non-beliefs.” “The educational curriculum should reflect the above-mentioned points.” (Abant, 2013)

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I have focused on the political aspect of the main subject of the thesis, which is Turkish university students’ understandings of the tensions and struggles between religion and secularism.

As the literature review in Chapter Two showed, although it has some similarities, secularism in Turkey differs from its counterparts elsewhere. My research has found that university student participants, both religiously observant and non-observant, are not generally opposed to having secularism as a state ideology; rather, they are opposed to its Turkish form, which is strict, authoritarian and anti-religious. Otherwise, they believe that secularism can safeguard religions and religious activities in a country. The complaints are of unjust policies, and the desire is for what is conceived of as a genuinely secular and democratic state.

There are some particular tensions and conflicts experienced by university students with the secularist Turkish state, expressed as ambiguity in their attitudes to change. The following issues were identified by the students as problematic: anti-religion propaganda in the education system by some teachers and lecturers; difficulties practising their religion (lack of facilities, tools, and the study schedule); inadequacy of school religion lessons;

problems for women wearing the headscarf at school and university, in the workplace and in public spaces; unjust policies concerning ethnic, denominational and religious minorities such as the Kurds, Alevis and non-Muslim foundations; and some obstacles put in the way of students of İmam-Hatip religious high schools gaining entrance to universities.

The fieldwork identified some effects of Turkish secularism on university students. One is ambiguity in the minds of the research participants. They tended to be uncertain on certain political issues, and in particular on matters such as: the banning of the wearing of the traditional headscarf by women at public schools and civil institutions; the upholding of Islamic law; media censorship; religious education by the state educational system; and the institution of the *Diyane*, the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Some religiously observant students objected to see women in public places dressed in a way contrary to Islamic principles and rulings, and would have liked, in these matters, to return society to the status quo ante of the Ottoman Empire. However, they were not sure what the solution would be, and how Muslims could practise their religion in the new social circumstances. Another effect on religiously observant students was the need to hide their religious identity and activities, to avoid probable problems at school and, later, at work. The reason for hiding their religious connections varied depending on the student's sex, occupations, and future expectations.

In the political area, a polarization was observed between secularists and political Islamists. The percentage of political Islamist university students among the research participants who wanted to bring *Shari'a* to the country was very low. Although religiously observant students believed that Islamic principles should be implemented, they were not certain of the feasibility of this in the immediate term or, indeed, ever. At election time, however, religiously observant people are concerned about the religiosity of politicians and still more so the policies of political parties regarding religion.

The AKP's role in the Islamization and secularization of the country has been much debated in Turkey. Secularist students worried that the country was gradually Islamizing with the AKP in power. Some students asserted that the Arab Spring came to Turkey when the AKP came to power and overturned Mustafa Kemal's regime. There have been significant changes in the last decade, on both the religious and secular sides of society. With the new conservative or Islamist government, religiously observant people have entered the upper echelon of the state, and have established peace to a degree within the secular system and the secular tools of the state. The system has made peace with Islam and religiously observant people. On the other hand, especially since the Gezi Park protests, which will be presented and analysed in Chapter Eight, there has been a significant and growing tension between conservative-religious government and the people embracing secular lifestyle and those who opponents.

While there still are tensions between religiously observant and non-observant people, as discussed in Chapter Five, there is also convergence, interaction and accommodation, particularly among university students. The participants generally were most concerned about problems such as democracy, injustice, inequality, the economy, and liberation for all ethnic and religious groups.

All these findings clearly support Casanova's idea of the non-privatization of religion, discussed in Chapter One. According to Casanova, "we should expect religion and morality to remain and even to become more contentious public issues in democratic politics" (2007: 22). The findings of this research show significant negotiation in the political area between religious and secular proponents in Turkey. As secularist students negotiate religion and secularism and accept the existence of religion and the appearance of religious symbols in the public sphere – seeing this as inevitable in a democratic country – religiously observant students negotiate the secular spaces of the public sphere and

religiosity, and accept the validity and necessity of secular democratic principles in the political sphere through a reinterpretation of the terms “Islamic” and Islamic politics. Only radical Islamist students see a deep-rooted contradiction in the politics of the public sphere between democracy and Islam.

# CHAPTER FIVE: RELIGIOSITY AND SECULARITY

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines religiosity, religiousness and secularity as understood and perceived by my participants. These words and their equivalents in other languages have a variety of meanings dependent on the person, country, culture and religious denomination, so that studying a particular religion and its adherents, and generalizing the findings to all religions and people would be misleading. Therefore, rather than totally accepting and implementing the findings and interpretations of other religions and religiosities, it was necessary to do research specifically on Islam in Turkey.

Endeavouring to explore the religiosity of Turkish university students, I put certain specific questions to them and observed them going about their daily lives.

My second aim is to examine the “secularization thesis” as applied to the university students of Turkey. Secularization has been a crucial topic of debate in sociology. Indeed as the literature below indicates, the main ideas answered in the theory have been debated for many decades. In order to decide whether a secularization process is occurring in a country or not, we need first to know the characteristics of the religion we are talking about and its adherents. Measuring religiosity and secularization is also in itself a significant problem. I have chosen to approach this issue by considering the beliefs and values held by Turkish university students, rather than by examining the percentage of them attending prayers at mosques, for instance.

Following Casanova’s suggestion that we need to discover new forms of religion and religiosity at three different levels of analysis, the individual level, the group level, and

the societal level (2006: 17), in this chapter I explore the kinds of religiosity and secularism defined and practised by Turkish university students at the individual level.

To elucidate these issues, I first briefly outline the main ideas and arguments in the literature on secularization. Religiosity and secularity in general, and particularly in Turkey, will be the main focus here. I then analyse the statements of my interviewees in respect of their thoughts and experiences with regard to religion.

Five sections each approach the main subject from a different angle. The first section concerns the perceptions of university students in Istanbul with regard to religiosity. I analyse their answers to my interview questions, for example, about how they understand religion and religiosity, the meaning of religion in their private and public lives, and how they recognize the characteristics of a religious person. I explore the place of religion in their worldview and also in their daily lives. In this section, I also interrogate whether, and to what extent, religion, for the students, is a lifestyle that impacts on every aspect of life.

In the second section of the chapter, I examine the main factors affecting religiosity and secularity amongst the students. After considering the accounts of my participants about their religiousness or secularity, I analyse their statements in order to reveal the factors that led them to their current worldviews and lifestyles.

The third section concerns the difficulties religious young people experience in holding on to their religious values and carrying out their religious obligations.

In Turkey, as a result of rationalization and Islamic revivalist movements, there has been a tendency to separate religion and culture. This is seen markedly among educated people, and especially university students. The main feature of the rationalization is the separation of traditional religion from rational religion, and the practise of a “genuine”

religion defined by primary Islamic sources, the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet, rather than basing itself upon tradition as lived by uneducated and conservative people. In the fourth section of this chapter, I indicate the objections of university students to not using one's intelligence, and to the formalistic religiosity (i.e., giving importance to the forms of the rituals rather than their meanings) by practising Muslims, in Turkey.

And finally, the fifth section looks at secularity amongst Turkish people in general and university students in particular. With the help of the literature, I analyse the views of my participants and other comments of students with regard to secularity in society and what they see as the main factors leading the society to secularity, such as a modern lifestyle, the AKP government, and capitalism.

In the sociological literature, secularization has occupied a significant place in the debate about religiosity and secularity. Secularization theory is generally referred back to the 1950s and 1960s. However, it can be traced much further back to Enlightenment at the beginning of the 1600s. Max Weber first used the term "secularization" in 1910. The "disenchantment of the world" is a phrase that was used by Weber to express the devaluation of mystical ideas and practices (Weber, 2002). This is an essential feature of secularization. The elementary idea of the classical theory is that modernization and rationalization necessarily lead to a decline in the importance of religion in the minds of individuals and in its place in society. According to this thesis, as a society becomes modern so it becomes more secular. However, while it is accepted that modernization has some secularizing effects in some parts of societies, the crucial question is whether modernity necessitates secularization or not. Some social scientists have long argued that for moderns, God is dead, hence religion will diminish and disappear, but continuing religiosity even in modern cities has proved a challenge to this prediction, and thus, this argument has been criticised since the 1980s (Schultz, 2006).

One of the first definitions of secularization is the separation of church and state. In the nineteenth century, the state and universities freed themselves from the control of religious institutions. This may be referred to as institutional secularization (Sommerville, 1998). As discussed in the previous chapter, this meaning of secularization has been part of state ideology of Turkey, using the terms secularism or laicism. But secularization is not used only with this political or governmental connotation; individual religious disbelief is another meaning of the term since the late nineteenth century. According to this meaning, secularization implies a decline in religious practices in parallel with modernization.

Secularization was a generally accepted theory in the 1960s. However, two different views have emerged since then. Some have defended the theory in its entirety (Wallace, 1966), while others have preferred to approach the issue more circumspectly. The main reason for their caution has been the continuing religiosity of many individuals even in modernized cities and among many educated people. Peter Berger is a well-known scholar taking this side in the debate. Although he was numbered among the prominent scholars who advocated secularization theory in the 1960s, he later changed his view and concluded that historians and social scientists were mistaken on this issue. He argues, “To be sure, modernization has had some secularizing effects, more in some places than in others. But it has also provoked powerful movements of counter-secularization. Also, secularization on the societal level is not necessarily linked to secularization on the level of individual consciousness” (1999: 2-3). It should be taken into consideration that many of the critics of secularization theory are not referring to institutional secularization but to the beliefs of individuals and their practices.

A close examination of the literature reveals some complications and ambiguities in respect to religiosity and secularity. There are different kinds of secularization, including individual, cultural, social, institutional, and philosophical. Unless we are aware of which

meaning is intended in each piece of research, it can lead to ambiguity and mistaken evaluation. This kind of ambiguity is also seen in the debates within Turkey concerning secularism. While some politicians and academics argue that secularism means the separation of state and religion, others argue that it comprises social and cultural secularization as well. As was seen in the previous chapter, religiously observant students generally accept institutional secularization; they tend to oppose individual, cultural and social forms of secularization. This chapter seeks to clarify the meanings of the term for the present-day, in order to establish the current theory of the field.

Different meanings and new religious revivalist movements in modern societies necessitate formulating new theories and new methodologies, such as “American exceptionalism” (Lipset, 1996), or “European exception” (Norris and Inglehart, 2011). In Turkey, the impact of religious movements is becoming more evident especially in modernized cities and among educated people. These movements vary from fundamentalist groups to moderate movements and Sufi orders. And while some of them accept various kinds of secularization, others strictly oppose any such separations. In order to understand religiosity and secularity we need to research further into current trends in order to develop new approaches and theories, in light of the situation in Turkey regarding Islam and Turkish people.

## **5.2 UNDERSTANDING RELIGION AND RELIGIOSITY**

In order to examine the state of religiosity among Turkish university students, I prepared a list of questions to ask research participants. I asked the students how they understood religion and religiosity, about the place of religion in their lives, how they identified religiously observant person, and how they experience a religiosity in their daily lives.

In their responses the students touched on different aspects of religion and religiosity. However, the common point they appeared to share was that religiosity is not composed only of worshipping and praying, even though worship is important in Islamic belief.

Being religiously observant [*dindar*] is truly living your life according to religion, to the laws of God. First of all you will perform the five daily prayers, do the fasting, pay attention to everything you say. And only after doing these, at least, you will be able to say: "I am religious". Without following these, not performing the prayers but still saying I am religiously observant, how come? No deal. You should have faith but also we need to see the application of this faith. Speaking of application, I mean the worshipping and speaking appropriately when you talk, not insulting, not lying to anyone... (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

A Muslim is not just someone who performs the prayers and worships. A Muslim at the same time is someone who has the ability to say, 'stop!' to the wrongs, to correct wrongdoings. But a Muslim is not only an objecting and rebelling person, but also one who prays and does not neglect worship. This balance is crucial. (Emre, Male, Computer engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

A religious person, I think, should embrace every part of the religion so that at every step they take, even every word they speak, God should come out of their mouths. Okay, I am performing the prayers and fasting, these are among the practices everyone should follow anyway. If we accept Islam we must do this anyway. I think one should live religion with love and enthusiasm. Coming from across, we should see the love for God from three or four meters away. How would you recognize belief? You know, I can't define it, I can't put it into a word, but there are some people, when you look at their faces you feel relief, something reflected in their faces, things like the spirit of mercy. Some people can remind you

of God the moment you see them... (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

Ethics assumes a significant place in the statements of students. This is also seen in the current religious literature in Turkey. My impression is, based on my own observations, that there was not so much emphasis on ethics in both the religious literature and preaching ten to fifteen years ago. This emphasis increased gradually, especially in the last ten years. I argue that this is closely related to a development that concerns the AKP party, in power since 2002. The founders of this party have Islamic roots, and members of the party are mostly religiously observant people. Since it came to power, religiously observant people have felt more comfortable with politics and started to think about other issues. Those who are religiously observant have realized that political power and rising wealth are not enough to ensure the widespread practice of religion. In my fieldwork in Turkey, I often encountered complaints about ethical problems experienced by religiously observant people in the media, literature, and private conversations. Kırbaşoğlu was one of the first Turkish theologians to voice these complaints. He criticized the books “*İlmihal*” [a concise manuals of Islamic faith, worship, and ethics], which are the most commonly available books in Turkey, frequently used to seek basic Islamic information. He discusses these books in terms of what kind of religiosity they present to society. According to his research, the common feature of the “*ilmihal*” is the argument that there are only five pillars in Islam. These five pillars are praying five times a day (*namaz*), fasting in Ramadan (*oruç*), practicing charity (*zekat*), going on a pilgrimage to Mecca (*hac*), and reciting the “*kelime-i şahadet*.” According to him, this kind of understanding restricts religion and religiosity to a confined space. Kırbaşoğlu also argues that these books create a “narrow, formalistic, mechanical, deficient, false, male-dominated, and psychopathological religiosity” (2002: 109-124). Presumably as a result of their familiarity

with the writings and discourses of religious writers and opinion-leaders, all my interviewees pointed out the incorrectness of focusing only on worship, and ignoring ethics (*ahlak*).

The following statements are the answers of some participants to the question about the definition of a religiously observant person:

A religiously observant person, I suppose, must be the person following religious rules and responsibilities. Who fears God and feels mercy. S/he looks at the ground when walking, aware of sins they committed, seeking a refuge for forgiveness, because they know these sins might be a shield, a wall blocking the connection between God and His servant, fearing that, neither too fearful nor too hopeful, in-between... So let's say: One who has a heart. Okay, you could say, what about an atheist person? But I think mercy of a person who surrenders to God is nowhere near the same. (Sema, Female, Photography, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 25/3/2012)

A religiously observant person is not a religionist [*dinci*]. They do not market God, do not sell God. A religiously observant person follows his or her individual responsibilities. An individual's responsibility is towards himself or herself first of all. From a scholarly perspective, they need both to master the texts in religion and do things in positive (modern) sciences. To me, both are the same; I do not separate the two. They have to have a consciousness of responsibility firstly to themselves, then to their family, then to the society, and then to the environment. These are in the sense of economics, social, scholarly knowledge, and in the sense of recognizing the fundamental rights and freedoms of subjects, not spoiling the environment and protecting the existing world. And at the same time this individual, who defends the rights of the oppressed ones in the existing world, and observes fundamental religious rituals, not as artificial actions, but performing

them to be fulfilled, viewing their religious sanctuaries not simply as mosques but places to bring God earth and provide His name to be cited in every field. (Hakan, Male, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

What is religiousness to me? So, one should have a standing in life, one should have a position in this life. What kind of a standing up, like the cliché here, speaking normally, if I say, like standing against injustices, such a normal stance they should take, I mean, to be honest. To me, honesty is more important than everything, than most things. Even when I say, "I am fine" to someone who asks me, I feel bad, if I wasn't fine but I said I was. I mean, it gives discomfort to me.

(Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

In Islamic belief, the calling to Islam (*tebliğ*) and representing it to others (*temsil*), have a significant place, and among some Turkish religiously observant people I observed an awareness of this a number of times. Women wearing headscarves in particular, because of their visibility, feel themselves responsible for representing Islam to both non-observant Muslims and non-Muslims.

When you said "religiously observant" the first feature that came to my mind was that they should be very careful about how they reflect the religion, they should be very careful about how they represent, I think. This is crucial. Because, OK, you may be a person believing in Islam and living Islam. But there are many people out there who will be affected by this. Many people who will be affected by your attitudes and you may, like, induce them to get interested in Islam or drift away from Islam. Because of that, how you appear from the outside in an Islamic sense is so important to me. I mean you need to be very careful about this. You need to be very careful about not harming Islam. You are not going to harm Islam. Your intention will be that. I think so. Muslims should live Islam themselves, and also

not spoil people's perceptions of Islam. (Ferda, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 26/3/2012)

However, this awareness of how you represent Islam has started to give way to pluralism and individualism. Individualism manifests itself in a variety of ways. One is in people's subjectivity. Hale is a student at the Theology Faculty in Istanbul. Although she wears a headscarf and practises her religious duties, she does not describe herself as religiously observant person. She believes in pluralism in religious life, and says that she does not judge others by appearance and practices.

I am not a religiously observant [*dindar*] person. I am a Muslim practising her religion. Not religiously observant.

*Isn't someone who practises his or her religion, religiously observant?*

I do not think so. Everyone has their way of living their religion. Like, for anyone who has religious faith, with some ways in which this becomes apparent, there is an area that appears in this person's social life. I, for instance, by wearing a headscarf, performing prayers, fasting, I fulfil some rituals of my religion... So, I do not think a definition as "The person performing the five daily prayers is religiously observant" to be right. Ok, I accept there are fundamental rules of religion that needs to be fulfilled. But there are orders listed as "rules of Islam", that I oppose. All the obligations of Islam are "musts," they need to be fulfilled. No. Can we say, here, these must be performed more? I think we can't. Hence, this is why I do not say Ones performing those are more religious... Yes there is a God who sent me to this world and what happens to me should be His will on my life. So, in this sense I can see myself as a person of faith than those. Of course no one can be perfect. None of us is a Prophet. But unless they perform something people are not regarded

as religiously observant. Hence the word religious is troublesome. Because everyone lives a different aspect of their religion. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

In this kind of pluralist view, the nature of the religiosity experienced by the students is influential. In this view religiosity does not consist in holding to unvarying attitudes and beliefs but may change according to the social environment, personal spiritual condition, practices in daily life, and personal experiences.

Yahya likened his experience of religiosity to phases of love. Even though he identified himself as a religiously observant Muslim, his understanding of religiosity had changed over the years.

If I start from the beginning, religion has always been at the centre of my life. But its significance has been increasing or decreasing from one period to another period. Everything would be shaped according to it or I was learning whatever is necessary to be learned regarding religion. It is a first excitement, a love... Like primary, secondary school times. A learning period from seven to fifteen or sixteen years old. Then, after learning, the period of helping other people during high school, or giving them something, to ones who hadn't learned yet. Surely, at this point, the excitement (of religion) is transforming further. At first, learning, now teaching, at high school teaching, and then I reach to an even more distinct maturity. And when I reach maturity, there is an important point of this period, it is a time when love, if we call it love, when it closes or ceases.

*When is that?*

The university period. You continue to give at the university period too, you add on something but after a point it is a period of satiety, already, an exhaustion period. A

distance arising when it is no longer at the centre of your life. It is yet at the centre but there is a distance. A bit more like “we know, I know these” period. It can’t be called this kind of period at this time, but close to it. Now is a period that it is individualizing, or rather, like stopping telling others things, and a living-with-yourself-period, this is now.

*Living with yourself, is it? Do you mean like you decide for yourself? What is it?*

In a sense of living, like, before you worry about others and how they should live it too, worrying to save others too. But now I do not have this worry. Now, more like, I shall live myself. It is everyone’s individualization period. (Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

When I asked about the place of religion in their lives, without exception all the religiously observant students among my interviewees stated that religion is “at the centre” of their lives. According to them, religion and religiosity influenced all parts of their lives. On this basis, I conclude that religiosity is a lifestyle in Turkey, not only a set of beliefs or the practising of religious rituals at certain times.

Religiously observant person is someone who does the requirements of religion, not being contented with rituals. Being religious should be shaping one’s life according to religion. (Ebru, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/8/2012)

Religiously observant, like when building their life at work, when living, when going out on the street, like thinking how to dress according to what my religion says to me, in the simplest terms, an individual trying to build their life according the religious rules and prohibitions, this is being religiously observant, yeah. To live everything, their social lives and individual lives, by giving priority to religious rules and prohibitions. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

There has never been suppression. Like religion is the main criterion directing our lives. Like our evaluations are all according to religion. I experience this even more and more. Not like confronting religion or, like, religion contradicting with our ideas, but our ideas being shaped according to religion. (Ali, Male, 22, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

Birol criticized one of the meanings of secularization: differentiation of various areas of the social system. He argued that Kemalist secularism wants them to practise religion in certain places but not in others, and that he could not live religion like that. This aspect of religion among the new Turkish generation poses greater challenge to Turkish secularism.

Religion is at the whole of my life, that is. At least in theory it is, it should be like that. I mean, even if I am not able to put it in to practise every moment of the day, I can admit with a clear conscience that it should be this way. And, actually, I sometimes hesitate to say “religion” too. Because when religion is said, I see it like there is an institution you can look at from outside, like you can put across and sense it as a rattle. Whereas my whole self is actually religious. If I accept the orders of God, I try to reconcile every particle of my life with it. I do not try to separate it from myself. How can I say, I do not like to bind it to the garden before getting home, like the Kemalist people. No, it is something I can do like that. Hence, I can't put religion aside at any time. It sounds like something, like something you buy and sell. And, what religion means is having a life style I think. Hence everyone has a life style. (Birol, Male, Sociology, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

Berna described well how religiosity affected her way of thinking and way of living:

Your point of view about religion gradually changes your way of thinking, your approach. Actually it spreads into your life.

*What kind of life is it directing to?*

To become a more tactful and thoughtful person. You think on the righteousness of your actions by means of religion. Even of your thoughts. Then everything starts to be sifted through a very thin sieve. Then, if I do things putting aside that sieve, my conscience is not clear. (Berna, Female, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/12/2012)

The students challenged both Kemalist secularism and the traditionalist religion of the previous generation. They wanted to live their religious values and principles in their lives without rejecting a modern lifestyle. This is the great change in Turkish society. For decades, religiously observant and non-observant people were easily distinguished through their clothing, haircuts, the music they listened to, and the places they frequented. Although this is still true to some extent, distinguishing between them is difficult more than ever. Religiously observant people who want to practise religion in all areas of modern life, try to arrive at an accommodation. Kübra defined this as the struggle “to generate a practicable religion.”

Religion should be within our lives because my dad used to talk of: “a religion which has not been able to be lived”. We think that we produced a practicable religion. Like, when you look at traditional religion, wearing jeans is a sin, this kind of judging. I do not think this is a liveable religion. Like going to the place of our charity (*vakif*), teaching things to a couple of students there, talking about a couple of concepts, that is all part of religion I think, this is part of our lives, I think. Otherwise merely to pray, fast, perform obligations (*farz*) of Islam, so and so, I do not believe it is that. Other than that, thank God, we perform the prayers

with headscarves on our heads so and so but Islam does not merely consist of these. Religion does not consist of these. Like you say “those activities you do.” We see those activities the things brought by religion. Otherwise why would I spend all my day (for Islam)? I could get a job and make money. (Kübra, Female, Philosophy, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

### **5.3 THE MAIN FACTORS AFFECTING RELIGIOSITY**

In order to understand in greater depth the situation of secularity and religiosity in Turkish society, to know the factor, which influence a religious lifestyle in a positive way, is crucial. The first factor that surfaces immediately is family. When I asked my interviewees, I realized that religiously observant students have religiously observant parents, and secularist students have secularist parents. Where one parent is religiously observant and one secularist, students generally choose the lifestyle of the more influential parent. However, we cannot assert that they completely copy the lifestyles of their parents. Rather, they adapt this lifestyle to their new conditions. Osman, even though he admitted that his understanding of Islamism is different from the Islamist generation of his father, explained the roots of his religiosity and Islamism:

Family conditions, affects of the environment, and so on, it shapes everything around these. I have always performed my prayers and fasted, there hasn't been any period I neglected. I mean, almost since the stage of primary school, starting before adolescence I have prayed and fasted. On the other hand, having heard, since secondary school, that Islam had a political language also affected me. I mean in my family I was familiar with talks on “*hicret*” (immigration) to Canada during the 28 February period, and the talk that Atatürk was known as a bad person in our

country. My mom not being able to go to school because of the headscarf (*başörtüsü*) ban, so I have concerns, thoughts about those things. Like it was said that we did need to pray (*dua*) for Chechnya, we watched the footage and so, these meant something to us. In high school also, we published a magazine as a continuation of this mood. 3-4 issues only, but it was released... *Cumhuriyet* newspaper wrote a report about us. It was about the students fleeing to Friday prayer. (Osman, Male, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

The fact that they generally followed their parents did not mean that students suffered oppression in their families. None of the students remarked on any kind of social pressure regarding their religious or secular lives, e.g. wearing a headscarf, and starting to pray five times a day. Two of my participants were the daughters of the most influential theologians in Turkey, and both of them said that their fathers did not even force them to learn to read the Qur'an or cover their heads.

My dad did not tell us to wear the headscarf either. I myself told him that I was going to wear headscarf, he was surprised like "are you serious?" and so. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

Formal religious education in Turkey is possible, with religion lessons in schools two hours a week and Qur'an courses in mosques. Both are seen as insufficient for a proper understanding of and education in religion. While they make a contribution to people's instruction in religion, according to my interviews and observations, they do not play a significant role in the religiosity of the students, providing only basic information. Berna summarized well the condition of these two institutions:

Quran courses were actually very strict. It felt very hard when I was little, [they are] not very lovely places. (Berna, Female, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/12/2012)

*Do not you regard the religion courses at school as an education in religion?*

An insufficient education it is. If we try to learn religion with merely that education, we are toast. Quite softened. Many parts of the religion do not take place in those lesson and textbooks. Insufficient. For example, who will perform prayers, who will recite Quran... They need to be able to read the Arabic alphabet, need to know a bit of “*tecvid*,” etc. The meaning of the “*surahs*” are important. But today these are not given at schools. This is a fundamental point. Apart from that, it is a very superficial course on “Religious culture and knowledge of ethics”. (Berna, Female, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/12/2012)

Kudret, criticized the formal religious education system both in schools and mosques, and saw it as a success for the Kemalist regime:

The current religion course at schools is actually a “culture of religion” course, like, there a culture which is being conveyed. Totally superficial and shallow things. So it is not religion that is being taught there. Like there is this and that in religion. Or else, there is nothing on “a religious obligation that needs to be done”. So there is no teaching at the current İmam-Hatip schools too, though the Quran, “*siyer*”, “*kelam*”, “*fikih*” courses, these still exist but in these there isn’t like the core of the religion, the spirit of it. Religion is a living thing, a dynamic thing. Religion is faith; it tells you of the afterlife, a world you can’t see at the time being, builds on that, besides the current life we are living. But in these activities run by the state, you can’t find this [spiritual] side of it. Merely the “world as it” exists. Religion also has an aspect regarding this world. The other aspect is not told. My dad is an imam for instance. Like, in our district there are people who are not performing the prayers. He does not think, like, I should tell this to these people, like prayers (*namaz*) is my obligation, God orders this. Because the system has never expected

this from him; on the contrary, it has punished the ones being like this (for interfering). “None of your business” it has said, “do your duty, lead the prayers, call to the prayers (*ezan*), get off to your home!”. Therefore the Kemalist system is very successful in that sense. There are thousand of sanctuaries in Turkey, there are mosques in every village and every district, but these stand at a position totally out of life. They have very limited effect on society because officials of religion do not have that kind of mission. They have not undertaken this kind of mission. Religion appoints him, God has appointed him with this mission, but the ones who follow this mission have been punished. Hence, it has totally transformed into an official service. I think the success of the Kemalist regime is that. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

Hale made a similar criticism of the Theology faculties providing the highest level of formal religious education in Turkey.

With the theology (*ilahiyat*) education I received I was enlightened by means of religion. Truly, after coming to this school my scope has been widened in various fields but I couldn’t find in myself that thing in my past, that pure faith. Like I realised that at the times I used to not question anything actually I did more in terms of worship and rituals. We address their foundation together with the Republic, since they are faculties the government has set up aiming to control, certainly they are integrated into the system. Also because it has a rationalist side; actually, it is not a place that I would say I am truly learning my religion. Besides, after the ‘28 February’ period, there is an entirely state shambolic break-down in theology faculties, absenteeism of the lecturers, a retreat. Because of that the students are likewise. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

These aforementioned issues regarding public institutions led people to seek alternative, informal religious education in the institutions and organizations of religious groups: Qur'an courses, religious conversations, meetings, and camps. Despite the fact that religious movements and Sufi orders had been banned since the beginning of the Turkish republic, they still continued with their activities in informal ways or by camouflaging their organizations. Yahya argued that students who practise religious principles in their lives are mostly involved with a religious group.

Unless they are involved with a religious group (*cemaat*) the university students do not have concerns about living their religion. There is God, there is the Prophet or so and so, like there are the fundamentals, they know these. Further, beyond that, there is nothing. If they are not involved with a certain religious group generally there is no worshipping either. Over 90 per cent do not bother. Maybe they attend Friday prayers, perform their fasting with deficiencies. Probably they give importance to religious holidays. As well, something just originates from their family, from society. (Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

However, some people did not attend religious groups for a variety of reasons. Hale complained about the banning of Islamic 'monasteries' or 'lodges' (*Tekke ve Zaviyeler*) in 1925. She spoke of "spiritual emptiness". As with the aforementioned arguments of Kirbaşoğlu (2002), she believed this spiritual emptiness created false religiosity and ethical problems in society.

Actually since dervish lodges (*tekke*) were closed, which were places that people could live their religion the best, people feel emptied of spirituality. What is it like in Turkey? Like we are Muslims but why do people like that? They go on the pilgrimage (*hac*) but why do they commit fraud? Also, from Europe's perspective, Islamic religion, Muslims, are viewed as very unpleasant. If we address Turkey, the

reason for that is deprivation of peoples' areas where they can live their religion, where they would learn their religion; there arises a deficiency in term of religion. I, for instance, know a student at the theology faculty. I myself am receiving totally religious-related sciences at school. But I haven't learned things that would appeal to my heart, like would improve me morally. There is not a place I could do this outside the school either. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

#### **5.4 THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGIOSITY IN A SECULAR ENVIRONMENT**

According to my observation and interviews, it seems that being religiously observant, conserving the values and principles of religion, and practising religious duties in daily life, are not without their difficulties in a secular state and a secular social environment like Turkey. Praying (*salat* or *namaz*) five times a day has rules which present some difficulties. Prayer times vary from day to day in accordance with the movements of the sun. Before praying, the worshiper has to meet six conditions: confidence about the time of worship (*vakit*); facing Mecca (*kible*); covering certain parts of the body (*setr-i avret*); cleaning clothes, body and place of prostration (*necasetten taharet*); ritual purity by performing ablutions, namely, washing certain parts of the body in a certain way (*hadesten taharet*); and intention (*niyet*). Day time prayers cause particular disruption because of the need to take a break from school or work. The performance of *salat* takes about ten minutes, and suitable facilities are required for washing hands, face, arms, and feet, together with a 'clean' place to pray, and so on. Performing *salat* or *namaz*, as Henkel argues, "together with the Muslim headscarf, it is also the most visible and perhaps most provocative aspect of everyday Muslim religious practice in Turkey" (2005: 487). As I said in the previous chapter, religiously observant students had major problems performing these religious duties in public institutions, like schools and student hostels, and they

worried about the situation in their workplaces after graduation, especially because of the visible elements of their religiosity. The difficulties were not confined only to prayers, but included food, drink, economic and social life.

*How seriously are people taking their religious duties as far as you are concerned?*

As far as I am concerned they are not, I mean even if they do how much can they? Religiously observant people, for example, should consume totally clean products, halal products, they shouldn't use products that are not religiously appropriate or suspicious. They shouldn't charge interest (*faiz*), when involved trade, they should be careful about products containing alcohol or pork-derived products. They shouldn't trade those. And I do not know to what extent they can be sensitive about these things. But they do not pay attention, importance is not given. (Ali, Male, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

There shouldn't be interest (*faiz*) and usury, in economical life; interest or the things that religion forbids shouldn't contaminate income. So it is very mixed up. At some points in peoples' life, religion is very dominant, and at others it is not. Like there are people putting religion at the very centre, going on pilgrimage, and depositing their retirement allowance to interest, consuming the money from interest. I mean there are people with weird understandings like that. (Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

Living under a secular state affects the whole life. The whole of it, like most of it. (Birol, Male, Sociology, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

With a religious perspective we should not watch anything on TV then. It is not something we can do [avoid doing]. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

Society lives a traditional form of religiosity. That's religion for them. They already live a secular life compulsorily, because we are in such a secular world. They continue their life in this world. If they have a choice, perhaps they would reject this secular lifestyle and prefer a more religious life. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

As I mentioned in the former section, religiosity was seen as a lifestyle by Turkish students, and necessitated comprehensiveness and consistency in their lives. According to my interviewees, a secular or secularist environment limits the possibility of consistency, and this causes tension in their minds. Sema covered her hair for a long period, and when she went to work for a company that operates with secular principles, i.e. wearing a headscarf was not allowed. She tried to hide her headscarf in various ways but finally gave up wearing it three years ago. She said that he made this decision to be consistent, and her situation as being between a rock and a hard place.

Bahar explained the tension she and Turkish society experience as being in a complicated condition. According to her, society is between religiosity and secularity, between East and West, between Turkish Muslim culture and Western culture. She highlighted the cultural and social tensions rather than practical problems:

*Is Turkish society secular or religious, what do you think?*

In the middle.

*What do you mean by the middle?*

Passing oneself off as religious and trying to be secular, hanging in the middle.

*Then, what kind of hanging in the middle?*

Either by means of the way they are brought up, I mean the cultural way of bringing up, an attempt was made to bring us up as religious. If you ask someone in

the street to recite “*Sübhaneke*” they might be able to do it, they can recite “*Besmele*” at least, but despite that a true religiousness is out of question. Maybe it can be found among older people. Because we are trying to become modern, to become westernized. We have an intention, like, to enter the EU, we are trying to behave like Europeans. We aspire their wrong sides. We do not take on, say, the education of the west. We are taking on the way they dress. We are taking or their opinions but not being able to apply them because our cultural backgrounds are different. Then, cultural conflict occurs, the individual can't find their own character; they say, “I am a westerner”, neither “I am an easterner” nor “Muslim”. Turkey is very much in the middle, neither of the East nor the West, a transition country in the middle; we are at a state of transition in every sense, trying to be secular. Society wants religion but we are not able to separate religion from state affairs no matter what, because our governor is a conservative person, and the party governing us is a conservative one. If a non-conservative party would come to power then the people who want religious freedom won't be able to live freely, there will be restrictions on everything... So as a country we are not one that has found its character. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

The tensions and the complexities Bahar and others portrayed above have consequences in various areas of society. Considering the answers given by the research participants, the main conclusion can be described as a contradiction. Both religiously observant students and secularist students complained about this. A secularist student, for instance, complained about the “neglects” and “contradictions” of the religious government and religious businessmen:

There are genetically modified organisms (GMO). They damage the human body, do not they? The hormonal balance is damaged by these foods. That must be

prohibited by the religion, too. Why is it not? Religious businessmen own the companies that produce these foods. Why do they not see this? Because there is money there. Today most of the cigarette companies belong to religiously observant people. Why does nobody say that cigarettes are not allowed in Islam? Drugs can be bought everywhere in public. Why does not the government take action against it? It is not difficult. But today they arrest the head of the Turkish Armed Forces as a terrorist. But drugs, illegal money, etc., are they not sins? If you see these religiously observant people, then you might probably dislike religion.

(Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

It was interesting that the same secularist student criticized religiously observant students as well, for their inconsistency between what they say and what they do:

There is a university founded by a religious group. There are such teenager girls there who wear skinny jeans, tight. Wearing high heels. They wear headscarves. Where is it then, where is Islam? Wear a headscarf, do not reveal your body! The whole body is up front. You reveal yourself wholly. But cover your head... Like shoes with heels... Carrying a Louis Vuitton in your hand. Today, a Luton purse starts from around five thousand dollars. With the full make-up on your face, headscarf on your head... If this is not a symbol, what is it then? Not a headscarf, a turban. Pardon me. Now that we are doing this for religion then we should cover all parts of the body. Now that she is covering her head. She has that kind of faith... That high heels and so, is not contradictory to religion, I think. But, when speaking about purses etc. what I am trying to say is that... If we look from their perspective, wondering around on the street wearing tight jeans, revealing the lines of their bodies, putting on full make-up, and when they wear a turban on the head, what

they are saying does not fit religiousness. It is not consistent. So, totally incoherent.  
(Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

A student who identified himself as “Islamist” complained about some religious businessmen and mentioned the contradictions in their ways of being Muslims:

There are people I know personally. There are religious employees, factory owners, and because it does not fit with their interest, which is to make extra money, they obstruct labour unions. Yes they can make charities with the money they earn, but there is also a secular side to that. They do not want their labourers to join unions, they do not want it. But when you mention to that person about how the system operates, how the government runs, capitalism, anti-capitalist systems, etc. then you are perceived as dull, like you are left-wing or so... (Osman, Male, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

Bahar’s story about her musical interest and works, is another interesting example related to this subject. She was accepted by a private university founded by religiously observant people on a full scholarship. The reason for her acceptance was her musical talent. However, she had various troubles with some religious friends for exactly the same reason. She differentiated between religiously observant and conservative-religiously observant people. This is a significant example in terms of seeing the varieties in the religious population of Turkey.

Because I played the zither (*kanun*) I was troubled by people who, I thought, were conservative people, I even almost quit music... I was about to fall off the cliff... My second year at the university, then I had to take radical decisions... I was accepted to the university with a music scholarship. This is a conservative university in the end. The University accepted me for free because I played the

*kanun*, but even though I lived in the area of a religious group, because of a few people with minds in a box (close-minded) I went through many troubles...

*Minds in a box?*

Yes, this is how I call them, moreover, a sealed box with tapes, we shall not open it no matter what. They have certain “truths” and mustn’t get out of these. Like the ones with blinkers can see the front maybe. The ones in this box can’t see anywhere. They put many obstacles in my way, many prohibitions were imposed on me. The first few months were all right; in the third or fourth months they started to pick on, first by words, then the actions came. Like each term they would transfer me to another place, I had to move each term. They made me live the life of an exile, but the strange thing is that even though they wouldn’t let me play at home, they called me in for every event, like, come and play. Every day people I didn’t know would give me a lift to programmes.

*Were the people who prevented you from playing arranging these events?*

Yes, the ones who prevented me were arranging the events. Those people were living contradictions and conflicts in themselves. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

## **5.5 OPPOSITION TO TRADITIONALIST AND FORMALIST RELIGIOSITY**

From a sociological point of view, religiosity and secularity are very difficult phenomena to measure (Smelser, 1995). A number of measures have been proposed by reaearchers in different countries. However, there is no consensus within sociology on an objective method. Some methods may determine the percentage of people undertaking religious duties, but piety and religiosity do not consist only of rituals. Feeling beliefs and values

must be taken into account, and these may change depending on various factors. Levels of attendance at prayers do not necessarily reflect the degree of someone's belief and religious feelings. As Giddens argues, "Many who have religious beliefs do not regularly attend services or take part in public ceremonies; conversely, regularity of such attendance or participation does not always imply the holding of strong religious views – people may attend out of habit or because it is expected of them in their community. As in the other dimensions of secularization, we need an accurate understanding of the past to see how far religiosity has declined today..." (2008: 555). Among my interviewees, some students who were active in religious groups and organizations were not praying regularly five times a day. Some others, even though they were praying five times a day, were going to mosques only occasionally. In addition to this, there is a great difference in the understanding of religion between this generation of Turkish students and the previous generation. Students I met in Istanbul criticised the religious understanding and practise of many Turkish people calling them "cultural" or "traditional" religiosity. They preferred a rational religiosity, questioning traditional religious understanding, and referring back to the original sources of the religion, namely the Qur'an and the Sunna (the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad).

Actually we could say, like, I have re-built my religion in the last five-six years. I see that before I had faith in what I saw of relatives and people around me. In the recent five-six years, by questioning, certainly not like an atheist questioning, but questioning, what religion wants from me, by looking into it again, what is being told, what I really should do, by questioning the problems in the natural flow of life, first I tried to question with the mind... Right now, at the most important point of my life... A cliché response it is but I say "*La ilah illallah* (There is no God but Allah)" and do not recognize any other authority... Actually let me put it like this. I

am the atheist of this society's religion but I am a Muslim. I am saying for you to understand. I am an atheist of the religion of tradition, but globally, in the universal sense, and as long as they are true, yes I am Muslim. It could be defined like that. (Can, Male, Chemistry, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

*In that sense, then what is being a cultural Muslim, a cultural religiousness?*

Being a cultural Muslim... Like it is said 99 per cent of Turkey's population is Muslim, this already is a monotonous statement, but there isn't religiousness in the sense that I described. Like anyone who says they are Muslim is a Muslim. Most of the men perform Friday prayers (*Cuma namazi*) or attend to Eid Prayers (*bayram namazi*) once or twice a year. You can't find a place in the mosques during the Eid Prayers, people are spilling into the streets, but you see, it is the Eid prayer. Five daily prayers are also obligatory (*farz*). God ordered them too but it is a culture, I mean Friday prayers, it is a ritual. It is a tradition so it [the Friday prayer] is attended to, but the five daily prayers, which are no different as far as rules are concerned, are not performed. They are also obligatory, God ordered this too, but it is a culture, and not attended to. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

I started to work on, like, reading the revelation, receiving the messages of the revelation. And frankly with that first versus (*ayet*) I read, my life standards started to change dramatically... And together with that my interpretation was built up wholly on a revelation perception. After that I passed onto the phenomenon of Quran-centred life. I mean at certain points I read other parts on *hadith* and *Sunna* (the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad). I resided on a wholly Qur'an centred phenomenon. I mean, I reached to a perception where in the eyes of society they could call me a deviant, like they could call me an infidel. *Elhamdulillah* (Thank Allah). (Hakan, Male, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

Kübra identified herself as an Islamist activist. She criticized the earlier generation of Islamists and saw the secularization problem of Turkish society as stemming from the actions of traditional Islamists. She said that it is a matter of action-reaction, and that if there was any problematic side in the secularity of the society, it was Muslims themselves, not secularists.

One time, even wearing jeans was argued against. Those important men sat down and wrote books on this. Like should a girl wear jeans? Is that it, is Islam this? Should we discuss this? Should Muslims as an “*iimmet*” (Muslim community, *ummah*) stop and discuss whether the girls should or should not wear jeans? There were times that these issues were discussed a lot, extravagantly too much. To a point where the girls would exaggerate and reach to the opposite, and there were the jeans, and tight-leggings and everything. Like people are not wearing jeans but shorts... I think it has an effect; yes this has been a reaction to it. (Kübra, Female, Philosophy, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

There was a great propensity among the students to separate religion from tradition and culture. Many sought with their own terms, the “pure”, “genuine” (*gerçek*) religion, and practised it without dependence on external authority. This independence and individuality was not universally seen among religiously observant students, however, and some belonged to Sufi religious orders (*tarikat*). In Sufi orders there is a strict hierarchy and a culture of obedience (*itaat* and *teslimiyet*) to leaders. Although they give importance to rationality in some matters, there is not the same degree of independence of thought and individualism as among those students considered “Islamist” who are not members of a Sufi order. This may be observed in the issues they complained and felt uncomfortable with. Osman was one of the students who identified him as Islamist student and he

complained about the lack of awareness of other religiously observant students with regard to political, social and gender issues.

What they realize is Israel, USA, “Mavi Marmara” ship [about the interception by Israel on its way to Gaza] and so on... But the things around us, within our close circle, the oppressions we produce just here, are overlooked. For example Muslims need to accept that we can't accept the nation-state concept. About women, they should accept women as active subjects or actors. There are things that also happened in the past like: Protests are organized against headscarf ban in public places but it is not often asked women how they shall operate. It is organized and done over something directly belonging to a woman. Muslims need to realize and think about the injustice in the country and in the world. (Osman, Male, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

Along with criticism of traditional religion, all religious and secularist students were opposed to a formalist (*sekilci*) understanding of religiosity. The new generation considered wearing the headscarf or living in a house belonging to a religious organization as no longer to be taken as indicators of religiosity. Some even argue that praying five times a day is not as important as ethics.

Especially, like, in recent years, in our school for instance, there are many friends who think this way. I know many friends of mine wearing the headscarf but who are very distant from religion and doing things contrary to the religion. I do not wear headscarf but I see myself as more religiously observant. You know, there is a thought like, if one wears headscarf she is religiously observant, performs the prayers, fasts, pays attention to her position with men. It is not like that. There are also ones who are around me behaving inappropriately, ones who are religiously observant but careless, and also ones who are very careful. Like a woman with

headscarf might very comfortably walk hugging her boyfriend at the university.  
(Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

So when you say ethics (*ahlak*), to me it feels like it is included in worshipping. Like a bit one within the other... Like I think those rituals can be much more flexible. But I think honesty should not be compromised no matter what... I do not pray five times every day. I will be honest on that, I do not pray five times every day. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

*Is it like people who belong to religious groups are religiously observant?*

No! It is not like the ones involved in religious groups are strictly following all religious orders. Even if they wear a headscarf... For example, there is someone in my class. She is not even aware of the 'p' of the prayers if you would ask, does not do a thing, but wears a headscarf. She is okay with wearing nail polish and coming to school! We are trying to live the religion symbolically. Among the youngsters religion is lived symbolically. Hypothetically speaking her parents are conservative, they made her wear a headscarf when the kid was young, and now to quit disturbs her conscience. Again hypothetically something called a shawl (*sal*) came up, a cover in between a headscarf and a non-headscarf; she is able to do what she wants and able to do what her parents want. As she must cover certain parts, but she does not, she wears tight leggings, tries to reveal herself more. But when you look she symbolically wears the headscarf. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

## 5.6 PERCEPTIONS OF SECULARITY AMONG STUDENTS AND THEIR CAUSES

As with religiosity, there was among students no accepted, objective definition and understanding of secularity. For some it meant not practising religious duties and abiding by religious principles, for others it means not having a political consciousness regarding an Islamic state. The meanings were closely related to the meanings of religiosity in their minds. Consequently, these two terms were used as antonyms. In the sociology of religion, the decline in the power and popularity of religion is called the “secularization paradigm”; in this section, I examine this paradigm in Turkish society through the statements of Turkish university students.

In line with the definition of scholars of sociology, the students did not define secularity or secularization in relation only to the following of religious rules. For example, the definitions below approach the term in terms of a sense of social responsibility. They do not ignore the significance of worship, such as praying five times a day, or fasting during the month of Ramadan. However, young people emphasized the meaning of prayers rather than their forms.

Those who say, “Let sleeping dogs lie,” they are secularist, namely selfish people. Even if they pray five times a day, and go on pilgrimage. It is not important, if they sacrifice hundred camels, they are still secular, because they would definitely do it for self-interest. This society is unfortunately just like that. (Can, Male, Chemistry, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

A secular person is somebody who has got a problem because he or she has neither ideology, nor knowledge about theology. They isolate religion in the private sphere

only. They say, “God is in the heavens above; he cannot come down into my life.” Religion has no place in business, law, and so on. (Hakan, Male, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

When I asked my interviewees about the situation of religiosity in Turkish society and among Turkish university students in particular, they were generally pessimistic in their opinions.

Turkish society, if you ask my opinion, is not religiously observant. There are not more than 10 per cent religiously observant people in Turkey, from my point of view. Maybe less than 10 per cent. This proportion is even lower among university students. But these low proportions tend to increase. That must be said, too. Not linear, but it is increasing. (Emre, Male, Computer Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

*What is the proportion of religiously observant people in the universities, what do you think?*

Forty per cent maybe, I do not know, maybe thirty per cent. (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

There is not a big place for religion in the lives of Turkish young people. Young people who are involved in social sciences are interested in religion. They are a little bit aware of the necessity of religion. Apart from them the youth are not attached to religion. They do not think about what religion says about anything. When you go out into the streets, you can easily see what people are really concerned about. (Ferda, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 26/3/2012)

A religiously observant student, who described himself as “radical Islamist”, with a very narrow definition of religiosity, claimed that part of society was not even Muslim:

I have not made a decision about this issue yet. However, I already think that 40 per cent of the population is not even Muslim. (Mahmut, Male, International Relations, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 24/4/2012)

Intention (*niyet*) has a crucial place in Islamic belief. It takes precedence even over practice. Because of this, students highlighted the importance of their good intentions and believed themselves to be religiously observant even if they drank alcohol and, in the case of women, left their hair uncovered. Galip was a secularist student who was head of the youth branch of the secularist party, CHP, in Istanbul. Although he drank alcohol and did not see a problem in having intimate relations with his girlfriend, and, in addition, did not fast or pray, he still asserted his religiosity:

There is a God, I believe. I believe in the Prophet and that he is the Messenger of God... I practise the religion I believe in.

*So, you are a kind of religiously observant person, are not you?*

I am religious in terms of the principles I believe in, but not in terms of the imposed way of religion. I do not practise the religion that is presented by the Islamists. Because I do not think that they are right. They are irrational. I look at the religion from the point-of-view of rationality. (Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

Bahar was another example, who did not wear the headscarf, but did practise the other duties of Islam. She did not claim that the headscarf was unnecessary; she accepted its place in Islam and was critical of herself and other young Muslims. According to her, religiosity necessitated a religious lifestyle, but young people, although they believed in Islamic values and principles, deferred practising their religion until their old age.

We, the youth people, live as if we will never die. Okay, there is a religion, but at the same time you have to pray, you have to fast. Yes, we can perform all these obligations, but they never come to mind when we are young. We can die any time, both when we are children and when we are young adults. But youth only want to enjoy their lives to the full. Let me go to Taksim, let me drink alcohol, let me take drugs, and smoke, and then let me ask God for forgiveness. The youth want to take pleasure immediately. If they lived according to religion properly, by which I mean obeying the rules, praying five times a day etc., it would impose restrictions on their lives. Therefore, they postpone these duties until old age. If a prayer time and work time clash, for instance, they can easily say that I can pray later, let me do my work first. Therefore, religion plays second fiddle now. I also do not obey all the religious duties. Yes, I really want to do so, but I do not either. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

Yahya claimed that conservativeness and religiousness are used interchangeably and wrongly. He said that Turkish society might be seen as religious, but it is actually conservative. Some forms of religion and culture were the same or similar, and this caused ambiguity in evaluating the condition of society in terms of religiosity and secularity. He gave the following example to differentiate these two social states:

I cannot say that Turkish society is religious. But they [members of the society] are conservative. I mean they are conservative in terms of culture, not religion.

*What is conservativeness in terms of religion?*

I mean the whole lifestyle; oneself, children, and everything are according to religion... Religiosity is a different thing. Conservativeness is a more cultural thing. Therefore a conservative mother can give her daughter permission to go

everywhere including the places unsuitable for religion. There is this kind of difference between religiosity and cultural conservativeness. A religious family would not want to allow their daughters such free-doing laxity. (Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

Hale argued that tradition and culture intermingle with religion in Turkey, and modernity, being opposite to tradition, is an important threat to religion. She blamed modernity and Westernization for the secularization process in Turkish society. In fact, Westernization has always had a central place in the debate on secularization among Turkish intellectuals. The poet of the Turkish national anthem, Mehmed Akif Ersoy (1873-1936) is well known in this debate for his verse: “Take the science of the West, take its art” [*Alınız ilmini Garb’ın, alınız san’atını*] (2006: 170). He defended taking the ‘positive’ things that the West had to offer, such as technology and science, while rejecting the ‘negative or harmful’ things, such as Western moral values and social structures. The Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan criticized the republican period of Turkey in 2008 saying, “We should have taken the science and art of the West; however, we took their immoralities that are contrary to our own values” (Hürriyet, 2008) Hale had similar arguments when she criticized society with regard to secularization:

In my opinion the opposite of tradition is modernism, because it was like this in Europe. They built modernity by not refusing their tradition. We are going to do this, too. We are becoming more and more modern; we are integrated into the modern world, and therefore the youth get further away from religion, because they become distanced from tradition. There is not a huge gap between Islam and Turkish tradition; on the contrary, they are interwoven. Therefore I see modernity as a threat for Islam. We tried to read the world through Europe for many years, because we saw Europe as the standard of modernity. We thought that as our

clothing and lifestyle were like those of Europeans, so we would be modern like them. This influences even our housewares. In actual fact, when we move away from our tradition and culture, we actually experience depersonalization. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

Secularist people were generally considered by some of the students to be responsible for the negative sides of modernity and secularity, especially the supporters of the secularist and Kemalist political party, CHP. However, like religiously observant people, my secularist informants have changed their ideas and attitudes towards Islam and Turkish culture. Galip's ideas about Westernization is a good example of this change:

The country should not be closed-minded. We should not revolt against the West. But we should not take the West as the only way; on the contrary, it is enlightenment, and the source of thoughts and reforms. This does not mean that we should imitate European countries such as Greece and Bulgaria. I mean, let us take the thought of the enlightenment. (Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

For a long period, I have read most of the newspapers and magazines published in Turkey. One of the interesting things that caught my attention has been the theologians who write columns at least once a week. Almost all newspapers have a theologian writing on religious issues and providing answers to readers' problems. Only extreme secularist newspapers lack this kind of column; mainstream secularist newspapers include one. In my view, this is another example of the change in secularism in Turkish society.

There was a consensus among religiously observant students that Turkey was undergoing a secularization process. Different people saw different factors behind this process, depending on which were the most important areas of secularization for them.

Some students, for example, complained about the economic sphere, arguing that religiously observant Muslims are secularized through devices such as Islamic banking. This is the kind of banking known as participation banking [*katılım bankacılığı*] or interest free banking [*faizsiz bankacılık*] in Turkey. Bank Asya, Al Baraka Turk, and Ihlas Finans are examples of Islamic banks, which were established as alternatives to secular or un-Islamic banks. Religiously observant people seek to avoid secular banks, not wishing to be involved in any way with any means of levying interest payment on a loan, loan interest being regarded as a sin in Islam. Because of this, the boards of management of these Islamic institutions receive fatwas from Islamic law scholars, such as Hayrettin Karaman (2010), about the legitimacy of the implementations of their banks. Some students I spoke to were, nevertheless, not certain about the alternative banks being Islamic, and were of the opinion that these institutions have a secularizing influence.

The sensitivity to interest (*faiz*) has unfortunately decreased nowadays. I should add the contribution of “participation banks” to this situation. Because some Islamic scholars, Hayrettin Karaman for example, drawing an analogy to the time of the Prophet (*Asr-i Saadet*) have said that if you buy a house or car, you can get a bank loan. Receiving bank credit has become normal nowadays. Cultural Muslims do not care about this issue and they do not approach it critically. They only say, “I am Muslim, I am religiously observant”, but they do not design all parts of their lives according to religion. They do not practice religion. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

Religiously observant-conservative people have sensitivity about not taking interest (*faiz*). They do not want to get any money forbidden by religion (*haram*). There is such a reality in economic life. There are numerous religiously observant people questioning bank credits who believe that even the stock market is forbidden by

religion. However, there are also religiously observant people who break with this view. The main contributing factor for this is the Islamic or participation banks. (Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

The following long conversation summarizes the problem well. Kudret was a law student and a religiously observant person:

The system of interest is an alien system but you can be out of the system, if you want.

*Can you?*

Of course, if you do not use a credit card, and do not get in contact with banks, you can stay out of this system. But if you say, I want to buy a house, I want to buy a car, and I must get a bank loan, then you will be involved in the system. I do not use credit cards. The only relation I have got with banks is that I take out my wages from my bank. But if you are a merchant, it is impossible to stay out of the system.

*How is it impossible?*

You make your payments, your exchanges etc., everything must be done through the banks. I am not a businessman. So I can be out of the system.

*What is the problem if I have to use banks for my business, if I do not get interest directly?*

The cash flow occurs through the banks. Your money remains in the bank until you take it out. They use your money; they sell your money with interest, even if you open an account with no interest. So you feed the system even indirectly. You aid and abet it.

*And that is why I am accountable for it?*

Of course, that is why I take out my wages immediately so that they cannot use my money. Under these circumstances, many people see the Islamic-participation banks as a mediate formula (*ara formül*).

*Is it certain that they are suitable for Islam?*

Participation banks say that we do not use your money for interest. We operate your money buying and selling something, doing businesses etc. We use the market profit. But it is a problematic issue if this system is Islamic or not. A number of Islamic scholars say that you should not be even in the shadows of banks, and that you should go into a bank with your left foot first, and go out with your right foot first. Even though these are participation or Islamic banks, they get involved in the secular or un-Islamic system one way or another. Some Islamic scholars, like Hayrettin Karaman, have given fatwas saying that participation banks are acceptable in Islam, and that there is no any problem if you use them. But how can Karaman say that without knowing business life? Abu Hanifa could say it, because he was one of the greatest Muslim scholars and a businessman at the same time. He knew the system. Maybe the bankers persuaded the scholars to give fatwa with some documents, but I have never seen any participation bank really buying or selling something. The commerce is only on paper. How can it accord with commerce? These are technical issues, I do not know. However, I cannot say I am a customer even though it is a participation bank.

*At least, they do not misuse your money, do they?*

Yes, but it can always be interpreted (*tevil*) inch-by-inch. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

Another significant factor behind the secularization process in Turkish society is the new political conditions following the coming to power of the AKP. The religiously observant people have increasingly come to the fore among the elites of the country. Now they are powerful and have voice in the education system, foreign affairs, and the media. Students called this “a relaxation period” and they were worried about its effects on secularization. For them, Islamization might cause or accelerate the secularization process. Before the AKP, religiously observant people were in the opposition and were careful to preserve their religious values and culture in almost all areas. With the AKP established in power, religiously observant people have embraced and acquired the secular democratic system in its totally. Mahmut was the student who identified him as radical Islamist and he believed that democratic system was against Islam. According to him, his father had the same belief before, but he changed his mind and attitude after AKP.

My father was against democracy for years until the AKP came to power. Many people have changed their attitudes towards democracy with the AKP. The people who did not go to polls and did not embrace the democratic system have started to embrace it. Among them there are members of parliament now. Some of them are friends of my father. That's why I know them. (Mahmut, Male, International Relations, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 24/4/2012)

Cihan Tuğal said in one of his books, *Pasif Devrim* (Passive Revolution), that in Turkey, Islamization and secularisation advance at the same time. Now in Turkey, you can pray freely, you can organize religious conversations (*sohbet*), and the problem of the headscarf is actually solved. When we perceive Islam consisting of just these issues, we can get luxury cars and houses that make us forget God. And we do not understand that these are produced by bad people who encourage consumption culture. Our problems were only the headscarf issue and Kemalism,

and nobody dictates to us now. Whereas they are not the real problems, the real problem is various persecutions all over the world. There is still the Kurdish problem, for instance, and you do not even think about it. (Osman, Male, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

In some periods, like 28 February, people were not allowed to practice their ideologies and religions. However, they embrace banned things much more than before. The new religious generation of Turkey never experienced any problem with governments and never paid any price for their beliefs. This has caused a sense of comfort and not appreciating religious principles among youth. If you go to Fatih University, a private university founded by the followers of a religious group, you can easily observe the examples of these people.

*What do you mean with sense of comfort?*

I mean those who look veiled, but do not observe the principles of being covered (*tesettür*). (Kübra, Female, Philosophy, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, religiosity, religiousness and secularity are discussed as perceived and experienced by Turkish university students. After summarizing and reviewing the literature, the responses of my research participants were analysed by theme, and organised into sections.

In the understanding of the students, religiosity does not consist only of worship and prayer but also of ethics or morality (*ahlak*) in every sphere of public as well as private life.

Today's religiously observant students, in contrast to the previous generation, place emphasis on embodying religion in their lives and activities (*temsil*), rather than limiting it to an Islamic lifestyle and obedience to Islamic rulings (*tebliğ*).

As Casanova argues, modern people have the opportunity to get to know various systems of meaning and to choose among them. This widespread access to knowledge is new as this opportunity was only available to elites before, while now it can be generalized to the entire population. Casanova explains this condition further saying that "what is certainly new in our global age is the simultaneous presence and availability of all world religions and all cultural systems, from the most "primitive" to the most "modern," often detached from their temporal and spatial contexts, ready for flexible or fundamentalist individual appropriation" (Casanova, 2006: 18).

This situation is the same when it comes to the different interpretations and understandings of religiosity and secularity. Religiousness had, we have seen, various meanings and perceptions among the research participants. For instance, a student who is very active in a secularist party and drinks alcohol might, according to their own perception of religion, can identify him or herself as religious. While a student who performs the daily religious practices and wears the headscarf, can declare she does not regard herself as religiously observant. The students generally agree that religiosity is not a constant feeling. On the contrary it can change from time to time and from context to context, and this is a challenge from God (*imtihan*), namely endeavouring to keep religious feeling and thinking alive all the time.

On the basis of the statements of my research participants, it is apparent that religion or religiousness is seen as involving every aspect of life. They reject the Kemalist ideology that aims at restricting religion to the areas of belief and worship only.

The students also objected to their parents' and grandparents' understanding of religion, arguing that traditional religiousness concentrates on the form of religious rituals and rulings rather than the meaning and soul of them, while neglecting rational and critical thinking. They typically held to the view that they did not have to follow mere culture arising from historical circumstances, but rather follow the religious principles and rulings, creating their own way of living.

Of all the factors affecting the religiousness and secularity of the university students, family background was found to be the most important. All students encountered in Istanbul in the course of this research, embrace in essence the lifestyles of their parents, albeit with relatively minor divergences. This does not generally stem from parental pressure to conform, but it nevertheless seems universally, or almost, the reality. Students embrace the worldviews of their parents while generally critically appraising them to create their own perceptions and lifestyles. They see formal religious education in schools, even the religious high schools and the theology faculties at universities, as an insufficient basis for their religious lives. This leads them to attend unofficial Qur'an courses and various religious events organized by religious groups and movements.

Performing worship of *salat* or *namaz* five times a day and performing ablutions before each *namaz* are the biggest difficulties students encounter in the daily round of carrying out their religious practices, as discussed in detail elsewhere. In some cases and contexts, secular environments might limit the consistency of religious observance, thus causing tension in the minds and social relations of religiously observant students. Marginalization of the religiously observant people by some secularist people is another cause of tension. This problem might occur both directly and indirectly.

Secularism was not an acceptable process for religiously observant students, especially to the extent that it means Westernization, anti-religiosity, being against Turkish

culture and tradition. Even secularist students are opposed to Westernization. Almost all students consented to political and institutional secularization, though concerned at being unable to practise adequately the religious principles in the areas of economics and education, and in their private lives, and this fact shows that the linear modernization theory of the privatization of religion is not grasped as valid by the university student participants.

All these findings support what Casanova (1994) suggests about the term 'secularization'. According to him, in order to analyse secularization properly, we need to distinguish between three meanings of the term: a decline of religious beliefs and practices; the privatization of religion; and differentiation of the secular sphere from religious institutions and norms. He adds, "If the premise is correct, it should follow from the analytical distinction that the fruitless secularization debate can end only when sociologists of religion begin to examine and test the validity of each of the three propositions independently of each other" (1994: 211). Taking into account these three meanings, the third connotation seems more suitable for my research participants as they accept the secular democratic political system, while they do not accept the pressure to follow (or suppress) a religious lifestyle in the public sphere. Thus, as Casanova suggest, the classical linear modernization theory of secularization is no longer applies to the relationship between religiosity and secularity in a society, and we need to develop new approaches to probe this relationship in all its complexity.

## CHAPTER SIX: RELIGIOUS GROUPS

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Depending on their interests and needs, most of the religiously observant Turkish people encounter at least one religious group in their political, public or private lives. Religious groups are generally either *tarikat* (religious or Sufi orders) or *cemaat* (religious communities). *Tarikat* groups focus on Sufism and the spiritual aspect of religion; *Nakşibendilik*, *Mevlevilik*, and *Kadirilik* are the most well known of these groups in Turkey. *Cemaat* groups are especially concerned with politics, education, relief of distress and other social matters. *Nurculuk*, *Gülen* or *Hizmet* movements, *Milli Görüş* movement, and *Süleymançılık* are the foremost examples of this kind of group. Most *cemaats* arose originally from *tarikats*, particularly from the *Nakşibendilik*. Their field of interest is what assigns them to the *tarikats*. Both the *tarikats* and *cemaats* are referred to as religious groups or religious movements in this thesis. As the concern of my thesis is Islam and Muslim university students, I did not incorporate the other religions and their religious groups into my research.

With all their varied characteristic interests, concerns and constituencies, the various religious groups have in common the aim of strengthening the religiosity of individuals, Islamizing society, and eliminating the barriers to the practice of religion in public and private. To further these objectives they employ various methods, establishing organizations and institutions such as student accommodation, political parties, local and international aid organizations, private schools and universities.

Religious groups are one of the main features of religious life in Turkish society and particularly in the lives of university students, who generally encounter them at their

primary or secondary school. The connection becomes stronger or weaker at university, depending on personal experiences.

In this chapter, I evaluate religion, religiosity and secularity at the group level. This chapter considers religious groups and their place in both the private and public lives of Turkish university students. After introducing the main targets for the activities of the various religious groups, I look at the issue from the point-of-view of the university students. Considering their views and experiences, I want to elucidate the perceptions university students have of Turkish religious groups, and the ways the groups affect their lives in terms of religiosity and secularity; how they influence the students' political attitudes towards the secular Turkish state; the impact on the lifestyles of the students publicly and privately; and what students think of the religious groups for good and for ill.

In order to achieve the objectives of my research, I used the findings of the in-depth interviews that I conducted with university students during my fieldwork in Istanbul. I also participated in some events organized by religious groups and observed some activities and events of both members of these religious groups and the university students they were in contact with. The Spring Festivals (Bahar Şenlikleri) were particularly helpful in allowing me to observe young people from both secular and religious groups/backgrounds. The type of leisure events pursued was another clue to understanding what religiously observant students prefer. These contexts and events enabled me to compare what was said in interviews with what I observed in such environments. The observations and conversations helped me to read and interpret my data. In this chapter I analyse the statements of the students, some of whom are members of religious groups; some with little or no sense of belonging to a group, who nevertheless for a variety of reasons live in a place associated with one of the religious groups; and other students not in contact with religious groups.

The chapter consists of four sections. The first section provides an outline of the major religious groups and their activities, particularly those activities organised for university students. Reference will be made to the literature, statements of interviewees, and my fieldwork observation notes.

The second section concerns the targets of the religious groups with their activities, institutions, and organizations. Interviews with university representatives and student members of some religious groups, are analysed to explore their main aims, and social and political aspects of secularization and Islamization.

The third section covers the effects of religious groups on university students. This has two aspects. One is about the perceptions of university students: how they see these groups and the advantages of the groups for the students. The other aspect is about the effects of the religious groups on the students in terms of their religiosity or secularity, and also in terms of their attitudes towards the secular state and society.

And finally, the fourth section includes criticism of religious groups by students. This is noteworthy for criticism of the groups' perceived opposition to some student freedoms. Strong feelings were expressed sometimes, based upon students' own experiences and observations regarding sociological, political and theological issues.

In the literature, there is a substantial body of theoretical and empirical research on social movements. Researchers describe the general characteristics of social movements in different ways, though despite differences of terminology, most such analyses highlight certain shared practices. When he describes the activities of social movements, Jasper, for instance, names the following characteristics: "conscious"; "organized"; "long-standing"; "particularistic"; and "non-institutionalized" (1997; 5). Some scholars make comparisons between new social movements and classical social movements, like feminism and

environmental movements, arguing that new social movements are more concerned about non-materialist issues like identity (Johnson, Larana, and Gusfield, 1999).

Şimşek, after summarizing the characteristics of social movements, as set out by previous scholars, created a list incorporating those characteristics commonly seen by scholars and especially those seen as most important. He lists five characteristics of new social movements, and examines the four major current social movements in Turkey - Islamism, feminism, the Alevi movement, and Kurdish nationalism - on the basis of these. Very briefly, Şimşek's analysis of the main characteristics of new social movements in Turkey found that Turkish "New social movements basically exhibit post-Marxist, post-modernist and post-traditional tendencies; [they are] generally middle class based movements; post-material, identity-oriented initiatives; proactive and particularistic movements; [they] display relatively decentralized and less hierarchical modes of organization as well as new forms of action" (Şimşek, 2004: 115–6).

Comparing Turkish religious groups with new social movements, Şimşek uses the term 'Islamist' for all Islamic religious groups indiscriminately. Another problem in his work on Islamic groups is that he considers only two examples, the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP) and the Gülen movement. His answer to the question "Is Islamism a new social movement?" is 'yes' in some respects and 'no' in others. He argues that Islamism is a post-traditionalist and post-modernist movement, in that Islamic revivalists criticize and reinterpret the traditional understanding of Islam. It cannot be described as a post-Marxist movement because the leaders and members of Islamic groups are from the new middle class of Turkey. It may be objected, in this regard, that voters for the religious-based political parties, such as the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) and the Justice and Development Party (the AKP), are predominantly lower class. Şimşek proposes that Islamist groups "demanded religious and cultural recognition in the public sphere and tried to create an

Islamic identity and way of life.” Islamism “started perhaps as a reactive movement against Kemalism and modernism, but later it gradually turned into a proactive social movement by raising diverse issues” (2004: 123–4). Finally, he argues that while Islamist movements are centralized organizations at the political level, they embrace democratic forms and activities at the civil society level, like religious-based NGOs.

Göle draws attention to the differences between modernist Islamism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as outlined by Islamic reformers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad ‘Abduh in Egypt, and the new generation of Islamists, like Ali Bulaç and İsmet Özel in Turkey. She argues that the older Islamist generation wanted to combine Islamic and modern values. As to contemporary Islamists, they are anti-modernists who seek to create an “Islamic alternative model” (1997: 54). She sees the conflict between secularists and Islamists, as a fight between elites and counter-elites, arguing that Islamization is a counter attack against the modernization project of Kemalism. However, Göle’s arguments and examples are limited to political Islam and Islamists. She makes no mention of other more a-political religious movements and their activities.

Neyzi divides Turkish history into three periods in terms of the construction of youth in public discourse: 1923 to 1950, 1950 to 1980, and 1980 to the present. Her studies focus on discourses on youth, rather than their experiences and statements. Regarding Islamic movements and university students in the third period, she says that after the military coup in 1980, the state tried to create a synthesis between Islam and Turkish identity, known as “Turkish Islam.” In this context, religious lessons became compulsory in primary and secondary schools, and graduates of the İmam-Hatip schools (religious vocational high schools) were allowed to go to university. According to Neyzi, “What was intended as an attempt to forestall the rise of further extremism among youth resulted in

the emergence of a strong Islamist movement among university students in the 1980s and 1990s" (2001: 422).

In the literature, there are a limited numbers of studies that focus on the subject of Turkish religious groups in terms of their effects on university students. Studies from the viewpoint of Turkish university students are also very limited (White, 2011; Andy-Ar, 2011; Avci, 2012), and do not directly address the relationship between religious groups and university students. With this chapter of my thesis my aim is to make a contribution to fill this gap.

## 6.2 A SHORT HISTORY OF ISLAMIC GROUPS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES

The Sufi orders (*tarikat*) go back centuries in Islam. Then came the establishment of the Turkish Republic, and in 1925 all Sufi orders were dissolved and all local and central derwish lodges were closed by a law known as the *Tekkeler ve Zaviyeler Kanunu*. This was in order to secularize the Turkish state. The only exceptions to the legislation have been two rituals of two Sufi orders: The "Whirling Derwish" dance (*Sema*) of the *Mevlevilik*, founded by the well known Islamic scholar Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (1207–1273); and the *dhikr* (or *zikir*) of the Istanbul *Qadiriyah* (or *Kadirilik*), founded by Syed Abdul-Qader Gilani (1077–1166). Public performance of these rituals has been tolerated as cultural activities, rather than religious rituals (Ernst, 2004).

From the beginning of the republican period, all kinds of Islamic groups lost their official status and power, and many of them their legal status. Although there are numerous Islamic groups and activities in Turkey, none of the activities had been performed openly since the beginning of the republic until recently. The groups were able to work only with the secular tools of the new country or go underground. Toprak declares,

“Overtly religiously observant people were not accepted into the political, social, or intellectual elite circles. The republic marginalized them, caricaturized them as fanatics, and considered them uncivilized. It was these marginalized groups that later formed the backbone of political Islam” (2005: 32).

Enterprises undertaken by Islamic groups and individuals were suppressed by the state through military coups, and interventions of the constitutional court. Suppression began in the 1920s and 1930s (Gökay and Aras, 2003). Kara (2011b) argues that the military coups and the revival of Islamic movements were directly related in Turkey. Islamic groups and activities were pushed out of the public and political areas, and put under the control of *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (the Directorate of Religious Affairs), founded in 1924 by Atatürk, to keep all religious institutions and events under its control through the *Diyanet* (Waardenburg, 2002).

Another significant Kemalist reform was the *Hilafetin Kaldırılması Kanunu* (The abolition of the Caliphate) in 1924. The Caliphate was the political and religious presidency of the whole Muslim community (*ümmet*). Even though, by common consent, the caliphate did not perform its unifying function well in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, it remained powerful in some parts of the Empire. For this reason Sayyid (1997) and Göle (2012) argue that the abolition of the caliphate and the revival of the Islamic movements are closely related to one other. However, it would be a mistake to argue that the abolition of the caliphate was the only reason for the rise of the movements: even in the Ottoman Empire there was Islamic opposition to the state, and the caliphate nearly lost its political and religious power in Turkish society.

The pressure on Islamic movements in Turkey caused a number of revolts against the political and ideological authority of the Kemalist secularist state. Islamic opposition and the polarization of secularists and Islamists were much stronger in the 1980s and

1990s because of the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the period (Zürcher, 2003; Toprak, 2005). To summarize the conditions of the post-1980 period of Turkey: in order to weaken leftist and violent movements, the state reinforced Islam in various ways. It demanded the creation of a synthesis of Turkish identity and Islam. The numbers of religiously based İmam-Hatip schools, Qur'an courses, and mosques dramatically increased and religious groups were allowed to act much more freely. Religion lessons were made compulsory even in secular primary and secondary schools. Turgut Özal (Prime Minister 1983–1989; President 1989–1993) opened the ranks of the state cadres to religiously observant citizens, and encouraged religiously observant businessmen to enhance their works. Religious TV and radio channels, newspapers, magazines and books were allowed in this period, and Islamic religious groups and their activities spread all over the country, especially through the agency of university students. Shankland explains this period saying that “there has been an accumulation of subtle changes in the role of Islam in public life that may be seen in all sorts of ways: in the expanding role of the Islamic brotherhoods; in modern, Ottoman-style mosques built in concrete springing up round the country; in the increasing prevalence of the call to prayer; and in the gradually growing role of religion in the civil service...” (2007: 360-1). In this period, as Şimşek says: “An important number of those young people served as ready votes for the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP), which was extremely ambitious with its motto of *Adil Düzen* (just order). The rest of these young people participated in various religious movements and organizations such as that of Fethullah Gülen” (2004: 121).

A centre for social research in Turkey, Andy-Ar, conducted research among 2,160 people in twenty cities, in 2011, into the perception of Islamic religious groups by members of Turkish society. How religious groups are seen; how much trust there is of them; which groups and which leaders are widely known; the number of their members

and followers; distribution by political party of the members, were some of the main issues addressed in the research. According to this study, the best known and most popular and effective religious group was the *Gülen movement*. The others, in descending order of popularity, were found to be: *Süleymanlılar*; *Nur cemaati*; *Nakşibendiler*; *İsmailağa cemaati*; *Cübbeli Ahmet Hoca cemaati* and *Menzil cemaati*. Interestingly, the *Milli Görüş* movement was not mentioned by respondents, though it is the basis of the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) of Necmettin Erbakan (1926–2011), and the founders of the AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, and Bülent Arınç, originally were involved with this movement (Shankland, 2007). In my view, this is due to the fact that, although the *Milli Görüş* movement is highly effective, because of its close relationship with politics it is seen as essentially political rather than religious. There is probably an additional factor in its lack of recognition as a religious movement, in that the 28 February military intervention in 1997 brought the movement to a standstill, and when Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AKP broke away from the *Milli Görüş* movement and Erbakan, and established the AKP, Erdoğan declared that “they have removed the shirt of *Milli Görüş*” (Yüksek, 2003). As Shankland says, “even though Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (JDP or ‘white’ Party) derives directly from Erbakan’s Welfare Party, it represents a division or wing of the Refah Party which sought a moderate presentation of Islam” (2007: 361).

Among the religious groups there is the phenomenon of group fractions within groups. So that, for example, the Gülen movement could originally be counted in the *Nur cemaati*, but went on to develop its own characteristics. *Nakşibendilik*, *Süleymanlılik* and *Milli Görüş* all trod a similar path of fragmentation and sometimes nominal affiliation, and even the *Nur cemaati* originally developed from the *Nakşibendilik*, and indeed, every one of them has its ultimate origin in the Sufi orders or the Islamic brotherhoods (*tarikat*). As I

explained in the introduction, every group went on to dissociate itself from the others with its own ways of thinking, strategies, methods and other characteristics. In Berger's phrase, "different religious movements differ in their relation to modernity" (1999: 7–8). Each Islamic group has its own approach to Islamic sources: the Qur'an and the Sunna, politics, modernity and religiosity.

Of especial significance for the present research, the Andy-Ar study revealed substantially stronger support for religious groups among university students and post-graduates than among the population at large, suggesting a greater personal involvement with the groups among university students and post-graduates.

Öktem (2002) has remarked on how religious groups, despite state opposition, still continued to influence the political, economic and social life of the country, though often in technically illegal ways. According to the author, the most important groups were: *Nakşibendilik; Kadirilik; Rıfailik; Nurculuk; Süleymançılık; İşıkçılık; Mevlevilik; Bektaşilik, and Alevilik.*

*Nakşibendilik*, founded by Muhammad Bahauddin Naqshband (1317–1389), is one of the most widespread and effective religious groups in Turkey. Öktem explains the fundamental principle of this Sufi order as: "the inner purification of the soul, which must be realized under the direction of a shaykh or chief abbot, called the Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kamil*)" (2002: 389). Compared to others, it gives more importance to the Sunni tradition, Islamic law, and politics. Two Prime Ministers of Turkey, Turgut Özal (1927–1993) and Necmettin Erbakan (1926–2011) were members. *Nakşibendilik* has many publications and radio channels, and student residences in almost every city in Turkey. Nowadays there are numerous *Nakşibendi* groups in the country: *Esad Coşan; Menzil cemaati; Mahmut Efendi cemaati*, to name only a few.

Said Nursi (1876–1960) was one of the most influential Islamic scholar and leader in the history of the Turkish Republic. Active in politics until the age of forty, (he called this period “the first Said period”), he then changed his focus to engage in more purely intellectual activity. Most of his substantial literary oeuvre (*Risale-i Nur Külliyyati*), of more than six thousand pages, dates to this second period. It consists mostly of Qur’anic commentary and theological (*Kelam*) reflections. As with the *Nakşibendi* groups, there are many subgroups under the umbrella of the *Nur* movement. *Yeni Asyacilar*; *Yeni Nesil grubu*; *Okuyucular*; *Yazicilar*, and *Med-Zehra grubu* are among them. These groups each have their publications, events, and student dormitories in which they provide residents with religious education informed by the *Risale-i Nur* Collection. Each of these groups interprets the thoughts of Said Nursi in different ways, and every group has a different understanding and approach to politics, religious propaganda (*tebliğ*), and the methods to be pursued in serving religion.

Fethullah Gülen is an interpreter of the ideas of Said Nursi and has made significant contributions to the movement, establishing primary and secondary schools all over the country and indeed the world; as well as nursery schools, university preparation courses, universities, student residences and houses, NGOs, businessmen’s associations, newspapers, magazines, TV and radio channels, publishing companies, and charities. One of the distinguishing features of the Gülen movement is that the activities of the group are not limited to Turkey. Most of the activities are worldwide, in almost every country. The movement does not use an Islamic discourse in its works, including in the schools. The fundamental and guiding ideas of the movement are: interfaith and intercultural dialogue; tolerance (*hosgörü*); understanding of others; and accepting everyone as they are (*herkesi kendi konumunda kabul etmek*). The Gülen movement is far more popular and effective than any other religious group in Turkey (Kömecoğlu, 2000). According to the Andy-Ar

research, 61 per cent of the Turkish population know of Fethullah Gülen; and the British ‘The Guardian’ newspaper presented him as “Turkey’s most powerful man” (Butt, 2008).

Apart from the above-mentioned religious groups, there are numerous groups and organizations in Turkey, both big and small. Like the groups above, almost all of them focus on educating students. *Süleymançılık*, which was founded by Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan (1888–1959), for instance, is quite effective in social and political life. This group has established more than a thousand student residences, and accommodates almost 100,000 students, from secondary school to university (Öktem, 2002: 393). It is also well established in Europe, particularly with mosques and Qur'an courses.

### **6.3 TARGETS OF THE RELIGIOUS GROUPS**

The purposes of Islamic religious groups have long been discussed in Turkey, both in the political domain and the social area. As we saw, the Turkish state saw them originally as a threat to its secularist and nationalist ideology and was worried about even small symbols that they displayed (Göle, 1998). The main concern of the secularists about religiously observant people has been the *Shari'a*, Islamic law, or – another term used by the military and secularists – “*irtica*.” What is the real target of religious groups and individuals? Why so many events, organizations and institutions? Have they got a hidden agenda? Do they seeking to overthrow the secularist state and establish an Islamic one? Do they want to introduce the *Shari'a* law into the country and force women to cover their heads? Do they want the country to go (*irtica*) back to the “Dark Ages”? Are they sincere in their declarations in favour of democracy and liberty? Do they really want the Republic? These questions have been often heard from secularists, secularist political parties, and government bodies. The wearing of headscarves, and involvement by religiously observant

people in politics, have been seen as signs of some hidden agenda. In order to prevent subversion, the state dissolved certain political parties: *Milli Nizam Partisi* in 1971; *Milli Selamet Partisi* in 1981; *Refah Partisi* in 1998; *Fazilet Partisi* in 2001; and attempted to dissolve the AKP in 2008. A few of the other harassments the religiously observant had to endure included a liability to be blacklisted by public institutions; the banning of the headscarves in universities; limitations put on Qur'an courses; and hindering students of the İmam-Hatip schools wanting to go to university.

To this day there is real anxiety in Turkey about the influence that religious groups may have on primary, secondary and university pupils or students who are the main targets for their proselytising. Students' families worry about the effect on their children's lives, especially their careers, if they become involved with a religious group. For their part, religiously observant people, their groups and political parties feel they must struggle to prove that they are sincere in wanting an independent, powerful, liberal, democratic state, and are not hankering to introduce the *Shari'a* into the country as state law. The remark by Erdoğan about removing his Milli Görüş shirt was a response to this suspicion. He wanted to let people know he had disavowed the introduction of an Islamic state and law, and was no longer involved with political Islam.

In my fieldwork in Istanbul, some interviewees were active in religious groups, while others though not active, lived in one of the student residences of a religious group. In this thesis, I use the word 'being active' in the meaning that working in a religious group in the light of the principles of that group.

I asked them about the aims of the religious groups as I was eager to get the view of the most significant actors, university students, who were both the main target group and the most active members of the religious groups.

It seems the primary aim of religious groups is keeping students out of secular spaces and social relations.

We work to keep friends at university in a life that is apart from secular activities or to pull them a bit to this side, I mean the Islamic life. In that sense, actually, we could see the *Milli Görüş* movement as a movement to create awareness. Rather than a student chatting with a girl at school, them coming and chatting with us, talking about a prophetic hadith or a Qur'anic verse or even discussing a movie, our work, I would say, is at least to keep them away from these distractions. (Ali, Male, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

The goal of being enabled to practise Islam in a perfect way was mentioned by all the religiously observant students. Different views were expressed as to how to achieve this aim. Some embraced an active approach and wanted to Islamize the state and the judicial system while others defended the idea that liberty need not conflict with practising the principles and values of Islam.

The cause behind the foundation of the *Anadolu Platformu* society is, for Islam to be lived at its best in Turkey and worldwide. “To be lived at its best” meaning, certainly not to be against religion, against Islam, not to be in an environment against the Prophet. Surely alternatives or advantages and disadvantages will be brought forward, everybody will make free choices.

*Will he make a revolution, will there be a political party?*

Why not have an aim of a revolution? It might be. But first the need is to develop in a political party. I think an awareness should be raised in society. This is not taking down the state. Not a revolution like in Iran... (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

Educating proper Muslim individuals is a struggle that necessitates dedication and the giving of time, energy and money. As previously remarked, religious groups particularly focus on students in order to educate a new generation in religion and how to practise it in the modern world.

We do not believe that anything will be done by remaining still. A constant struggle [is necessary] and we see the outcome, maybe it exhausts us though...

*What fruit?*

A Muslim society. A society with character. Muslim societies, many of them around. All of them are Muslim societies, but how much of a Muslim character they possess, is quite debatable.

*What do you mean by “with character”?*

A Muslim society with character, like they have a vision, have a passion. In general people who carry a concern for existence are people with character; essentially, what we are trying to make people gain is that concern. (Kübra, Female, Philosophy, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

Some small groups are against receiving a secular education and going to university, particularly for female students. I found no student who was a member of such a group. The majority of religious groups, although they seek to establish their own schools and universities, do not seek to prevent students from going to public schools. However, they offer their own alternative education in their student residences, societies and other institutions.

The very purpose of the Anadolu Students Association is to educate people with character.

*How “with character”?*

As such; first, they will know their history, won't deny their history; people who are devoted to their history but also equipped with the skill and virtue of criticising their past. Secondly, being a person who does not retreat from society, like not watching down from ivory towers, being within the society, being morally upright. We describe in morals with the boundaries God has drawn for us, for a Muslim. They should perform well in their jobs. That concept of "a young person of character" will be constituted by this, they shall be a young person who is good at their job. Together with this, their understanding of freedom will comprise not accepting the existing situation but imagining a better one that can be [is possible], such that there always is a better one than the existing one. While doing this, they will not sacrifice their humanity to any other thing (authority, power, money), a model of a young person with that kind of understanding, this is what we are trying to develop, a character model. Certainly this is one aspect of it. Together with that we started holding an alternative school project last year. We called it "Thought Academy". Here we started holding lectures with the pioneers in their fields, to comprehend the issues brought forth to the era. There are 60 young people from universities who have been regularly attending the last year's lectures. (Emre, Male, Computer Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

What is taught by the groups ranges from peaceful democratic change, to violent revolution and the installation of a theocracy.

*Why have you undertaken an active duty at a religious group?*

I started university life living at a religious group house [*cemaat evi*]. Younger students come there. They are helped with their school courses. Apart from that topics like morals, modesty, respect for parents, hygiene, are being discussed. If the kids or their families are religiously observant, if they have somewhat of a

tendency, prayers are performed with them. I observed such things. I mean there is such a system. A nice, good system, I said, I shall be part of this. This is how it started. I remember telling someone on duty at the religious group [*cemaat*]. “Big brother, I’d like to have students too”. We already live a life, we shall make use of it, make it conducive to goodnesses, to good things. There are values we believe in, a life style; we shall tell it, convey it, it shall be delivered through generations, a perception like that, it was. That does not have a political side but we shall tell them that this life style is a life we embrace, we believe in. Religiousness, worship, or success at life... If we look into secular aspects too, I will give lectures to kids, so they succeed in their courses, become the best in their classes; at the same time I will teach them the necessities of the religion, they should be religious, their faith in God should be strong and such goodness shall be. Furthermore my God that I believe in would be pleased with this too. Our Prophet whom we follow, of whom we say we are the Muslim community [*iimmet*], would like it too, that’s how I thought. That was the motivation behind my work.

*Was there also an aim that Turkish society would become more religious, more Islamic in a political sense too?*

Not quite. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

Osman summarized well the change in the views of political Islamist adherents. His father is also an Islamist; however, the new Islamist generation do not talk about the same issues and do not give such importance to politics as their predecessors did. This change, based on my observations, occurred after the 28 February military intervention in 1997. The President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the former President of the Turkish Republic Abdullah Gül departed ways with their political Islamist leader, Necmettin Erbakan, and founded the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in 2001.

*What are the things that make you as you are?*

Independence is crucial, no dependence upon any superior. In general, kids of political Islamist families... In general you would come across books with names such as Seyyid Kutup, Ali Şeriati in the houses of these kids, they approach the issues in a critical way. While many Muslims in Turkey do not produce things on Kurdish politics, we work on this and the right form of conscientious objection [*vicdani ret*] about military service. For example, labour rights is an important issue. Thoughts, criticism regarding the capitalists system, are brought forward. Actually tearing off from tradition is not possible but “traditional”, how should I say, stereotyped understanding, can always be questioned. (Osman, Male, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

#### **6.4 THE FUNCTIONS OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS**

In my interviews, I asked the students about the impact of religious groups on their lives and on society in general. I asked respondents to base their answers on their own experiences and observations. According to them, religious movements create social surroundings suitable for practising religion and socializing at the same time.

It is probably since high school that religion is central to my life. My dad would constantly warn me about this, reminding and giving something of a vision. Apart from that, after meeting with Anadolu Gençlik, I started to feel that [sense of religiosity] more intensely. I met with Anadolu Gençlik during my first year of high school.

*I suppose socialising there, the friendship and so on must have affected you very positively.*

Having people sharing similar ideas affect one in a positive way. In fact, if I can put it this way, we are all almost the same. (Ali, Male, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

If I did not live at the religious group house [*cemaat evi*] but on my own, I would feel a bit left out of things. After I started to live at my own house, I realised that actually, I had been able to tell everything about myself very comfortably while I were there. I am aware that there is no ease when I stay on my own elsewhere. And there was also quite sense of solidarity there. I suppose knowing that there are people thinking like you makes one happy. For instance, not having those people sharing my thoughts makes me a little sad and I tell myself that I should work harder and do something. (Ferda, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 26/3/2012)

Some religiously observant students state that, although they are not against them, they do not need to attend the events of a religious group:

I am not bound to a religious group. Neither do I feel a lack of it. Because I do have a religious environment where I find myself, where I feel good. But if I did not, a religious group might be needed. (Ebru, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/8/2012)

Developing religiosity (*dindarlık*) and spirituality (*maneviyat*) are obviously the most significant aims and results achieved by the religious groups. This purpose is accomplished in two steps. One is removing secular elements, which are against religious principles, and the other is bringing in religious factors. Depending on their interests and needs, students highlight different advantages of being members of the groups. While for some students, male-female relationships are a prominent issue, for others, it can be practising Islamic rituals and strengthening their spirituality, political problems and so forth.

You know, Anadolu Gençlik constantly reminds us that we are Muslims, that we need to behave like a Muslim. Like, at school getting into contact with girls, talking to them or getting involved in inappropriate (*uygunsuz*) things or making cheesy jokes with girls... It somewhat prevents us from these kind of things. (Ali, Male, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

In this era when materialism has made people its slaves, if I say the facilities provided for us at religious group houses are insufficient, I will have betrayed myself in terms of my character. In this path, which is opened in a material direction, windows opening to spirituality are offered to us. I became involved with a religious group with very different intentions in my mind. Surely, first I had materialism in my mind. While knowing it more closely I felt the gap, the absence of spirituality inside me. I understood that the unique place to fill this gap is the religious group. (Atiye, Female, Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 24/5/2012)

The influence of religion is rising among youth. The end of the prohibition [prohibiting public religious organizations display] was effective in that. The atmosphere of the universities changed. Many prejudices were broken. We can also count the significance of the activities of religious NGOs, societies and so on towards youth. (Ebru, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/8/2012)

I didn't perform my prayers truly. But later at high school, it became obligatory [*farz*] for me. Since we were used to hanging out with friends, to hanging around with them, I upset my family a bit. Certainly, my family wanted me to be religiously observant. My mom and granddad insisted a lot. But because of hedonistic desires, because hanging around was easy, I couldn't warm up with prayers. But I started to go to the course of the religious group during the final year of high school. We met with the religious group, started to stay over at the elder

brothers, “*abiler*”. Certainly when we stayed with them we performed the five daily prayers. But we would neglect the dawn prayer for instance. After continuing with the religious group a while longer, I thoroughly got used to the prayers, I started to perform them. (Faruk, Male, International Relations, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 23/3/2012)

Islam gives particular importance to living and praying together, caring for the needy, encouraging people to act well, and avoid doing wrong (*Emr-i bi'l-ma'ruf nehy-i ani'l-münker*). The opposite of these deeds are regarded as sins. Religious groups, according to the students, provide the opportunity to practise these personal and social principles and responsibilities in the networks they create. The groups perform these activities in various ways, such as establishing student houses and residences (*evler* and *yurtlar*), organizing religious conversations (*sohbet*), and controlling the permitted times of coming and going.

Maybe the best feature of a religious group is that: It clears the ego away. It affects the youth very positively in this way. (Can, Male, Chemistry, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

During high school I attended religious conversations or meetings of a religious group once, twice a week. Certainly this keeps religious feeling alive, I mean to attend a religious conversation once a week, a fortnight, to listen, like advice on religious matters, receiving suggestions keeps that awareness more lively. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

Almost all religiously observant people are somewhat involved in a *tarikat* or *cemaat*. If there were no *cemaats*, *tarikats* and other religious groups, the ratio of being religious might have fallen substantially. Because if a *cemaat* entity [group] does not form then the emotion of selfishness comes forward. I do not think this thing can be reached a hundred per cent on one's own. Certainly, a *cemaat*

environment is needed. I consider it as a necessity of religion. (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

There surely would be some differences in my life if I had not met with the *cemaat*. For example I would be a person who would put his career first by all means. Now my priorities are different. Like, rather than saying I shall have a perfect career and the rest are irrelevant, I believe that I should have a good career but also, I should live my religion and do things to fulfil the demands of religion. This is my priority now. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

I have many friends who are connected to the Gülen Movement. I surely know that people of this *cemaat* are struggling to protect the youth, to protect them from all the seemingly bad deeds. Like, for example, these might not always be things we are okay with. Sometimes I even might object. But at least you know their intention. For example I stayed at a dorm of these people. You were not allowed to enter the dorm after 9 p.m. If you were going to enter the dorm after that it was not welcomed. If you will do it, somehow, then you have a responsible big brother; you need to call him and tell him "I am at this place". This is some kind of precaution as they think. I think it is a good thing. Apart from that they encourage the students staying there to pray. They constantly invite them to religious conversations [*sohbet*]. They mention God, the Prophet. I think these are very nice and not easy topics. *Cemaats* protect the university students against secularism by providing them with accommodation. I think *cemaats*, *tarikats*, are doing their best to call people to the path that they know to be right. They provide the youth at universities with these facilities. (Birol, Male, Sociology, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

Bahar, based on her own experiences and preferences, summarizes well the social control exercised by religious groups on students, female students in particular. Her story

reveals that conservatism (*muhafazakarlık*) has a different meaning in Turkish society than it has in the West. The term needs redefining to accommodate the significance of politics, culture and religion for Turkish people. Bahar, for instance, is a religiously observant female student. She is a musician, does not wear the headscarf, defends a secular democratic form of government, and embraces a moderate interpretation of religion. However, she wants to conserve her religiosity from, as she sees it, the 'bad' aspects of a secular society.

I live at a religious group house [*cemaat evi*], because of my other occupation. I am kind of half-active.

*What would be different in your life if the cemaat wasn't there?*

I wouldn't want it not to be there, as of now.

*Why, is it for the accommodation?*

No, no, really not because of that; if it was that, my aunt lives nearby, I could stay with them. All my relatives are around here. I came here of my own will, to stay. I am kind of a person who puts comfort first, if there is no one to push me, I might not do some religious duties. Those kinds of places are somehow protected. Like, because you are a girl you have to somehow be protected from society. You are not able to be as comfortable as a male, there needs to be a protective factor from outside. The *cemaat* creates protectiveness over you. Since they push you, you are able to do things more easily.

*What do you mean by protectiveness?*

For instance, outside things that are described as forbidden [*haram*] by religion start to feel like normal after a point.

*For example?*

For example, you start making gestures to boys as comfortably as if you are with girls. By religion you shouldn't do such a thing but after a point it starts to feel normal for you. But if you are within the *cemaat* you shake this off, you say, I have done wrong, I should collect myself.

*Do they warn you or do you think of it yourself?*

Not warning but you constantly hear, constantly listen. People around you are really clean people. They really protect themselves from the society, or rather from sin [*günah*]. And since you see them, by their words and actions, you start to put yourself in order. Or, for instance, say you missed one prayer, your conscience happens to be restless because people around you are trying not to miss. They are able to provide a protection for you. I wouldn't want to quit in future too, because I am accustomed to the comfort, I am willing to get the salvation of my hereafter, I believe truly they can provide this salvation. (Bahar, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

In a secular society and educational system, according to my interviews, religiously observant students and their parents experience a tension between religious principles and a secular lifestyle. They are apt to be concerned about the undermining of their religion and cultural values. Under these circumstances, religious groups which do not completely reject the modern state and society, are felt to fulfil the needs of people, both economically and socially. Creating spaces suitable for religiously observant people results in a number of benefits for both the groups and students, and most especially for female students coming up to university in Istanbul from the provinces. Sending their daughters to a huge and unknown city seems difficult for the average Turkish family. Religious girls are apt to be still more concerned about going to university in a foreign city. In a conversation, the secretary of a foundation university told me of concerned prospective female students

calling and asking even about such matters as the distance between male and female student residences. Here I suggest that religious groups make a significant contribution to the modernization of Turkish society in general, and university students in particular.

The *cemaat* offers an alternative. To you, like, it opens an area where you can swim in your own water. Therefore there is no need to get out of water and die. But neither is there a need to vanish in that water and become part of that pool, because you have your own water, your own pool. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

Most of my friends who are from other cities are staying with religious groups. Maybe they stay even although they do not want to, but their families trust the groups, saying “daughter, you shall stay in a place I know or we can trust”. At least with the religious group they are somewhere safe at nights... That’s the case mostly. A friend of mine wanted to leave the religious group house [*cemaat evi*] but couldn’t because her family did not want her to, because living outside in the end is difficult. That is, their family was worried like, in Istanbul what shall we trust... Certainly this is much more common for girls. There is also financial aspect of it. At the end there is a fixed amount you will pay when you stay at a religious group house; if you start to live in your own house you will pay at least 3-4 times more. At the end of the day, families of people from small villages, towns, have certain financial capacities. Therefore, some stay with religious groups out of necessity. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

Berna mentioned about the spaces in business life that are opened by religious groups:

Together with secularism, in the simplest term, working hours, for example, are not arranged according to prayer times. And associations are organised so that they can follow the obligations of their religion. Schools likewise. Children at a secular high

school do not have a place to pray. For example, there is no prayer room [*mescit*] whatsoever at these institutions. And these people got organised in a way that would provide them with these. I think being such big and strong religious groups is a reaction to top-down imposition of modernisation and secularization. People's concerns are first and foremost to live their religion in peace without being condemned or judged by anyone.

*In what possible way could membership in a religious group help with that?*

All have work places. They work at certain places. They are dominant in certain areas. If they would have a profession like banking they go to *Kuveyt Türk* for instance. If they would like to be a teacher, they become one at the religious group schools. Arising of the issue, it seems like that to me. Somewhat reactive. (Berna, Female, Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/12/2012)

Religious groups relate to politics variously. However, understandably, all are opposed to state repression of religious movements and their symbols. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, religiously observant people are not, by and large, against a secular state, but are troubled by the Kemalist-secularist state, which applies pressure on religion and religious culture, and also intervenes in religious lifestyles in order to change them in favour of a secular and modern lifestyle. According to some of my informants, religious groups aim to remove the pressure on religious people and groups. Emre sees the opposition as a fight between tradition and modernity.

How do I find Fethullah Gülen? Let me put it like that: Revenge of tradition against modernism.

*What do you mean?*

He is a kind of traditionist. He was educated at a traditional school, *medrese*. He studied medrese style science; he is the person who opposed the state mind-set by fighting modernisation and nationalism, who defeated the state mind-set. He defeated the modern state's mind-set, the nation-state's mind. But whether the current state mind-set he is standing before is the one he defeated, this should be discussed once more. Others should start to discuss these too. Because the state mind-set too has changed. In this, there probably is also Fethullah Gülen's effort. In this there also is the effort of the Anadolu Platform, and the effort of the *Nur* movement and *Milli Görüş*, and efforts of the *tarikats* and İskender Paşa too.

(Emre, Male, Computer Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

The practical experience of Sunni religious groups in the history of Turkey has revealed a different kind of oppositional culture. Kara (2011b) defines it as “passive opposition”, arguing that religiously observant people in Turkey do not want the sphere of religion to be one of political fighting. They prefer patience and to wait for the appropriate time to change the system in an evolutionary way. Kara argues that this attitude is a serious and a vernacular kind of opposition; it is enduring and functional, at the same time. A well-known Islamist and feminist writer, Tuksal (2012), similarly argues that in Sunni political culture people believe that rebellion results in great disorder (*fitne*) and bloodshed (*kan dökme*). This fear stems from the fighting after the time of the Prophet Muhammad. They prefer reconciliation with authority and living in a space granted by those in authority. In such a space, Sunni people or religious groups developed alternative dynamics to attain liberty and remove oppression (*zulüm*).

## 6.5 CRITICISM OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS BY STUDENTS

The growth of Islamic groups since the 1980s has been read in various ways by scholars and writers. Some, particularly Kemalists, argue that the state intends to Islamize Turkish society from top to bottom. Religiously observant people, on the other hand, fret at the inadequate provision by the state of suitable conditions for practising religion. Çakır (2008) finds merit in both these viewpoints but considers them inadequate to explain the increased activity and proliferation of Islamic groups. He argues that Turkish society, which is conservative and religious, has turned to religion for personal peace and social solidarity, in the face of the disruption of modernization. It's to this he ascribes the increase in prayer, worship and reciting of the Qur'an, as well as the increase in socializing through religious groups (*cemaat* and *tarikat*) organizations and events. Çakır classifies organized Sunni Islam under three headings: *Diyanet* organizations, working through the mosques and foundations; religious groups; and political Islamists. Islamic groups have felt the need to have religiously observant people thinking and speaking alike in order to have strength in unity to achieve their objectives: Islamizing society, removing state repression; and influencing politicians through their potential voters. At the same time, the state, Çakır argues, also did not want any enterprise by religiously observant individuals but rather to control society through groups and organizations.

In the same way, there are various views and criticisms about religious groups among my research participants. The prominent criticisms were about freedom of expression and independent thinking. Although they appreciated the importance of religious groups, religiously observant students complained about the way that they discourage independent thinking. Students who were not connected with any religious

group wanted to take control of their own lives and take their own decisions for their future.

I merely have some respect. I am against *tarikat, cemaat* that kind of things, I mean I do not have to follow a particular path. God created me, we have our book, and we have our prophet. Our responsibilities are certain. (Meryem, Female, Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 19/4/2012)

To me, the current *cemaats* feel like states sometimes. Sometimes it is like you are making an effort for them, you are doing something for them. And also what is called a *cemaat* has a leader, there is someone for you, this does not feel rational to me. To me it feels weird, having a leader and constantly following what he says, is going to say. They [students] should decide on their own what they are going to do with their life by thinking on their own. When one joins a *cemaat* it happens to be like you have to do this and that every day, we are going there in the evening, in the morning, at the weekend, there is a meeting there, we are going to do whatever they say. I mean with your own will you can go a couple of times and see. That's fine but when one is constantly involved in it, then the students' independence vanishes.

(Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

Some religious groups evidently allow substantially more liberty of thought than others, and this was remarked on by some of my interviewees. Notwithstanding this, there are many secularist students who take the view that all religious groups are inherently inimical to the freedom and independence for their members.

*What makes your group different from other cemaats?*

I think that is, there is not a leader and there are no somebodies' channelling, I mean, a format shifting, channelling, that is not there. Surely somebody would set

an example and support you. But according to me, this has never been formalist or in some way to channel your brain... Apart from the no-leader thing, they are valuing people for who they are as people. (Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

Nevertheless, secularist students argued that not all religious groups support independence and liberty, and that those students who are active in religious groups cannot have their own thoughts and cannot decide about their own lives.

I absolutely am against *tarikats* and *cemaats* because an idea is being imposed there. They do not allow people to be as they are. There you act according to the opinions of others. You do not own your own thought. Everything utterly shall happen as a certain person says. (Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

We used to go to the Qur'an course when I was little, I didn't like it at all. To follow an order has not appealed to me since I was a kid. One comes there and reads something and others are, like, yes, we should live like that. This does not feel right to me. Maybe the intentions are good but I do not need the books read. Yes I shall read, and form it [my own opinion], embrace the things I need to but I will live my life as I know and wish... (Adem, Male, International Relations, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 24/4/2012)

Rationality is a notable feature of the new generation of Turkish society's approach to religion with the expansion of higher education in the country. This leads, often enough, to conflict with their parents, religious groups, and traditions. My research participants, university students, want to maintain their belief in God, and other religious doctrines, but in a rational way. Rather than being fatalist, they want to be the captain of their own soul.

In contrast to their forebears, they want to read the Qur'an in Turkish, with understanding. This propensity towards rationality seems not to dispose students to irreligion but rather to "conscious religiosity" (*şuurlu dindarlık*). However, there is uncertainty and a diversity of opinion among students regarding the limits and scope of rationality. What counts as rational varies between individuals and from group to group. All the *Nur* movements for instance, focus on the faith that is acquired through investigation (*tahkiki iman*), and criticize faith acquired through imitation of the ancestors or predecessors (*taklidi iman*). Some groups highlight the importance of having a conscience (*şuur, bilinç*) in faith, prayer, morality, and human affairs. Other groups and religiously observant individuals criticize them for being irrational in-group brainwashing forms of relationships and teachings. Some students, while being uncompromising when it comes to decisions in their own lives, might submit unquestioningly to guidance on a political issue, for instance.

Both the NGOs and religious groups [*cemaats* and *tarikats*] have undoubtedly played a role in the rise of religiosity in the society. But an Islamic definition without a social and political awareness is not right. Since this definition is regressive, also it regresses the perception of civilization. We do not accept this definition. So to carry out this definition maybe, how effective are the *tarikats*. So *cemaats*, yes, they are somewhat effective, maybe very effective but how effective are *tarikats*? That should be talked about too. Like, *tarikats* might be having a negative effect.

*Like making people more passive?*

Unfortunately it happens.

*Is that a bad thing?*

Yes, it is, because a person's way of thinking, contemplating on their own is an important matter. For example, a *cemaat* or *tarikat* leader who tells people to vote for a party is denying the minds of people, the mind of the individual, I think. A person should always have the liberty to choose, to live according to their own rights and wrongs. Such that, look to the Qur'an verses warning on this matter. From Taha to other chapters, it merely says, warn, threaten or give the good news. The order may change. It says you tell the people. It does not say, force people to do something. But there is that kind of handicap in the perceptions of the *cemaats* and *tarikats*. This is a handicap that should be overcome. There is a handicap in the groups about valuing the person, valuing Muslims. (Emre, Male, Computer Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

Religiously observant students who prefer not to be members of a religious group, but to be active in an NGO or a non-religious society criticized the conservative character of religious groups. They often held the view that they do not need external control, that individuals can control themselves if they really believe in the principles of their religion. One of my interviewee students likened the protective structure of the religious groups to living under a glass bell, able to see but not feel. Having left a particular group, he said that now he experienced the genuine taste of both good and bad deeds. Fatma, as a religiously observant female student, also argued that although religious groups are useful in various ways, they isolate students from the world.

To be honest, I do not think we should be that much protected from the outside world. Like, at the end of the day, bad habits are the person's own, nobody is imposing them on you. One can protect oneself. In the past too, during my high school and university years I was never devoted to the *cemaat* life but never fell into doing bad deeds either. In the end, it is up to you. And I have never seen

someone who would acquire bad deeds, or so. This way it is like a person has never been able to decide for themselves about something. Like if they see people drinking and enjoying themselves, they immediately do the same thing. But this won't happen. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

Hale approached the subject in terms of the different characteristics of people and groups, arguing that religious groups appeal to the heart (*kalp*), rather than reason (*akıl*), and people were different in their interests. While religious groups and their teachings were attractive to some people, they would be unattractive to others. Her argument, though, seems much more suited to the *tarikats*, than the *cemaats* and political Islamist groups, as the *tarikats* of Turkey concentrate on spirituality rather than philosophy and politics.

*Cemaats* and *tarikats* have an effect of bringing people closer together or moving them further apart. In the Islamic tradition we can distinguish this like the theology [*Kelam*] culture and a *sufi* [*tasavvuf*] culture originated in the Islamic tradition, and these two have never got along very well, they are constantly conflicted. Because while one appeals to the person's mind, the other appealed to the heart. This situation also signals people's approach to religion. While some people want religion to address their minds others want their hearts to be addressed. Thus while religious *cemaats* are attractive for some, they are repulsive for others. Since some actions in the *cemaats* seem irrational to people, it can actually push people away from religion. And others approach it feeling that "this is the thing I needed". As I mentioned regarding myself, I think I have spiritual needs and want them to be fulfilled. For example there are many people having those kinds of needs and to fulfil these gaps people are heading towards *cemaats*. But that is okay, if it is their

own individual choice, it is a nice thing. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

## **6.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has analysed the place of Turkish religious groups in the lives of university students in terms of their religiosity and secularity. Elucidation is sought of the perceptions university students have of religious groups, and the ways the groups affect students' lives; how they influence the students' political attitudes towards the secular Turkish state; the impact on the lifestyles of the students publicly and privately; and what students think of the religious groups for good and for ill.

In Turkey, university students generally encounter religious groups early years in education or lately at university. Some religious groups have established private primary and secondary schools and universities. Students attend these schools either because of the academic success of these schools or because of their parents' desire that their children receive a good education, including a good religious and moral education. Because of the inadequacy of religious education in public schools, some students of public schools attend Qur'an courses run by religious groups. Some religious groups have established university preparatory courses, which have become popular, and have spread all over the country. These courses have come to be seen as necessary to be able to get into university, so that many university students attend them and thus encounter a religious group. As everywhere in the world, cheap accommodation is a must for most university students; and the facilities, accommodation and scholarships offered by religious groups to students is very attractive. Even non-religious, non-practising, or secularist students benefit from these opportunities. The groups establish student societies at universities and organize youth-

oriented events. At the same time, they organize other kinds of events outside of the universities such as picnics, football matches, movie nights, tours, religious meetings, and religious conversations.

In Turkey, Islamic groups mainly fall into two camps: *tarikats* and *cemaats*. While *tarikats* focus on the spiritual aspect of Islamic teaching, Sufism, and date back to the first centuries of Islam, *cemaats*, although they originally arose from *tarikats*, are new religious movements, which were founded in the period of the Republic. Along with the spiritual aspect of Islam, *cemaats* are particularly concerned with education, politics, relief of distress and other social matters. Of the *Tarikats*, *Nakşibendilik*, *Mevlevilik* and *Kadirilik* are the most influential of a wide range; while *Nurculuk* or the *Nur* movement, Gülen or the *Hizmet* movement, the *Milli Görüş* movement, and *Süleymancılık* are the most organised, widespread and well-known *cemaats*. In this thesis, these are all referred to as religious movements and religious groups. As the focus here is on Islam and Muslim university students, other religions and their religious groups have not featured in this research.

The history of religious groups is, at the same time, the history of the relationship between the religious and secularist state in Turkey. In addition, it can be seen as a conflict between privatization and non-privatization of religion. While the Turkish state was struggling to push religion into the margins and into the private sphere, religious groups and their activities were seen as a threat by the state and secularists, who were inclined to suspect the religious of being unhappy with the secular Republic and wanting to go back (*irtica*) to an Islamic regime implementing *Shari'a* law. The finding is that among the priority targets of these groups is placing religion, religiosity and religiously observant people into the public sphere, and in the meantime, securing for university students suitable alternatives to "unsuitable" secular spaces and leisure activities. They seek to

educate the new generation in Islamic values, teaching them Islamic beliefs and principles. According to the students, private schools and universities established by religious groups respond to the needs of religiously observant people giving a quality science and religious education.

Based on my observations, it seems religious groups are achieving their aims of creating social surroundings suitable for practising religion, while providing opportunities for socializing through their institutions and events. This also responds to the felt need of both parents and students, particularly female students with their home at a distance from Istanbul. For an average conservative Turkish family it is difficult sending their children, especially their daughters, to another city, which are perceived as full of “dangerous” places and people both in terms of safety and Islamic values. There is reason for thinking, therefore, that religious groups make a significant contribution to the mobilization and modernization of Turkish society. In addition, there has been a significant role of the religious groups in ‘de-privatization’ of religion, that is, bringing it into the political and public spheres. As Tocqueville points out, “the democratization of politics and the entrance of ordinary people into the political arena would augment, rather than diminish, the public relevance of religion” (cited in Casanova, 2006: 20).

Another observation of mine on my both secularist and religiously observant research participants has been their growing tendency to embrace an individualization of their religion. Even religiously observant research participants criticize religious groups for some of their characteristics. While they appreciate the importance of religious groups, they complain of them discouraging independent thinking. Not all religious groups are authoritarian, but students do generally feel the need to take control of their lives and make their own decisions. There was some criticism by students of groups they had had a

relationship with at one time, but had left because, they said, of lack of respect for individuality.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: DIVISION OR COHESION?

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, my aim is to find out whether there are sharp divisions among Turkish university students with regard to religion and secularism and, if so, to ascertain this division. I also explore how university students understand this division, and then assess the debate from conceptual, political, and social angles. Another aim of this chapter is to explore whether the differentiation in Turkish society results in extreme polarisation or whether it is a consequence of a pluralistic society.

In order to elucidate these issues, I will first consider the literature on the Turkish fragmentation or division debates in the conceptual, political and social spheres. After summarizing and reviewing the views of relevant scholars, I present and analyse the responses to and experiences of the Turkish university students with whom I conducted in-depth interviews in Istanbul on this issue. I will also present the observations I made in Istanbul during my fieldwork.

This chapter consists of three sections. In the first section, I consider, culturally and conceptually the issue of differentiation of some philosophical underpinnings.

The second section concerns debates at the political level. Although a part of chapter four concentrated on Islamism and secularism, here the subject is examined from another aspect, seeking answers to the following questions: what are the meanings of the terms Islamic state and secular state in Turkey? What are the perceptions of Turkish university students of these terms and subjects?

And finally, the third section concentrates on differentiation within Turkish society. Whether Turkish youth culture, particularly among university students, has become fragmented in terms of religion and secularity, is the central subject of this section. In order to find the answer, I consider the statements of my informants and my observations during my fieldwork in Istanbul. In answering the following questions, this section is related to the central questions of my thesis; namely, are there different lifestyles in Turkey in terms of religiosity and secularity? Does religiosity necessitate a different lifestyle for religiously observant Muslims? Are there different spaces for religiously observant and non-observant people in Turkey? Is there tension experienced by religiously observant or non-observant Turkish university students because of differences in lifestyle? How much difficulty do religiously observant university students encounter in practising religious values and principles in their lives, and what are the main difficulties? How do they try to solve problems philosophically, politically and socially?

In the literature, scholars with different worldviews and from different disciplines generally agree that there has been tension in Turkish society over religiosity and secularity. According to Berkes (2002) the major problem in secularization is the restriction and suppression of the sacred sphere in economic, political, educational, sexual, and informational life spaces. He argues that those who are against to this process are called reactionary (*irticacı, mürteci*), and hence this is defined as a conflict between reactionaries and “modern people”, between people and the state, or between intellectuals and the uneducated.

Religiously observant Muslims have been in philosophical, cultural and political crisis for more than a century. As Akyol (2011b) says, the biggest Islamic problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is how to be a good Muslim in an open, democratic and global world in which Islamic values are to be defended.

Together with industrialization, political, social and cultural modernity or secularity have brought a big change to Turkish cultural codes. The major change has been in the minds of the people. Arslan (1998) highlights the psychological and philosophical aspects of the tension experienced saying that there is a price we need to pay for modernity, and this price is the tension that arises from balancing different identities. He argues that we juggle our different identities in modern life, and that without facing this difficulty and experiencing this tension, we cannot be modern.

Some scholars discuss tension at the societal level. A secular judicial system, for instance, causes tension in Turkish society because a judicial system should respond to the needs of society. As Öktem says, “in a country with an overwhelmingly Muslim majority, secular legislation always presents practical problems in the conduct of social life” (2002: 371).

## **7.2 DIVISION AT THE CULTURAL AND CONCEPTUAL LEVEL**

The original distinction between religious and secular affairs in Islamic thought is different from that in Western thought. The term used for religion and religious affairs is *din* and the term for the world and worldly affairs is *dunya*. However, these are not seen as completely separate by Muslims. Berkey argues that the distinction between the sacred and secular is “meaningless” in Islamic thought and tradition (2004: 203). *Dunya* or *dunyawi* does not mean secular; it refers to worldly affairs through which Muslims work, and which test their moral right to ascend to heaven in the hereafter (*ahiret*).

Muslims argue that Islam is not only a belief system but has principles and values concerning every aspect of life, from politics to the civil sphere (Daver, 1988). Monshipouri claims that Islamic principles and institutions are associated with all spheres

of life. He says, “In the majority of Muslim societies, there is not a distinct separation between religion and other aspects of people’s lives. Islam is both *din wa dunya* (religion and the world).” According to him, there is not a conflict between religion and the world; rather, the problem is “between the forces of tradition and the forces of modernity” (2004: 615).

During my fieldwork, I asked my informants about the relationship between religion and the world. Religiously observant students emphasized the significance of the penetration of religious values into worldly affairs. When we talked about the wide-ranging activities of Kudret’s religious group he compared the comprehensiveness of the religious group with the comprehensiveness of religion itself. According to him, religion, Islam in particular, is related to every aspect of life:

We are in a period that if you are not in every part of the society, you will not be able to be part of it. We speak of the communication era. That is, you need to be in each and every place. You need to have a word. Because this is precisely what religion is. That is, religion is in every part of society. Secularism, religiousness, these are not Islamic terms really. To separate these is like to separate the earth, to put the hereafter in a faith apart; this is secularism, I think. In Europe, for instance, it is working very well, like in France. Like the sphere of the Church is fixed, the sphere of the state is fixed; they do not interfere in each other, everyone does their job in their area. So nobody steps in to the area of the other. But Islam is not like that. Islam encompasses the whole of life, it is a living thing. Something that organizes everything. Hence, if you separate the earth, the state, apply secularism to an Islamic state, that will not happen. Because in the end, Islam is a religion that designs both life on earth and in the hereafter. In this respect, it is a system in its entirety that rules everything together. Actually, in their essence, the monotheistic

religions like Christianity and Judaism were so as well. They designed both life on earth and in the hereafter. You could say that when these separations took place they brought about the bankruptcy of religion, because religion is a totality. Religion encompasses the whole adventure of being human; if you divide it, it is finished. Hence if you are a Muslim you have to be so in every sphere of life. Since religion is a system that encompasses all spheres, all actions, you need to carry the values of religion to all spheres so that religion can be established. Maybe you should be in media as well. At least, you should do your version of it, I mean, you should do it the way a Muslim is supposed to do it. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

The distinction between *din* and *dunya* is used in Islamic literature to classify Islamic rules and duties. The terms are used for different areas of religious duties: *din* means *'ibadat*, namely worship and ritual, while *dunya* means *mu'amalat*, namely worldly transactions (Zubaida, 2005: 438-9). As a result of this distinction, while a state can apply law enforcement to worldly transactions, it cannot apply legal sanctions in the sphere of worship. Worship being related to the hereafter, people can only give advice and preach on matters of this nature. As Kamali says, “The *Shari'ah* itself draws a distinction between juridical obligations and religious obligations (*wajib qada'i*, *wajib dini*) and takes the latter out of the jurisdiction of the courts of justice” (Kamali, 2008: 266). Another reason for drawing this distinction is to clarify which areas and rulings can be changed according to the needs of the time and new circumstances, and which areas and rulings cannot be changed. Renewal (*tajdid*) is crucial for religion and for a judicial system. In Islamic tradition, renewing the rulings according to essential Islamic principles and sources is provided with *ijtihad*, which means the striving of Muslim scholars to find new rulings or solutions for new problems (Çelik, 2012). If the ruling concerns worship, it can never be

changed. However, as Kamali indicates, “If it concerns worldly transactions, the majority of jurists have held that it is open to interpretation and *ijtihad*” (Kamali, 2008: 26).

The general Western view of modernity and secularity, which involves separating religion from worldly affairs, is not seen as compatible with Islam because, first of all, the main principle of Islam, according to al Faruqi, is unity (*tawhid*) and it, together with the oneness of God, implies the unity of *din* and *dunya*, faith and practice, politics and religion and so on (Al Faruqi, 1982). For approximately a century, Muslim scholars have discussed the possibility of separating religion from politics, the judicial system, education, and science. Some modernist scholars argue that it is possible, and that adopting modernity and secularity is the only way to escape the social and political problems of the Muslim world, since the main cause of these problems is Islamic tradition. Some traditional scholars, on the other hand, defend the conservation of religion against modernity, rejecting Westernising attempts at reform (Çelik, 2012).

Opposed to these extremes, the majority of influential Muslim scholars defend renewal and revival. According to this view, Islam is related to all spheres of life at all times, and is not for a particular time or circumstance. Islam was revealed at a particular time for all times until the day of judgement. Employing the concept of *ijtihad*, Islam may be seen as not completely opposed to modernity, nor in need of adapting to it, but rather renewal may be achieved through an internal dynamics, relying on the primary sources (the Qur'an and the Sunna) and the principles deduced from them. Past Muslim scholars created a methodology to do this called *Usul al-fiqh* (legal theory or the principles of Islamic jurisprudence). This methodology aims to ascertain what is mutable and immutable in Islamic law, and guides Muslim scholars when they perform *ijtihad* in response to a change in circumstances (Karaman, 2010).

Saeed makes the aforementioned classification in the following way:

Muslims can be divided into three broad categories as far as their responses to the challenges posed to Islam by modern ideas, institutions and values are concerned. The first category sees no need to change 14 centuries of tradition and regards any ‘modernization’ of the understanding of religion as tantamount to a mortal blow against Islam. The second feels that opposition to change is unwise and counterproductive if Muslims are to be active participants in the modern world. They present Islam in a way that suits people living in the modern period, but do not go as far as significantly altering traditionally held Islamic ideas, institutions and values. The third category wants to re-present Islam by questioning key aspects of the tradition, ignoring what is not relevant to the modern period, while emphasizing what is relevant and attempting to remain faithful to the immutable Qur’anic ethos, objectives and values (2006: 8).

Tariq Ramadan (2009) is a well-known Muslim scholar who advocates the compatibility of Islam and modernity. He refers to the ambiguity of some Muslim thinkers concerning modernity and Westernization. Ramadan draws a distinction between modernity and Westernization: “Nothing in Islam is opposed to modernity and we can firmly state that Muslim thinkers and ‘ulama’ (learned scholars) who are opposed to this notion, and to the idea of change and evolution that it covers, often confuse it with the model which is current in the West. Clearly, they confuse *modernity* with *Westernization*” (2009: 307). He sees the values and principles of modernity as compatible with the principles of Islam: “Muslims have themselves, therefore, to discover the challenges of their time. Nothing in Islam is opposed to individual engagement, social reform, to progress and well-being. On the contrary, one of the principles of *Usul al-Fiqh* is to consider that all social reform and scientific progress.” (2009: 308).

There is a crucial difference between modernist scholars and revivalist scholars (or the advocates of renewal, *tajdid*) in Turkey, as in the Muslim world in general. Revivalist scholars and movements highlight the importance of the starting point. According to them, modernist Muslims make mistakes when they interpret Islamic sources and tradition on the basis of modern and secular values. They argue that, even if they arrive at the same result, Muslims need to identify themselves on the basis of Islamic values, and they should seek solutions for the sake of Islam. They say that Muslims must shun the influence of Western values and politics; otherwise all interpretations will only legitimate modern circumstances (Paçacı, 2008).

In Islamic thought, worship (*ibadet*) is not limited to rituals, such as prayer (*namaz*), fasting during the month of Ramadan (*oruç*), and pilgrimage (*hac*), but comprises all activities. One of the most influential revivalist Muslim scholars of the republican period in Turkey, and founder of the *Nur* movement, Said Nursi (1878-1960), emphasised the importance of intention (*niyet*), saying that, having considered it for forty years, he believed that intention even has the potential to transform ordinary activities (*adetler*) into worship (*ibadet*) (Nursi, 1993). This view is put forward in various works; there being the condition that people must practise the obligatory prayers (*farz ibadetler*). According to one of my informants, even going on holiday can become worship as long as she continued to perform the necessary prayers:

Religion is of course at the centre of my life. There are rights and wrongs in my head. I go along with the world as long as I do not do wrong, not neglect my worship, respect the rights of my parents over me (these can be multiple). There are general rules of religion. Others are there to ensure that you do not violate those rules. For example, one should be in *tesettür* (clothing and being covered in an Islamic way). I could do it with either a headscarf or a shawl. For example, “jeans

are not to be worn” is not a general rule, it is formalist. In fact if you wear jeans and a topcoat over it, you are in *tesettür*. Like that. To me, worship is not solely prayers and fasting. For instance, as long as one follows one’s obligations towards God, going on a vacation is also worship. Unless I neglect my prayers being on vacation. Or, if they are performing charity, practising charity (*zekat*), and so a Muslim shouldn’t be judged over possessing, maybe not the most expensive, but the most comfortable car. (Ebru, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/8/2012)

The definition of the term “Islamic” comes into prominence here. What is Islamic and what is un-Islamic? Some Muslim thinkers advocate separating religion (*din*) and Islamic law (*fiqh*) from each other, arguing that while religion cannot change, law can. In a symposium organized by *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı* (Turkish Religious Foundation) in 2002, Ali Bardakoğlu, who was the president of the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Directorate of Religious Affairs) between 2003 and 2010, defended this view. However, one of the most prominent Muslim scholars, Hayrettin Karaman, objected, arguing that it apparently implies the secularization of the sphere of jurisprudence. Karaman said that God does not give free rein to people and the universe; rather, He or religion intervenes in all spheres of life. This intervention includes permissible (*mubah*) acts, spheres of life, and issues (Karaman, 2007).

In Islamic jurisprudence there is a distinction between legal, moral and religious rulings depending on their levels of necessity. Although the number and names of terms vary from one school of law (*madhab*, in Turkish *mezhep*) to another, the original names of the terms in Arabic are *wajib* (obligatory), *mandub* (recommended), *mubah* (permissible), *makruh* (reprehensible), and *haram* (forbidden). In this way Islam does not exclude any sphere and, as Kamali argues, “concerns itself with all areas of human activity, not always in an imposing and overbearing way, but in the form of moral encouragement

and persuasion" (2008, 18). Karaman (2007) says that even the permissible (*mubah*) is under the control of God, being permissible in the light of Islamic values and principles.

Since the beginning of modernization and secularism in Turkey, the terms "Islamic", "un-Islamic", secular (in Turkish, *seküler, laik*) have not been used in the public sphere. Instead, these terms have been used as a quick way of identifying institutions, products, organizations, and so forth as compatible with Islamic values and principles or not. This creates a bifurcation in society between the Islamic and un-Islamic. One of my student informants worked for an "Islamic" newspaper, and I asked what he thought of the distinction between his paper and a secular one, having regard to the fact that secular papers also have religious columns and a special page during Ramadan.

*What are the features that make your newspaper Islamic? For instance, say authors of theology, it happens to be in a secular newspaper, like Hürriyet, too?*

You can't see an advert for alcohol in our newspaper, it would not take an advert for alcohol, this is loud and clear, this is what makes our newspaper Islamic. For example, you cannot see an advert with nude women, which would not be compatible with religiousness. You can't see an advert of a swimsuit, not a model with a swimsuit. A décolleté will not happen, say naked legs, etc. will not happen, and neither will be alcohol advert.

*Banks?*

Banks could be but not advertisements for interest. *Akbank*, for instance; say they started a campaign giving consumer loans. But establishing a system without interest, arbitrarily, saying "we are just charging a commission but not any interest". It specifies zero per cent interest tables and sends the advert of that to you. These are the matters on the advertising side; apart from that there are things

on the publication side. For example, for a movie with [sexually] nasty content, there could be reviews, but no promotion.

*With the columnists, would there be things that would not be compatible with the values of Islam?*

It might be, because not all of our columnists are Muslims, like we have Armenian authors. Certainly every publication corporation has a policy and they do not let you breach this, would not let you contravene it, if you will not follow that publication policy this is not your place. That does not mean everyone will say the same thing, like in a single choir. Our newspaper's publication policy is not a narrow one, for instance, you shall not swear at sacred values, insult people; apart from that, write whatever you wish. That is put aside; it is not like there is no space, say, for a socialist statement. We have socialists, Armenians, etc. authors. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

The relationship between Islam and science is another significant issue in the philosophical sphere. This issue was discussed in the twentieth century by almost all religious scholars in Turkey and in other Muslim countries. I observed in Turkey that this debate has lost its appeal because people see a less contradiction between Islam and science. It appears, in my view, that religious groups, and the religiously observant students supported by religious movements, played a part in this change. All the university students I met during my fieldwork in Istanbul agreed that Islam and science are compatible with each other. The only exception to this, albeit a most significant one, is evolution theory. Some non-science students tended to doubt it. One student told of a Kemalist-secularist uncle of his who was very surprised that he believed in science. All the secularist students also held the view that Islam and science were not in contradiction.

There is a significant detail in this worth mentioning. Al Attas summarizes the sensitivity of religiously observant people regarding relationship between Islam and science:

We do affirm that religion is in harmony with science. But this does not mean that religion is in harmony with modern scientific methodology and philosophy of science. Since there is no science that is free of value, we must intelligently investigate and study the values and judgements that are inherent in, or aligned to, the presuppositions and interpretations of modern science. We must not indifferently and uncritically accept each new scientific or philosophical theory without first understanding its implication and testing the validity of values that go along with the theory. Islam possesses within itself the source of its claim to truth, and does not need scientific or philosophical theories to justify such a claim (1995: 38).

### **7.3 DIFFERENTIATION AT THE SOCIETAL LEVEL**

Turkey has a society divided into various groups in terms of various aspects, such as ethnicities, religions, sects, religious groups, leftist groups, politics, religiosity and so on. Those who are religiously observant and those who are not are one of these divisions in the country. Culturally this fact can be observed in every walk of life, from neighbourhoods to schools, clothing to newspapers, hotels to TV channels, there are widely understood and shared coding systems through which people detect degrees of religiosity and secularity.

Having different understandings of religion and the world causes a division in Turkish society. Those who embrace modernization and Westernization and those who embrace and prioritize Islamic values live in the same society, but in different ways. A

social differentiation occurs in various spheres of life and, as a result, there might be tensions experienced by all sides of society. As Göle argues, “Changes in life-styles and aesthetic values that reflected the shift from an Islamic to a Western culture created cultural distinctions and social stratification in Turkish society” (1997: 51).

During my fieldwork, in my interviews, in the events organized by religious and secular groups, and in daily conversations, I observed a general discourse of “we” and “them”, the use of these pronouns depending on the speaker. When it comes to lifestyle, religiously observant student typically uses “them” in reference to secularist people. This is the same for secular or secularist students. However, while secularist students use “*dinci*” (religiost) or “*İslamci*” (Islamist) as synonyms, religiously observant students generally do not use particular words to describe secularist people. Only some extremists and political Islamists distinguish themselves as “Muslim” as opposed to the secular status ascribed to everyone else. When I asked, “If you are Muslims, what are the others? Are they non-Muslims?” they appeared taken aback and at first said nothing, and then reluctantly agreed that others are Muslim too. The students in the *Nur* movements identify secular Muslims as “*ehl-i dünya*”, i.e. worldly or worldly-minded people. This term refers to Muslims neglectful of religious duties and the hereafter, for whom religion is not at the forefront of their life. The adherents of most religious groups do not usually hold this view of secularist people, but refer to secular groups by name or political stance, e.g. “*CHPli*” is used in regard to the secularist and Kemalist political party, CHP, and “*solcu*” in reference to those they regard as left wing.

I also observed great differences between the everyday language of religiously observant and secularist students. While religiously observant students prefer words from Ottoman Turkish and Arabic, and words evocative of religious values, secularist students avoid using such Ottoman Turkish and Arabic words, preferring a secularized language

restricted to “pure” Turkish (*öztürkçe*) and Western loan words. Sometimes conflicts over wording blow up, especially in the media. The way the Eid following Ramadan, the month of fasting, is referred to, for instance, gives rise to comment in the media every year. While the secular media will generally refer to it as “*Şeker bayramı*” (the Sweet Feast), conservative or Islamic media call it “*Ramazan bayramı*” (the Ramadan Feast). With some of my informants I prepared a list of words used mostly by secularist people and those used mostly by religiously observant people.

Table 1 – Different Languages in Daily Life in Turkey

|                  | ENGLISH           | RELIGIOUS                    | SECULAR                |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>GREETINGS</b> |                   |                              |                        |
|                  | Good day          | Selamün aleyküm              | İyi günler             |
|                  | Good morning      | Hayırlı sabahlar             | Günaydın               |
|                  | Take care         | Allah'a emanet ol            | Kendine iyi bak        |
|                  | Good night        | Allah rahatlık versin        | İyi geceler            |
|                  | I am fine, thanks | İyyim elhamdülillah          | İyyim, teşekkür ederim |
|                  | Congratulations   | Hayırlı olsun                | Kutlu olsun; tebrikler |
|                  | Happy eid         | Bayramınız mübarek olsun     | Bayramınız kutlu olsun |
|                  | Happy birthday    | Allah hayırlı ömürler versin | Nice senelere          |
| <b>WISHES</b>    |                   |                              |                        |
|                  | God bless you     | Yerhamükallah                | Çok yaşa               |
|                  | I hope            | İnşallah                     | Umarım                 |
|                  | Thank you         | Allah razı olsun             | Teşekkür ederim        |
|                  | Rest in peace     | Allah rahmet eylesin         | Toprağı bol olsun      |
|                  | Get well soon     | Allah şifalar versin         | Geçmiş olsun           |
| <b>NAMING</b>    |                   |                              |                        |
|                  | Ramadan feast     | Ramazan bayramı              | Şeker bayramı          |
|                  | God               | Allah                        | Tanrı                  |
|                  | Headscarf         | Başörtüsü                    | Türban                 |
| <b>NOTIONS</b>   |                   |                              |                        |
|                  | Science           | İlim                         | Bilim                  |
|                  | Coincidence       | Tevafuk                      | Tesadüf                |
|                  | Islamic           | İslamî                       | Dinî                   |
|                  | Fortunate         | Bereketli                    | Uğurlu                 |
|                  | Fortune           | Kader                        | Talih                  |
|                  | Kismet            | Nasip, kismet                | Şans                   |

Some points should be made about the uses of the different words in this list. While religiously observant people use secular language along with their religious language, secularist people rarely use religious words in private or in public. It seems to me that this is a matter of power relations. As my religiously observant informants declared, they felt under secularist pressure at school and work and in almost every sphere of their public life until the rise of the AKP government. Under these circumstances, religiously observant people had to use secular language in order to hide their true affiliations and avoid social, political and economic discrimination. From my observations, circumstances have slightly eased for religiously observant people since the AKP came to power in 2002, and although secularist people still do not use religious expressions, the expressions of religiously observant people has been normalized in daily life, business, politics and the media.

Students in their public life feel the religious-secular social divide. Faruk, for instance, complained about the contemptuous attitudes of his secular classmates:

When they talk with young people of our side, young people of the social section or socialist youth try to mock them. Like at the very least there is sarcasm going on. They do it as if it is somewhat a joke, if they are close friends. Or, if they are not, they might look down on them (religious observant students). That is the case. This is a common situation that we can generalize, such that I observe it. (Faruk, Male, International Relations, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 23/3/2012)

The headscarf or its absence is the most visible sign of a woman's worldview. According to Ferda, students wearing the headscarf feel the social division much more than others:

I started wearing a headscarf while I was at a private high school. Although it was a school of a *cemaat*, many of my friends did not wear the headscarf. It was two of us

who wore headscarves. I too started to wear a headscarf and suddenly realized how much attention I got from (those) around me. Because, even in our family, my uncles for example, when I wanted to greet them during the feast (*eid* or *bayram*), did not extend me their hands. There were ones behaving unpleasantly because I wore a headscarf. I then realized the people had started to act differently; there was such separation in public. When I was a kid, I realized that separation. I still have this thought in my head. There is a separation in every aspect, for instance as to ideas. I think people are categorizing themselves according to it. They classify in that sense, I realized. And another thing, I see that people who understand Islam completely surely are different from the ones who do not know and understand Islam, and maybe I want to think so a bit also. (Ferda, Female, Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 26/3/2012)

Another religiously observant student, who wears the headscarf, studying in the faculty of architecture, talked about her anxieties at school, over her religious identity:

I feel bad when I see some behaviour of teachers at school. For example, our teachers are still harassing us at school because we wear headscarves. When defending a project to a panel, the teacher might criticise the one wearing a headscarf twice as often as the others. As a result of that, there is lack of good will towards the school. Certainly I cannot say that for all teachers, but you come across some such teachers. And that ruins your whole day. You feel like you struggle for nothing. And there is that also: when you look to the general profile of the architects, in general, it is a Kemalist, left wing society. People feel like they need to be accepted by them. Like you always need to explain yourself to them and prove yourself to them, like “look I too can do it, I actually am that kind of person”. To me this is something I do not like at all. There is a fear that they can block my

way in future, can obstruct me, but I do not know whether this will happen. (Fatma, Female, 21, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

However, when I asked the same student whether she experiences these problems with all lecturers and all secular friends, she said that she does not.

Generally old teachers are like that. Young new teachers do not have such a problem. Some lecturers, who are old and have been at that school for years, act that way.

*Are you having that problem with your friends?*

There is no such problem with friends. I mean you realize [they notice] but, there is no verbal harassment. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

There is a crucial point here: although these kinds of problems were and are experienced among the older generation, it would seem that the new generation does not experience these troubles as much as the previous one. In the new social structure of Turkey, young people have much more interaction with each other and spend more time together. Nevertheless, even though they get closer with the passing of time and know each other more than before, both secularist and religiously observant students have prejudices about each other. According to religiously observant students, the secularists have many prejudices against them. They think that religiously observant people only listen to religious music; only read books by religious writers; are not interested in science; do not like having fun; always vote for the AKP; and are all involved only with religious groups and their events. Fatma, after outlining such assumptions, admitted that religiously observant students have similar prejudices about secularist students.

Actually if you think about it, there are many women wearing the headscarf in our school. When you look around the school, actually many of the people wearing the

headscarf are also extremely prejudicial towards secularist people. (Fatma, Female, Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2/4/2012)

Although big social tensions do still exist in Turkish society between the religiously observant and the secular, according to my own experiences, observations and the statements of my informants, the social distancing and prejudices have dramatically decreased in recent years. I attended the spring festivals of four different universities. In the festivals, schools and student societies organize concerts, lay on entertainments, set up on open markets, all for approximately one week. When I was at the festivals, I observed that there were thousands of attendees at each of the campuses, there were many female students wearing headscarves, and male students who are active in religious groups. Even though they did not drink alcohol and join the dance groups, they attended the concerts, listened to the pop music singers and spent some times enjoying the festivals.

Among my informants, many religiously observant students mentioned their good relations with secularist, Armenian, Jewish and leftists students. And secularist students mentioned good relations with religious male and female friends. They generally stated that although they had different worldviews and political views, there were not that many social problems among young people, and the problems were gradually decreasing over time. The problem, as they saw it, was mainly with the older generation. Sema's activism is a good example for dialogue between the students from different backgrounds and from different worldviews. She is a very well known activist student among both religiously observant and secularist students, who sometime appears in TV programmes due to her activities.

Among young people, there is no problem of isolating others. I have many friends who do not wear a headscarf and many who do. I have friends who wear a burqa (*çarşaf*), Jewish friends and Armenian friends. For all, we are able to get along with

each other, and we can talk. Moreover I have friends who wear the headscarf and I introduce them to my secularist friends. And I do observe they get along. Very well, I mean. There are some women, narrow-minded dinosaurs. They are still not happy with our getting along well. As if art is their monopoly, Istanbul is their monopoly, they stare like saying “Oops where did you come out! Wear your clogs and return to your neighbourhood, Çarsamba!” Not common among young people, but some happen to come from a Kemalist family, for instance. They cannot understand, cannot empathise. They do not often share an occasion with a person wearing a headscarf. They can only share a bus, but that is because they have to. Such young people are suffering from prejudice and distance. (Sema, Female, Photography, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 25/3/2012)

This supports Toprak’s argument that the division between the urban elites and the traditionalist mass of the population is in fact disappearing because of social and geographical changes:

“The division of the population into a secular, urban elite committed to the Westernization project of the republic’s founders versus a largely traditional mass – a division which has been widely discussed by Turkish social scientists as a centre-periphery gap – is a much less useful categorization today. Social and geographical mobility, coupled with the development of modern communication networks, to a large extent have integrated the periphery with the center” (1995: 94).

Toprak indicates that new social, geographical, and economic conditions have brought significant changes in society. Although the secular elite of Turkey did not welcome the new elite, now they share the benefits and share the same spaces. As a result, both sides are now being transformed. Yahya says that although university students embrace different

lifestyles, social relationship and communication between different groups at university are quite good:

There is public pressure on the religious, such that, at the university, a person who wants to practice their religion is, like, somewhat isolated. I mean this is a natural process. At the end the so-called youth who follow popular culture go for fun, hang around at Taksim, do this, do that. But since a conservative person is bound by some rules and lives social life of this kind only to a certain extent, because of that there is a separation, a split, but among friends there is no such discrimination. That is, whoever prays, prays, and whoever does not, does not. There is no such problem among university students. So generally that pressure is not there. Put aside certain marginal groups, except the marginal groups, the left wing and the right, ones not wearing headscarf and ones wearing it, they can all hang out together. All can sit and chat around a table. (Yahya, Male, Biology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/3/2012)

#### **7.4 SPATIAL DIFFERENTIATION IN TURKISH SOCIETY**

The religiously observant students I interviewed in Istanbul generally mentioned lifestyle (*hayat tarzi*) and said that religion and religiosity necessitate a particular way of life. In some spheres of life religious lifestyles are very apparent: attending Friday prayers; praying five times a day; fasting during Ramadan; abstaining from alcohol and wearing the headscarf are some prominent examples (Andy-Ar, 2011). Having different lifestyles results in differentiation in some social places of gathering. Although religiously observant and secularist people in Turkey share the same spaces, religious duties and principles associated with lifestyles create particular needs for some places, and keep religiously observant people out of others. For instance, the prohibition on looking at the body of a

woman, except her face, hands and feet, which is seen as forbidden (*haram*) for men in Islam, might restrict public space for religiously observant men and women. Drinking alcohol also seen as forbidden, while being present and doing shopping in a place selling alcoholic drinks is not approved of in the Islamic tradition. As a result, some religiously observant people might experience tension in their social lives.

I like being out. I particularly like school. You could say I like almost every occasion. Certainly, except for being secular. The secular part is the way people dress. You know, I like the way a Muslim wants to dress. If we would at least think about the Prophet, if he was to be at my school, he would not like to see the people I see. I am not comfortable with that scene, particularly how women dress. Men, too, we observe aspects of their dress not much in accord with the Sunna, but I am particularly uncomfortable with women. I am suffering from that... Certainly, praying, during the daytime is also a big problem... (Birol, Male, Sociology, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 27/4/2012)

You cannot go to a nightclub with a religiously observant person. With them, maybe a chat at a teahouse can happen. Or, for example, you cannot go somewhere serving alcohol. They would not come, or convey to you a negative message. So they would not be involved in these occasions. Because in their heads, they have that code: alcohol is sinful. According to their beliefs, if we were in a place selling alcoholic drinks, we also would be sinners. (Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

Praying (*salah*, in Turkish *namaz*) five times a day is one of the most significant causes of tension in daily life for a religiously observant student. Praying five times a day is an obligatory (*farz*) duty in Islam, and the times of prayers are determined by the position of the sun. Under these circumstances religiously observant people, students in

particular, have difficulty finding places to perform the obligatory ritual ablution (*wudu*, in Turkish *abdest*) in the approved and proper fashion. The normal washbasins in the toilets at school, say my informants, are not suitable and are found offensive by others. It can often be similarly difficult to find a suitable place to perform *namaz*. *Namaz*, along with reciting Qur'anic verses, includes certain acts such as standing (*kiyam*), bowing (*rüku*) and prostration (*secde*). The ground must be clean and shoes must be taken off. Practising Muslims need particular places such as a *cami* (a big mosque) or a *mescid* (a small mosque or prayer room). Otherwise they need to carry around a prayer cloth. In universities and other places which do not include *camis* or *mescids*, religiously observant students can experience tension affecting their socialising, and even their education and work lives.

Meryem was a religiously observant student of a private university founded by a religious group. She compared her university with other universities.

I, for instance, would not want to go to places like Kültür University, Bahçeşehir University, Beykent University and so on.

*Why?*

If I went to these universities I would neglect my prayers, would not pray, but here there is a prayer room (*mescid*) on every block, comfort for ablution (*abdest*), I do not neglect my prayers. But those universities would not have that.

*Do campuses not have prayer rooms in general?*

In our school there is one in each block. Some have just one.

*Are there places, like, for ablution on the campus?*

There are ablution sinks in the prayer room; this is in every building, both for men and for women.

*Then do you not wish that all public buildings had mescids?*

I do, the thing I am best at is being an organizer, but in a religious sense this would hinder my daily worship. Although it is the job I am best at, I cannot do this efficiently.

*Why?*

Because that sort of job, being organizer, does not have regular days and nights, I need to be constantly supervising it; I need to constantly supervise a three-hour event that would cause me to miss my prayer. Because of that, I gave it up. I wish there was freedom of religious worship and more possibilities and facilities; but if it is not happening, I will make my choices appropriately to myself. We have to.

(Meryem, Female, Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 19/4/2012)

Another student mentioned difficulties relating to *namaz*:

The high school was outside the city. There we did not have a facility for our worship, like a *mescid* or something, neither was there a mosque nearby. Only a village mosque that is a twenty-minutes walk away but with no vehicles to get there. The lunch break was forty minutes. It was very hard to go to the mosque and come back, and if you did, you could not eat. But as religiously observant or conservative people we chose to go anyway, squeezing the meal into the break time, and so we went to pray anyway. I got along with the biology teacher, got the keys of the biology lab from him. Because the gap between prayer times was narrowing. First, he did not know but after I asked for the keys for it a couple times he asked, and I told him; he did not make a problem. The biology lab was in good shape. There was a sink; you could use it for ablution. There were long, big tables, you could pray on top of them. (Kudret, Male, Law, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/4/2012)

These difficulties led some religiously observant students to being active at universities in creating spaces to practise their religion. They founded student societies, endeavoured to establish a *mescid*, organized religious events and conferences. These are some examples of their activities. It seems that the AKP government has made their work much easier than before.

Our faculty heads are from the *Nur* movement. Faculty heads played a big role in the opening of *mescids* on this campus. So somehow with their influence these *mescids* were opened, because they have been trying to open them for two-three years. They are making efforts, saying that we want a *mescid* at the campus and so on, but this year a mosque was finally opened. And also, now *mescids* have been opened in all the faculty buildings. In the new schools too, and certainly at the other universities. Surely, the changing of those Presidents of the Republic might have helped. In every building *mescids* have started to be opened for men and for women. (Ali, Male, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

Neighbourhood pressure seems also another cause of tension for religiously observant students. Although secularist and religiously observant students have good relationships and good communication with one another compared to their parents' generation, they still witness and experience some problems in some places. As an active secularist student, Galip complained about the social pressure on his religious friends. According to him, there are some neighbourhoods and places where secularist people live and they do not accept religiously observant people in their public spaces:

With a female friend who embraces Islamic thought completely, we cannot spend time at the Asmali Mecit district right behind here. There are public prejudices there. When we go to a restaurant with an evidently religiously observant girl wearing a headscarf we would not be served well by the waiter, because the

customers of that place would not accept it. Or at Cihangir. You think of the population there, as writers, thinkers, researchers, doctors, and such sections of the society happen to have tendency towards left wing thought. When you go to the places where these sections of society socialize together with a girl wearing headscarf, you happen to be somewhat unwelcomed. I personally experienced this.

(Galip, Male, Radio Art and TV, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 30/3/2012)

Another factor influencing spatial differentiation is the desire to provide a suitable environment seen, in terms of religious values, to educate children. Religiously observant students generally said that their families preferred suitable neighbourhoods and schools, particularly for their children. The family of one student I interviewed even moved to another city known for its religiosity:

My parents transformed into an Islamic family and since they thought that in Muğla practicing their religion would not be possible, or rather that it would not provide for a solid thing for their future and the future of their children, they sought somewhere closer to Istanbul and moved to Kocaeli. To feel more comfortable living an Islamic life, for their children to live more easily, thinking they probably would not be able to look out for them in Muğla. Since they encountered religion late, they were in conflict whether they would be able to make it as to practising their religion, and because of that they moved fourteen hours away from home.

(Buse, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/4/2012)

*How did your father become religiously observant?*

I suppose my mom has had some effect on that, mom taught some things. There used to be programmes on TGRT by then, he watched them. Then he went on pilgrimage; there was a change after that. Then we moved to İhlas Houses, city-

state, where a more religious section resided. Then he learned to recite the Qur'an.

(Meryem, Female, Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 19/4/2012)

Separating males and females (*haremlik-selamlik*) is a much debated and most problematic issue in the daily lives of religiously observant people nowadays. There are strict rules in the Islamic tradition governing the relations between men and women. For Turkish Muslims, *İlmihals* (catechises; concise books of Islamic faith, worship and ethics) play an important part in their religious lives. These books include basic information on Islamic principles and rulings for use in private and public life. Such things as: the principles of prayer; fasting; business life; male-female relationships; and permissible and forbidden acts. These works, which are seen as reference guidebooks in Turkey, explain such religious matters in detail, referring to the main sources of Islamic jurisprudence, the Qur'an and the *Sunna*. The sources are interpreted in the light of the Sunni Hanafi sect, which is embraced by most of the Turkish population. According to an *ilmihal* published by the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (the Directorate of Religious Affairs), sex outside marriage (*zina*) is forbidden in Islam. Other rulings about relations between men and women seek to lessen the temptation to *zina* arising from pornography or lewdness. These rulings are for unmarried, non-kin men and women. The main forbidden acts in this regard are: looking at the bodies of women apart from their faces, hands and feet; for women, looking at men's bodies between the belly and the knees; looking, listening and touching salaciously a person of the opposite sex; being alone together with a person of the opposite sex (Bardakoğlu, Karaman, and Apaydin, 1998). The attitudes of university students to these prohibitions vary depending on their understanding and interpretation of these rulings, and on their degree of religiosity and secularity. Ebru, for instance, although willing to be interviewed, declined to meet me face-to-face but responded to my questions by email. She, like other religiously observant students, sees social relations between men

and women as one of the *imtihans* (religious tests set by God). I asked Ebru what she thought of this issue:

Mixed occasions of men and women chatting and having fun is what we are talking about, they should be totally avoided. Certainly this is also somewhat related to the environment. The test of one who is going to a girls-school is not boyfriends but something else. But if it is co-ed, then the environment becomes a test. Not having been involved in these circumstances I cannot lecture from a distance, maybe I too could not stand the situations and would talk with boys, I do not know. But there are rules that will not change. If I were tested, I would know that what I was doing was wrong. One should talk with boys only if necessary, one should not be comfortable as if talking to a girl. I do not believe in girl-boy friendships. It conflicts with our nature. It should be like a teacher-student relationship. You like, you respect but you do not get informal, you have your boundaries... However crowded the occasion, I do not sit together and drink tea with a stranger man. And whatever the subject is, it is not only a matter of principles. Since it is against what I have learned, it is against my principles. (Ebru, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/8/2012)

In the course of a speech in January 2013, the then Transport Minister, Binali Yıldırım, talked about his time at university, saying, “After I sat the university entrance exam and received my exam result, I was torn between two options. I would either go to Boğaziçi (Bosphorus) University or Istanbul Technical University. I first visited Boğaziçi University. I took a look and saw that it was a different world. Different buildings and so on, and then I saw young people in the garden; girls and boys were sitting together on the lawn. I was very surprised. I told myself, I will stray off the road here at this university, so I selected Istanbul Technical University” (Haber Türk, 2013a). Although his remarks were

not openly supported, he reflected the ideas of some religiously observant people who do want to maintain spatial differentiation in public life as far as possible. Ali was one of them:

Certainly I want the girls and boys to be separated in the classrooms. It is not a good thing for them, being in the same classroom. And of course it is about the sensitivities of girls too, actually, for the ones thinking this way. Besides, for the boys' comfort too it would be better for them being in separate classes. (Ali, Male, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

The provincial chairman of *Saadet Partisi*, the party of the religious *Milli Görüş* movement, said that they wanted *pembebüüs*, a ‘pink bus,’ a women-only bus service in Istanbul, because of the difficult conditions on public transport (Posta, 2012). Buses are generally so crowded that this causes real discomfort especially for female passengers. One student blamed the mayor of Istanbul, saying that if he were truly religiously observant he would have done something about this problem. Two students also mentioned *pembebüüs* approvingly. Yet one student argued that male passengers are also uncomfortable in the current conditions on public transport, and said he wants a “*mavibiüs*,” a males-only “blue bus” service!

Certainly, surely so, it is even more important for both men and women, even if there is a “pink-bus” there should also be a “blue-bus” for men. Because it seems like it is always women feeling uncomfortable, but among man too there are many feeling uncomfortable. A few times on the bus, I saw men getting annoyed like “Hold tight! I am trying to keep clear yet you fall over me”. And she (the female passenger) replies “What can I do?” Such conflicts are happening all the time, actually, so ladies and gentlemen should use different buses. But apart from that for

others there can be a metrobüs which can be used by all together. (Ali, Male, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

However, although all religiously observant students see this issue among the *imtihans*, the degree of sensitivity varies depending on their culture, family education, and sense of religious priority. In my observations, the social relations of males and females are no longer strict in the spaces frequented by those who are religiously observant. During my fieldwork, I created a Facebook page with the title of my thesis, *Din ile Sekülerlik Arasında* [Between Religion and Secularity]. I shared some news, articles, advertisements, and books in order to get students' opinions about these issues, ask questions and conduct polls. There were approximately two hundred members on my list, most of whom were Turkish university students and university graduates. I shared, for instance, news about new houses in the Netherland that were built in accordance with the needs of religiously observant Muslims, called "Halal" or "Islamic houses" (NRC, 2012). According to the report, the main features of these houses, which made them "Islamic", were the shoe cupboards, bidet nozzles in the toilets, and separate kitchens and sitting rooms in order for men and women not to see each other. I asked the members of the page whether they approved this house plan. Surprisingly, most of the religiously observant members were not happy with this kind of naming and plan, which they labelled formalist religious thinking and a waste of time.

Similarly, when I asked my student informants during the fieldwork on how they planned their wedding parties, some traditionalists and a small number of religiously observant students said they wanted the wedding organised with men and women sitting separately (*haremlik-selamlık*). Other religiously observant students disagreed with this. Although they accepted religious rulings relating to relations between men and women, they did not approve of the sexes sitting separately on such occasions. According to them,

there was no problem at all if women go to school, work, and travel together with men. The important thing, according to them, is the principles rather than the external forms. Emre was a religiously observant student who was active in a religious society and worked together with both men and women. He argued that the *haremlik-selamlık* is bound up with rural culture and is out of place in the city.

In the Republican period, Islamic tradition, Islamic components in Anatolia were suppressed and these suppressed Islamic components retreated to the rural area. In other words, retreated to the village and there arose again. The rules of the village and the city are not the same. The city is different. Sitting males and females separately (*haremlik-selamlık*) being more common in cities. This is wrong. These rules might be right for the village. But they are not for the city. (Emre, Male, Computer Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 20/4/2012)

A female student complained about males, and her, conservative male classmates in particular. She criticized them for being sexist and selfish. According to her, the main problem is in the minds and feelings of men, not women. She argues that men want a perfect and easy world in which there is no *imtihan* (divine test), no difficulty, no striving to win through in the face of difficulties and obstacles.

A man says that women should not appear in public life so that I should not commit a sin. Does that kind of world really exist? Woman should reside inside the home so that I should not commit sin! Then, you are not doing anything to be rewarded with paradise. Like he would not say, I should close my eyes. If it is to close your eyes which you need to do, there, then you will be able to do it. That is what falls into your responsibility as a man. But they do not actually close their eyes. In that matter I am very troubled with men. Rather than a woman problem actually there is a man problem. There is a perception problem. Since we are not able to correct

that, it is not right for us to focus on ‘the woman problem.’ If you are affected by looking at any woman then you are perverted, in the moral sense. In this country I saw even women in burka being harassed. Only the eyes are apparent and on the eyes there is no makeup and so on. Then the problem is not what women wear; it is men’s point of view, their perception of woman. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

Two religious writers, who represent two different viewpoints of my informants, debated these matters recently. One of the foremost Islamic scholars in Turkey, Hayrettin Karaman, wrote a much-debated article in his newspaper column. In his article, Karaman (2011) criticized the pressure of the secularists on religious life, arguing that secularists try to impose their lifestyles on religiously observant people in various ways, and are thus totalitarian. He also argued that everyone must be free to distinguish right from wrong, what to approve and what to disapprove of. The liberal Muslim writer, Mustafa Akyol (2011a) commented in his newly published book about this article and said he agreed with Karaman’s ideas. Nevertheless, he did not agree with him on the attitude religiously observant Muslims should adopt towards people of whose lifestyles and acts they do not approve. In the article, Karaman argued that normally particular places should be provided for people who act in ways that are inconsistently with Islamic principles, in order that they do not influence the new generation. However, this is not possible in the current political conditions. Another solution would be moving to particular neighbourhoods with other religiously observant people, but this is also impossible in the current social circumstances. It is necessary to live among people who do not observe religious values, principles and duties, and even alongside those who sin openly, sharing the same neighbourhood, apartment block, workplace or school. According to Karaman, religiously observant Muslims can respond in two ways: internally, they hate those bad deeds and they

intend to correct them at a suitable time and opportunity; externally, they at least do not smile at people behaving badly. Akyol objected to the idea of spatial separation, calling it a “zone defence”. Instead of defending the traditional social order and traditional interpretation of religion, he argues that Muslims should consider modern realities and the present social order, and should focus on improving personal morality (*bireysel ahlak*). Instead of applying pressure and isolating religiously observant people from society in order to protect them from sin or heresy, Akyol argues, they should give religiously observant people individual consciences; this would be fruitful for both religion and religiously observant people.

## 7.5 SEEKING SOLUTIONS: CREATING ALTERNATIVES

Living in a secular state and country and aspiring to practise religious principles in daily life, at work, in business and education, leads religiously observant people to seek solutions that would emancipate them from dilemmas, ambiguity, and tension between their Islamic faith and secular life. Along with intellectual endeavours, activist religiously observant people, religious movements, charities and societies take concrete steps in order to resolve this matter within the bounds of possibility. The key word for this solution is ‘alternative’. Religiously observant Muslims in Turkey, except for some fundamentalists and extremists, want to practise their religion while accommodating themselves to modernity. However, they realize that there are some inconsistencies between Islamic lifestyles and modern lifestyles. Under these circumstances the majority of religiously observant Muslim individuals and religious groups, instead of completely rejecting the values and institutions of the modern world, try to reconcile them with Islamic principles. So, for example, loan interest (*faiz*) being forbidden in Islam, some religiously observant

Muslims have founded so called interest-free, ‘Islamic banking’, which is currently offered by such banks as *Bank Asya*, *Albaraka Türk* and *Ihlas Finans*.

This subject is also closely related to the debate on what “Islamic” and “Islamization” are. In some cases, religiously observant Muslims struggle to protect Islamic values and forms of society from the influences of the secular state and society, while in others, accommodating the realities of the modern age, they reproduce modern ideas and institutions in the light of Islamic values, and call them “Islamic”, like Islamic banking, hotels, schools etc.

New Year celebrations are debated every year among religiously observant people in their social circles and the social media. The question is whether attending the celebrations, or even watching them on TV, is permissible (*halal, caiz*) or forbidden (*haram*), the reservations being that the celebrations have Western roots and involve drinking alcoholic drinks, and watching nasty images on TV. In order to protect university students from these, the various religious groups endeavour to organize alternative events on New Year’s Eve: a movie night; a night of computer and other games. The *Milli Görüş* movement, for instance, organizes *Fetih Gecesi* (the night for the conquest of Makka) events for university students, via *Anadolu Gençlik Derneği*, every New Year.

We do not celebrate New Year’s Eve. On the contrary we oppose the celebrations because it causes very unpleasant results, like the incidents in Taksim. When many people drink, when people’s friends start to drink, the ones hanging out with them who normally happen not to be drinking at all sometimes start to drink. In fact because of that there is always a celebration of the conquest of Makka on New Year’s Eve. The *Anadolu Gençlik Derneği* (Anatolian Youth Society) does it in all the districts. It is done in other cities as well. It is intended for university students, the public, for all. At big halls. The aim is to prevent bad deeds from occurring.

The conquest of Makka actually was not on New Year's Eve, but you see, they celebrate it exactly on that night. (Ali, Male, Electronic Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 10/4/2012)

Restaurants and cafés serving alcoholic drinks are generally seen as unsuitable places for religiously observant students to go and spend time. Although some of them do not see a problem with going to those places with their secularist friends, they do not normally choose to go there.

In general I do not go to places serving alcohol; when there is an alternative I do not prefer to go there. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

Fifteen years ago, I met an Islamist man who had prevented his children from going to primary school when they were younger, arguing that those schools, being institutions of a secularist and Kemalist state, are forbidden (*haram*) in Islam, and could harm his children with their secular teachings. Now he deeply regretted his decision, confessing that he had made a big mistake, and asked me to help his children with their maths and Turkish. Religiously observant people realize the significance of education and send their children to school and university. However, while wanting them to be successful at school, they still strive to protect them from secular values (aspiring to secular mindset) and lifestyles to keep them away from “unsuitable” social circles, and to provide a religious education outside of school. The activities of the religious groups for students have been reinforcing alternatives on this issue; İmam-Hatip schools (religious training high schools) have been another important alternative. However, the main and the most successful alternatives have been private primary and high schools and foundation universities established by religious groups. People send their children to these schools for them to get a good education, including in religion and morality, taught by religious teachers in a suitable social setting. The significant point here is that religiously observant people do not want their children to

get only religious education. They want them to be “modern Muslims,” getting both modern science and religious education at the same time. While the term ‘modern’ can be used as a criticism in some contexts, it is more usually used approvingly, pointing to a person who practices his religion while keeping pace with the modern age.

A student mentioned online collaborative dictionaries as a social sharing platform, built on the contributions of users, and in particular an Islamic alternative dictionary called *IHL Sözlük* (the Dictionary of İmam-Hatip High School). Although she admitted the alternative dictionary had lost its popularity, her explanation is important in terms of why the dictionary was established, and how the terms alternative and Islamic are perceived:

There are non-religious Turkish online dictionaries on the Internet. Entries are opened on various subjects and the members make comments, as if they are definitions. Entries are not composed of single terms. Sometimes a sentence, sometimes a new item, an opinion of someone, sometimes writers’, books’, movies’ names... Anything you can think of can be an entry. There are famous dictionaries that you must have heard of, like, *Ekşi*, *İTÜ*, *Uludağ*, etc. These are “no holds barred”. In the name of liberty of thought, obscene cursing, insults, disrespect of faiths... Administrators do not intervene. One dictionary that was founded with the need felt in the social media for a respectful dictionary with morality is the *IHL dictionary*. It happened as they said it would be. Cursing and obscene jokes are prohibited. Harassment of peoples’ sacred values, and insulting God or His prophets, are prohibited. It was safe. But the discussions were boring. Boys were picking on girls by branding them with names like Islamic intellectuals or so. At times girl-boy mixed gatherings happened in order to meet each other. They would steadily discuss whether it was permissible (*caiz*) or not. But usually the gatherings were of girls and boys separately. Other things were also done. As

far as I know, there is a reading group, which is still running now. As if almost everyone was from the theology faculty (!). Most of them would know everything (!). Certainly there were members with different life styles too. I was at a one time active there but I got bored. It did not leave a good impression on me. And now they are said to just potter about. The desire to complete the project is very diminished. (Ebru, Female, Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 27/8/2012)

The alternatives and the term ‘Islamic’ can be encountered many spheres of life. The number of “alternative holiday centres”, for instance, has increased in recent decades. These hotels are known as alternative, conservative (*muhafazakar*) and Islamic hotels. They have separate swimming pools for men and women, Halal food, prayer rooms (*mescid*), and they do not serve alcoholic drinks or pork. Although they organize concerts and have places of entertainment, they have no disco or nightclub. *Caprice Hotel* and *Sah-Inn Hotel*, for instance, are the most well known Islamic hotels in Turkey. They have many customers among ethnically Turkish religiously observant people in Europe.

Differentiation of the religious or Islamic from the secular exists prominently in the media too. There are numerous Islamic newspapers (*Yeni Şafak*, *Akit*, *Zaman*), TV channels (*Kanal 7*, *STV*, *Hilal TV*), and fashion magazines (*Âlâ*, *Aysha*, *Îkra*, *Hesna*). There are also building complexes (*İhlas Konutları*, *Şehrzâr Konutları*), and foundation universities (*Fatih University*, *Şehir University*) that are Islamic. One of the student respondents used a general expression for all these: Islamic or Turkish civilization. She sees “Islamic civilization” or “Turkish civilization” as the alternatives to secular-Western civilization:

I see secular lifestyle and western civilisation as dangers. We have our own civilization: Islamic Civilization. This geography (place) has a civilization. We could call it Turkish Civilization too, it is totally okay for me. There is a lifestyle, an understanding of the world that is promoted by this civilization. This is the

alternative to the modern and secular civilization of the West. (Hale, Female, Theology, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1/5/2012)

## 7.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examined the argument that there is a division in Turkish society in terms of the worldviews of the people as religiously observant and secularist. I looked at the issue from different aspects: mainly philosophical and sociological. I had already elucidated the political aspects of this division in Chapter Four, so I touched on it very briefly in the present chapter. Focusing on the philosophical and sociological aspects of the division in Turkish society, particularly university students, I ascertained the details of the division through the relevant works of some scholars, and my interviews and observations from fieldwork in Istanbul. In addition, I explored the fact that the differentiation in Turkish society does not result in extreme polarizations; rather, it is a consequence of a pluralistic society, and by somewhat exclusive, alternative lifestyles.

I showed that religious individuals, and religious groups which have softened state oppression and worked underground to avoid surveillance, are now able to be more open. They are more powerful than before in politics, economics and culture. The most significant factor behind this has been the AKP government ascendance to power since 2003. The AKP government has given rise to a new elite, and has come as a relief to religiously observant people, who now feel free to express and practise their religious beliefs and principles.

In the Islamic literature, while the term *din* is used for the religion and religious affairs, the term *dunya* is used for the world and worldly affairs. These two key terms are not generally seen as in conflict and completely separate areas from each other. My

research participants agreed with this idea and both secularist and religiously observant students said that religious and worldly affairs should not be in contradiction with each other. However, the problem appears when students begin to discuss what religion and religious requirements are. Although they were all Muslims, they were grouped with respect to their understanding and interpretation of religion and religiosity. Each interpretation results in a particular lifestyle that separates its followers from others. And this separation appears diversely, from discourse to language, from private institutions to preferences in daily life.

During my fieldwork, including interviews and my involvement into the everyday activities of students, I observed a general discourse of “we” and “them”, the use of these pronouns depending on the speaker. I also observed great differences between the everyday language of religiously observant and secularist students. In some spheres of life religious lifestyles are very apparent: attending Friday prayers; praying five times a day; fasting during Ramadan; abstaining from alcohol and wearing the headscarf are some prominent examples. Having different lifestyles results in differentiation in some social places of gathering. Although religiously observant and secularist people in Turkey share the same spaces, religious duties and principles associated with lifestyles create particular needs for some places, and keep religiously observant people out of others. Gender relations, drinking or not drinking alcohol, praying five times a day, educating children in accordance with their values and principles in a “suitable” neighbourhood and schools, are other examples that might cause social and spatial divisions. However, although all religiously observant students see these issues among the divine challenges (*imtihan*), their degree of sensitivity varies depending on their culture, family education, and sense of religious priorities. In my observations, the social relations between men and women are no longer strict in the spaces frequented by those who are religiously observant.

Students in their public life feel the religious-secular social divide. While some of religiously observant students complained about the contentious attitudes of their secularist classmates, some other female students argued that wearing the headscarf made them feel the social division much more than others, as its existence or its absence is the most visible sign of a woman's worldview. However, when I asked the same students whether they experience these problems with all lecturers and all secularist friends, they said that they do not. It can be asserted that although these kinds of problems were and are experienced among the older generation, the new generation does not experience these troubles as much as the previous one.

Living in a secular state and country and aspiring to practise religious principles in daily life, at work, in business and education, leads religiously observant people to seek solutions that would emancipate them from dilemmas, ambiguity, and tension between their Islamic faith and secular life. Along with intellectual endeavours, activist religiously observant people, religious movements, charities and societies take concrete steps in order to resolve this matter within the bounds of possibility. The key word for this solution is 'alternative'.

Religiously observant Muslims in Turkey, except for some doctrinaire extremists, want to practise their religion while accommodating themselves to modernity. However, they realize that there are some inconsistencies between Islamic lifestyles and modern lifestyles. Under these circumstances the majority of religiously observant Muslim individuals and religious groups, instead of completely rejecting the values and institutions of the modern world, try to negotiate and reconcile them with Islamic principles, like so called interest-free 'Islamic banking', colleges, universities, holiday places, online dictionaries, media etc.

As Toprak points out, “Social and geographical mobility, coupled with the development of modern communication networks, to a large extent have integrated the periphery with the center” (Toprak, 1995: 94). New social, geographical, and economic conditions have brought significant changes in society.

I argue that in the new social structure of Turkey, religious and secular young people have much more interaction with each other and spend more time together. Nevertheless, even though they get closer with the passing of time and know each other more than before, both secularist and religiously observant students still have some prejudices about each other. Based on my own experiences, observations and the statements of my informants, I also argue that although serious social tensions in the political arena do still exist in Turkish society between the religiously observant and the secular, the social distancing and prejudices have dramatically decreased in the last decade.

While religiously observant people use secular language along with their religious language, secularist people rarely use religious words in private or in public. It seems to me that this is a matter of power relations. As my religiously observant informants declared, they felt under secularist pressure at school and work and in almost every sphere of their public life until the rise of the AKP government. Under these circumstances, religiously observant people had to use secular language in order to hide their true affiliations and avoid social, political and economic discrimination. From my observations, circumstances have slightly eased for religiously observant people since the AKP came to power in 2003, and although secularist people still do not use religious expressions, the expressions of religiously observant people has been normalized in daily life, business, politics and the media.

# CHAPTER EIGHT: THE GEZI PARK PROTESTS

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I address the main subject of my thesis by exploring the significance of the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul, since the protests created a valuable opportunity to understand students', and more generally young people's, perspectives on politics, religion, political Islam and secularism. My interviews with them enabled me to crosscheck the findings and discussions of my research presented in the other empirical chapters.

The protests, which occurred during the research, focused on university students in Istanbul and their experience of tension between religion and secularism in the Turkish context. Based on my observations on social media, the encounter between religiously observant people and secularists in the park seemed at the outset one of potential conflict. It prompted me to explore this further in the field through first-hand qualitative research. Thus, although I already had sufficient data to complete my thesis by then, as this was such an unexpected political and social turn of events touching on the concepts of religiosity, secularity, youth, and the anxieties of secularist people for their secular lifestyle, I decided to initiate this new fieldwork episode and went to Gezi Park.

When the Gezi Park protests took place at the end of May 2013, the 'real' motivation behind the protest was unclear, particularly for religiously observant people. At the outset the protests were in opposition to work on replacing the park with a shopping mall, together with drastic alterations to the adjacent Taksim Square. Only a few hundred strong in the beginning, the number of the protestors increased dramatically in the first week, evidently encouraged, rather than deterred, by police brutality.

By the time I arrived at the park, one week after the beginning of the protests, I found myself able to move only with difficulty owing to the many thousands of protestors in the park and square. There were a great number of booths of various organisations, mostly secular and leftist, handing out leaflets and discussing their demands, the policies of the government, and the aims of the protest.

Observing developments through various media, including social media, much of the population was unsure whether the protestors were engaged in democratic action against the government and some of its policies, or whether theirs was rather an objection to the religious identity of the Prime Minister and the religiously observant people who he particularly represents. Was the main issue religion, the Islamic revival in the country? Did these protests demonstrate that religion cannot co-exist with secularity, and that there is a deep-rooted and irresolvable tension between religiously observant and secularist Muslims in Turkey?

These questions being so closely related to my research, I visited Istanbul. For two weeks, day and night, I stayed in the park, visiting tents, talking to protestors about their views of the protest. I took hundreds of photographs in Gezi Park and Taksim Square and wrote down every slogan I encountered: more than three hundred in the area. None was hostile to religion or religiosity. A small number criticized the Prime Minister's ostentatious practice of religion.

I interviewed nineteen university students related to the protest; most of them were protestors who were present at Gezi Park, the others were those who opposed the protests and did not go to the park. While all of them were Muslims, there were differences in their understanding religion. The interviews included secularist and religiously observant Muslims, and also Sunni and Alevi Muslims. Along with that I got helps from my

gatekeepers in order to select suitable informants for my research, I also visited all the tents and groups in the park to talk and to offer to do interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured, asking their personal details and their views of the protest, criticisms of the protesters and the policies of the government, their views on religiosity and secularity in the country, and to what extent they saw the conflict as being between religiously observant and secularist Muslims. The questions are listed in Appendix Three.

This chapter presents the data and analyses the data in terms of my research questions, my aim being to find answers to the aforementioned questions. What were the activists protesting against? What government policies and practices were they criticising? Did religiously observant people also criticise the Prime Minister or the government? If so, why were they dissatisfied with the Prime Minister and the AKP government? Although some religiously observant people supported the protests by either going to the park or expressing sympathy on social media, why did most religiously observant people withhold support? Was the huge protest movement actually about religion, religiously observant people and the religious identity of the Prime Minister? What kind of impact did the Gezi Park protests have on the views of Turkish people, particularly university students, concerning religion and secularity? Is there a conflict between secular and religiously observant Muslims in Turkey and, if there is, what has been the impact of the Gezi Park protests on this?

This chapter has four parts, each covering an aspect of the issue. The first part consists of a summary account of the Gezi Park protests with such information as seems necessary to an understanding of the discussion in other sections. I present interviewees' responses in this chapter.

The second section focuses on the place of religion in the protests, asking whether the main objections of the protestors were religion, religiously observant people, and religious identities of the current policy makers.

The third part concerns the attitudes of religiously observant Muslims to the Gezi Park protests. After considering the extent of support that the government has among religiously observant people, it focuses on the withdrawal of support for the protests by religiously observant people. Though also critical of the government regarding the replacement of the park by a shopping centre, many who had taken part in the protest in the park initially, and given support online, later, especially after fights between police and protestors, and after statements by the Prime Minister, withdrew support. Reasons for these events are considered here.

And finally, the fourth section considers the repercussions of the Gezi Park protests for democracy in Turkey, and the polarisation and conflict in the context of secularity and religion.

## **8.2 THE OBJECTS OF THE PROTESTS**

The Gezi Park protests started on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013 in order to protest the pedestrianisation of Taksim Square. In the beginning, a few hundred activists gathered in Gezi Park, demonstrating peacefully. They set up tents and read books for a few days.

Brutal police intervention on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> May provoked protests around the world, and brought thousands more people to the park to support the protesters. Thousands more protested across Istanbul and Turkey, some banging pots and pans at their windows, and there were protests by Turkish people in capitals across Europe.

At the beginning of June the content of protests changed to more general criticism of the government, and the attitude of the Prime Minister in particular. During this period, between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, there were a number of clashes between police and demonstrators both in Istanbul Taksim Square and in some other cities of the country, such as Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Hatay, Eskisehir and Mersin. During these the police used tear gas and water cannons.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, the police emptied the park of protesters and unrest decreased slightly. Activists and resident of certain neighbourhoods gathered in other Istanbul parks discussing recent incidents followed by Gezi Park protests, local issues, and the future of their activities, making announcements on websites and the social media.

These protests were among the most significant and influential public displays of political opposition in the history of the Turkish Republic. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2.5 million people attended the protests in total, across the 79 cities of Turkey. 4,900 protestors were arrested, around 600 police and 4,900 activists injured, and 7 activists died during the protests. The total economic damage was estimated at about £46,000 (Şardan, 2013).

I conducted my fieldwork in Gezi Park, where the protest movements initially started, and which has become the main symbol of the protests across the country. I visited the park between 7th and 21st June 2013, conducting semi-structured interviews with activists.

When asked the objectives of the protests, interviewees gave a variety of answers, common complaints being the political rhetoric of the Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, his contemptuous attitude towards those who had not supported him in elections, and some of his policies.

Derya had been in Gezi Park since the first day, trying to protect it. She was a student in the Cinema and TV Department in Istanbul. When I saw her, she was picking up rubbish in the park and putting it in a big bag, voluntarily. She was not being paid and belonged to no organisation. I asked her about the continued resistance to the authorities.

Actually we still resist in order that Gezi Park will stay. This movement might have grown, it might have become a symbol for other things, but my friends and me want the park to stay the same and not change. This event has grown. It shows that many people have various problems that exhausted their patience. Everything just surfaced here. Of course, the police brutality has also affected this since the third day of the protests. After that, people lost all patience and started to come and talk about their other criticisms of the government. Before that, this was just a demonstration of 300 to 400 people. But we still are here for the same reason, the park. (Derya, Female, Conservatory, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 9/6/2013)

Most of the people I interviewed away from the park were AKP voters who did not go and add their support to the protesters in the park, but most were, nevertheless, critical of the government and opposed to the plans for Gezi Park. A group of religiously observant students in a café, for instance, spoke to me of the chopping down of trees in the park that it seemed to them like cutting down people.

One of the most commonly heard expressions in the park was “*Hayat tarzına müdahale*” (intervening in a person’s lifestyle). Secularist or religiously non-observant informants, particularly, accused the then Prime Minister R. T. Erdoğan of intervening in the secular lifestyle of citizens of the country both in his speeches and policies. His policies created a strong suspicion among secularist people as if they were threat to their lifestyle.

There has been anxiety among secularist Muslims in Turkey about this issue ever since the AKP came to power in 2002. Until the protests, the relatively few secularist intellectuals who expressed anxiety about the conservative government were sometimes referred to as “anxious moderns” (Keyman, 2010). These people were not at the fore of the Gezi Park protests; it has rather been the generality of secularist people. I asked secularist people about the understanding of threat to their secular lives.

Aylin was another university student cleaning the park, sack in hand. She said that the protestors were resisting for the sake of their freedom, because there was no justice and democracy in the country. She was particularly uncomfortable about proposed new regulations restricting the sale of alcohol. The new regulations were intended to ban off-licence sales between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The law also forbids the sale of alcohol near schools and places of worship (Karanfil, 2013). Alcohol and the headscarf may be seen as visible symbols of secular and religious lifestyles respectively.

*In what respect do you think your freedom is restricted?*

They do not have the right to interfere with our individual issues. They are our social representatives. They cannot make any decision on the issues that people make their own decisions about individually.

*Which implementation is the most uncomfortable for you?*

I am uncomfortable about the new regulations on alcohol sales. I am not a drinker, but there can be people who like to drink alcohol. I also might like to. They cannot set limitations with regard to this issue.

*What is your main demand of the government now?*

It was just for an apology in the beginning, but that is not enough now. There must really be a change. I do not say that the government must change, but at least they

should change some of their characteristics, for example they should give up (their) arrogant attitudes. Of course, some of us think differently, but as a shared point, we all want democracy. (Aylin, Female, Medicine, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 9/6/2013)

Mavi agreed that the reaction to the new regulations arises from their symbolic significance. She said that it has been the final point that is closely related to the secularist youth. Instead of discussing the advantages and disadvantages of a new draft of law, it is very common in Turkey to discuss who is proposing it, and its potential symbolic meanings. It seems that secularist citizens generally view any government move on issues like alcohol, with suspicion. Nejat explained what the new regulations meant for him:

Of course, I do not want people to be drunk and disturb people on the street. But I think the government, by imposing this restriction, is using it as a control mechanism to limit the living space of people. They also dispossess the people who drink on the street of their freedom. (Nejat, Male, Electrical Engineering, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 11/6/2013)

Until the clash between the police and the activists spread to other neighbourhoods and cities, the cries of “Resign Erdoğan!” were little heard and were mostly symbolic, but the more the tension grew the more vocal this call became. Although most of the protestors who shouted for the then Prime Minister’s resignation, meant it, others thought it not a desirable goal.

So many people in the park scream, saying “Resign Tayyip, resign the government!” I read a book now. It says, “As a resister, I do not want the government to resign; I want it to work properly.” This sounds more reasonable to me now. They must work perfectly. They are our servants. We elected them in order that they will serve us. (Derya, Female, Conservatory, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 9/6/2013)

I have never believed that if Erdogan resigns all the problems will be solved. On the contrary, lots of things would be worse. People scream on the streets saying "*Tayyip resign!*" (*Tayyip resign!*) but I do not think they really want it. If we think of the fact that most of them come (here) individually, without any organization, I believe that they say some words without thinking about the future carefully. (Reyhan, Female, Political Science, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 9/6/2013)

The question of the place of women in society is a distinguishing issue separating between religiously observant and secularist people in Turkey. The place of women in the business, political and social life of society, and their roles in the family, have long been discussed in the country, as I have shown throughout the thesis. Although the AKP established a women's branch of the party this, they assert, does not imply any restriction on women in the political, economic and business areas. The party is mainly criticized over policy-makers' rhetoric and especially over the new draft of an abortion law. All the women I spoke to in the park objected to the views of the then Prime Minister on abortion. They see the law as a violation of women's rights.

The woman problem is an important factor explaining the fact that so many women have come to the park. Because we do not feel ourselves safe. As citizens who do not want to live the conservative lifestyle of the AKP followers, especially being women, we do not feel safe. When they discuss abortion, they imply that abortion is used as a birth control method. How does something like that happen? For whom this can be an easy decision to have abortion, come on! I know some of my friends who went through a trauma. Nobody can go and do that willingly. If her family would not ostracize her, she would prefer to give birth. But such a woman (who gives birth out of wedlock) would be labelled a hussy. If he, as the Prime Minister, implicates us as being like this, the views of both the extremists and moderate

people about us would change. In the circumstances, we have to explain ourselves in such private matters! (Ceyda, Female, History, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

As a secularist woman, Ceyda was pessimistic about the situation of women if the thinking and discourses of conservative policy-makers does not change.

Why do I have to defend myself against these people? Who will protect me from them? Who guarantees that these people will not harass me on the street? If they assault me, who guarantees that they will be found guilty? I will be accused! They will probably say: “Why did you dress like that?” or “You should have worn a headscarf!” (Ceyda, Female, History, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

Mavi said that even its coming into question is felt as a big threat by women, because abortion is one of their essential freedoms. She recommended that, women felt restricted by the discussion of the issue.

Since he came to power in 2002, the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan often emphasized the importance of a young population and recommended that all couples to have three children. Although this recommendation was seen by most AKP supporters as just his personal view of what is in the best interest of the country, protestors saw this too as an intervention in people’s private lives. There were a number of slogans in the park concerning his views on abortion and family size, with ironic comments such as: “Are you sure you still want people to have three children like us?”

How can one say “You should have three children”. He is a Prime Minister. Is that why we put him there? So that he will tell us how many children we should have? Of course, he does not make it obligatory. Rubbish! But I will do it or not! (as I like). (Lale, Female, English Teaching, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 9/6/2013)

Am I a baby machine? Of course not! How can he decide on my behalf? (Ceyda, Female, History, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

The words “authoritarian” and “dictator” were much heard among protestors in the park, mainly in criticising the Prime Minister, rather than the government in general. According to the protestors, Erdoğan, having been elected three times and been in power for eleven years, has been an authoritarian leader who fails to show respect for his opponents. The reaction of the Prime Minister to the protesters at the outset of the protest, was perceived as insulting. On 2<sup>nd</sup> June, during an opening ceremony, he said, “We will also build a mosque in Taksim Square. Of course I will not get permission from the CHP [the main secularist opposition party]. I will also not get it from a few marauders!” (Sol, 2013). Since then, the word “marauder” (*çapulcu* in Turkish) has been used as key word to express the reactions of the protestors to the Prime Minister. The word has been used to create a collective identity among protestors from various backgrounds: Kemalists; Leftists; LGBT members; Islamists; football fans and non-political individuals. All adopted this word as epitomising the authoritarian and contemptuous nature of the Prime Minister.

*Why has this movement been so widely disseminated in such a short time?*

It has started to become a kind of a dictatorship in the country. The Prime Minister has a self-opinionated attitude. For example, despite these problems, he can call his own (Turkish) people “marauders” and “marginals”. He has never taken steps backward after all. This is a kind of dictatorship and all these reactions are actually towards it. Of course, we cannot compare him with the well-known dictators like Hitler and Assad. But I think if there were not these protests he would have been like them at the end. (Reyhan, Female, Political Science, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 9/6/2013)

*What is this resistance for?*

Now it is very different than it was in the beginning. It has transformed into a resistance against oppression. On the first day, it was for the park. Gezi Park and Taksim Square are the symbols of the possibility of expressing oneself, and the new project of Gezi Park was seen as a blow on the freedom of expression. We, the residents of Cihangir, wanted to protect this place in which we always spend time. This was our object in the beginning, but now it is definitely against the police brutality and also against the oppression of the government that has lasted for a long time. (Mavi, Female, Political Science, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

One of the most well known theologians in Turkey, İhsan Eliaçık, was the most interesting person I met on my visits to the Gezi Park protests because of his religious identity and society. He and his friends were in the park under the name of the “Anti-capitalist Muslims Society”. They had a tent in which they argued their case against government policies. The society is, as a matter of ideological principle, leaderless, but İhsan Eliaçık, is generally seen in Turkey as the head. He is a theologian and Islamist activist. People were surprised when they saw him and his friends, some of them women wearing headscarves, and some bearded religiously observant young men. When I visited them in their tents, I talked to a few members of the society, including İhsan Eliaçık, and he agreed to be interviewed, for which purpose we went and sat in a café to escape interruptions from his many visitors there. When I asked him the reasons for the protest, he said:

This indicates that there has been a collective anger in the society and it appears through these protests. Everybody or every group has a different reason for their anger. The main group in the park is the youth, called the generation of the ‘90s. When the AKP came to power in 2002 they were about 12 years old, and now they

are university students of about 22 years-old. Since their childhood, they have always seen Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on television. They are at first reacting to this situation saying “It is enough!” Secondly, the young people do not like the attitudes and the way of speaking of the Prime Minister towards citizens. He has a commanding style and they do not like it. Erdoğan is now like a conservative and oppressive father intervening in the hairstyles and earrings of his children. He made regulations about alcohol sale, but it was understood in this confusing atmosphere as though he forbids alcoholic drinks. Young people react to his oppressive manner, and they say “Do not interfere our lives, we know what we will do!” (Eliaçık, 9/6/2013)

The statements of students I interviewed largely conformed with the views of Eliaçık. They distinguished between the personality of the Prime Minister, on the one hand, and government policies, on the other. The main demand was not to change the Prime Minister; they wanted more freedom and respect in their personal life choices, and they criticized all who seek to curb their “freedom”, including secularist parties.

There are serious criticisms against the government’s policies, and the Prime Minister as well. The restriction on alcoholic drinks, the discussions on abortion, and the education system, all of them came together. In addition, ignoring the people who did not support the government in the elections brought these people here into the park. Actually, I do not think that these reactions are against only one political party. The main reaction is against some regulations and an oppressive system. If the other political parties did the same things, they would have got the same reactions. The ideology of the government authorities is not the issue. The regulations have threatened the lifestyles and the standard of living of the people, and then they have reacted in this way. Yes, there are the slogans of “Tayyip

resign!” and there is an opposition to the government in the park, but it was not the starting point of this movement. If the circumstances go that way, I think it would not be good. (Zeynep, Female, Economics, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

Eliaçık, explaining the main things he objects to, said that he reacts against all kinds of totalitarian regimes: “If the battle tanks of the army show up tomorrow, I will try to prevent them, because I am against military coups as well. I suffered a lot because of the military coups in the past.”

Berkay was a member of TGB, *Türkiye Gençlik Birliği* (Youth Union of Turkey). This union was established in 2006, having 65 student clubs in 40 Turkish universities. One of the founders explained the main reason for founding this union was the need for a central organization to represent revolutionary, patriotic, Kemalist youth (TGB, 2013). At the society’s tent I spoke with Berkay, a member of the union. According to Berkay, everyone gathered in the park for freedom. But he emphasised that it was not only for the freedom of each particular group: they want freedom for all citizens. However, he did call for all the others to unite behind his ideology.

There is a liberation struggle here. If you like, ask whichever group you want in the park. The main objective for us is neither the park nor a political thing. Everyone is united in a single demand: Freedom for everyone! We do not want freedom for any particular group or community. We want it for all people. We, as the union, believe that it is possible if we converge on Atatürk. I mean, if we really understand the values, principles and the thought system of Atatürk, freedom and solidarity would increase. We want the other groups and societies to come together on common ground, which is Atatürk. (Berkay, Male, Chemical Engineering, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

Love of Atatürk and defending him was another motivation given by some protestors. In Turkey this can be regarded as another way of expressing support for secularism. As I presented in Chapter One, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938) was the founder of the secular Turkish Republic. He was determined to secularize and westernize the country. Debate about Islamism and secularism in Turkey generally centres on esteem and opposition to him. Love of Ataturk and his images symbolizes secularism and the secular lifestyle (White, 2010). There were a great number of flags with the image of Ataturk in Gezi Park and in Taksim Square. These would seem to indicate a secular anxiety and a secular reaction to conservative government policies (Harding, 2013). In my interview, Eliaçık made reference to secularist protestors:

When this reaction spread around, secularist, Kemalist and neo-nationalist people also came and joined the protests. They have been discontented with a conservative government for eleven years. They are living with the feeling that ‘Ataturk’s secular republic is being lost, the government is destroying everything, they put the admirals in prison, and we have become isolated’. There is great cumulative anger among them. (Eliaçık, 9/6/2013)

After the police emptied Gezi Park, another kind of protest started in Taksim Square. On 17<sup>th</sup> June 2013 an activist, Erdem Gündüz, stood in the middle of the square for eight hours in order to protest the police ending demonstrations in the park. His protest brought a great number of protesters to the square. Many stood in silence facing the Atatürk Cultural Centre with its Atatürk flag. In a short time the “standing man” protest spread to other neighbourhoods and other Turkish cities (BBC, 2013; Radikal, 2013). I went to the square for three days talking to protesters about their aims. Aslı, one of the university students in the square, believed that the government does not show respect to Atatürk.

The aim of my standing act is Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the disrespectful attitudes of the government towards him. I am not a revolutionary in any way or form. I am also not a member of the CHP or any other political party. I am here only for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. (Aslı, Female, Primary School Teaching, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 19/6/2013)

The clearest reason for these reactions was a statement by the Prime Minister just before the protests, on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013. Criticized over the alcohol regulations, he asserted that he acted with religious justification, saying, “When two drunkards make a law, it is respected, but why must a law ordered by religion be rejected?” (CNN Turk, 2013). A member of parliament from the CHP, Muharrem İnce, claimed that Erdoğan, when he was saying “two drunkards”, meant Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Prime Minister of the time, İsmet İnönü (Akşam, 2013). People generally accepted this interpretation. This statement of the Prime Minister heightened the anxiety of secular Turks and provoked reactions in the country. One concern was his way of speaking of Atatürk and İnönü; another was the reference to religion when making law in a secular state.

The statement of the “two drunkards...” You are expecting respect for your values. But they are, Atatürk and İnönü, are also the people whom some people value greatly. (Ceyda, Female, History, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

This protest is a reaction to the AKP that has become more and more restrictive and conservative in the last couple of years. As you know, there has been a polarization again in the country and people feel the polarization between secularity and conservativeness. The government becomes more conservative, and the other 50 per cent of the population are worried. These activities are the result of that. Because every step of the government, symbolically, is perceived like that we are becoming a more conservative country. Of course, I have the same anxiety. In the

beginning, I did not feel uncomfortable like my friends and relatives. But the implications and the speeches of the government in the last two years show that we have been transforming from a secular society to a conservative society, and this is frightening me. (Mavi, Female, Political Science, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

One of the most prominent groups in Gezi Park was the Çarşı group, the best known supporters' group of Beşiktaş football club. This group was founded in 1982, and has been popular in Turkey for a long time. A famous slogan of theirs is “Çarşı her şeye karşı.” Which means “Çarşı is against everything”, referring to its supporters who are, according to the supporters I interviewed in the park, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-authoritarian, ecological and pluralist. They were very active in the park, especially during periods of police brutality. They were the most well organized group when activists struggled against the police to protect the park and the protesters. I interviewed two members of the group. Ahmet was one of the university student supporters of the Çarşı group.

*What exactly are you against (karşı) in this protest?*

We just want the government to indulge the demands of the people, because there has been a disproportionate force by the police here since the beginning. People were just reading books here, and there was no other activity. I came in the first days and am still here. I also attended some of the few fights against the police.

*What is the main objective of your group?*

Some friends, who organize the park, prepared some lists explaining the demands of the people. Apart from that, we just want Gezi Park to stay in place. As the Çarşı group, we do not want anything else. As we are a non-political group, we have nothing to do with the government. We just want the government to stop the

disproportionate force of the police, using excessive power against the protestors, and to rule the country in a democratic way, instead of a dictatorial way. The speeches of the Prime Minister have never calmed the protestors down and never stopped them worrying about the problems of the country. On the contrary, the government has always talked in an abusive and sarcastic way. We wanted other people to come and see the solidarity in the park. (Ahmet, Male, Mechanical Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 11/6/2013)

Although few, there were female students in the park who wore headscarves. Zeliha, a veiled university student, was among them. She had been there since the beginning of the protest. Although she was a member of the Anti-capitalist Muslims group, she visited other tents, speaking with the other activists. Her objectives were not confined to the protection of the park.

*For what purpose are you here in the park?*

First of all, I am here for the trees in the park, and to prevent the park being concretised for the sake of development. And then, I am here to argue against the sexist and racist discourses in the park.

*Is there racism and sexism in the park?*

If I say that there is now, it would not be right, actually. But during the big protest on Saturday, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2013, which was most probably the first protest of most of the people, a lot of slogans included sexist swearwords and some of them were neo-nationalist, like “*Mustafa Kemal’in askerleri yiz*” (We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal). Now they are generally cleaned from the area. More precisely, when we have spent time together in the park, we have seen and known each other well, and have overcome our prejudices. Nevertheless, some problems still

continue. Consequently, I am here to clean sexism and racism from the park.  
(Zeliha, Female, Environmental Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

The experience of Ceyda shows that Zeliha had succeeded in her object. When we met with Ceyda in a café, we talked about her views and experiences regarding religion. She mentioned prejudices that the previous secularist generation have about religiously observant people: women wearing the headscarf in particular.

My mother is a believing person. But when she saw a woman wearing a headscarf she was standing on end! She said, “I believe they are the supporters of the AKP, they are the members of a religious group (*cemaatçi*), they are the people who put Erdoğan into power!” Even my mother, who is one of the hardest people I have ever seen, has become moderate during the Gezi Park protests. When I went to the park on the first day, she asked me, saying, “Are there really women wearing the headscarf in the park?” She was surprised when I said yes, and she has softened her stance... (Ceyda, Female, History, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

The Anti-capitalist Muslims group was there to protest against the government and wealthy religious business people, most particularly because of their close relationship with the capitalist economic system. Eliaçık calls the economic policies of the government “*Abdestli kapitalizm*” (ritually cleansed capitalism).

I have been criticizing the religiously observant or conservative for being addicted to money and property and having desire for prohibited ill-gotten gains (*haram*), and also criticizing the government for misappropriating capital, and being very greedy and money-grabbing. We have come here for this reason. (Eliaçık, 9/6/2013)

Finally, another reason for the Gezi Protests was the absence of viable opposition parties. The protesters found the CHP very unsuccessful in terms of providing an effective opposition.

If the CHP had stood as a proper opposition so far, set our minds at rest, and if they expressed our discomforts, we would not feel these protests necessary. Always criticizing Erdoğan is not a proper opposition. We saw that none of the political parties and organizations did anything for our sake. Our minds have never been set at rest for a long time. The journalists who voiced my views have been given the sack, squelched, or they have been practising self-censorship. The party that I voted for as the lesser evil is functionless. So there is nobody defend my rights. It has been so up to now! (Ceyda, Female, History, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

### **8.3 THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN THE PROTESTS**

The data that I presented above challenges the popular explanation that the protests were about religion and religiously observant people. Although some committed secularist people were there in the park, who believe that the government aims to transform the country into an Islamic state, or that the government is trying to institutionalize religiously inspired policies – and there is evident anxiety among secularist people about indications of Islamism by the government – they were not against religion and religiosity itself. As emphasised in previous chapters, in order to understand the place of religion in the protests, it is necessary to have a clear conception of political Islamism, religiosity, secularism, and secular Muslimism. The secular Muslims of Turkey are worried about political Islamism, rather than religiosity. They are not troubled with having a religious

Prime Minister, but they are troubled with a political Islamist Prime Minister who aims to Islamize the country as a whole, from the legal system to education.

*Are the religious identities of Erdoğan and the AKP important for you?*

In my view, it is up to people themselves. He might be religious, but he should keep his or her relationship with religion private. His religiosity is not a bad thing, but in my view, it should not be that much, like interfering in all people. There can be both faithful and unfaithful people in the society. Therefore, they should not insert religion in all issues that much. This protest has nothing to do with religion. Nobody can say something about the religiosity of the Prime Minister. Most of the people are believers here. And nobody can say something about the non-believers. Religion is something that people are bound up with emotionally, and it is easy to organize people around it. Some people use religion to provoke religiously observant people, claiming that this protest is against religion. No such thing!

(Aylin, Female, Medicine, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 9/6/2013)

An Alevi informant, İlyas, also emphasized that the Gezi Protest was not about religion, much less any particular sect. He remarked that Sunni and Alevi people live together in the park peacefully, and that Erdoğan incites his supporters using religion and discriminating against the protesters.

I visited the Ataturkist Thought Association (*Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği*, ADD), which was founded in 1989 aiming to preserve the revolutions and the principles of Atatürk, and committed to the necessity of being the guardians of those principles (ADD, 2013). Tizcan was a university student and a member of the Association who was in the park. He criticized the then Prime Minister for referring to religion when making laws. He saw this as contrary to Ataturk's secularism.

Actually, there is a significant difference between what the government tries to do and which method they use. For example, making alcohol regulations is acceptable in a social law state. Nevertheless, if you refer to religion when you do it, or if you say something like “When two drunkards make a law, it is respected. But why the law that is ordered by the religion must be rejected?” it means that you are doing something against the principles of a social law and the secularist state. This kind of approach, rhetoric and method is unacceptable, at least for me. Our association generally thinks like that. In the park there is a reaction against the government for using religion for the sake of their politics. Even some women wearing a headscarf say this. (Tizcan, Male, Journalism, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

I asked him if he had a problem with the Prime Minister’s religious identity. He said that people cannot object to him praying and carrying out religious rituals; everybody should respect his worldview. However, he must practise religion personally, as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, not as a Prime Minister forcing people to practise religion. Government decisions should be made from a world viewpoint, not a religious one.

After the protests started, the Prime Minister went on a trip to North Africa from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> June. I was in the park and saw that the protestors were waiting for him to calm people down. The then President of the Republic, Abdullah Gül, said the protestors were being heard, and that “Democracy is not only a matter of elections” (Milliyet, 2013). He was implying that the government should respect those who were not its supporters, and listen to them. The then Deputy Prime Minister, Bülent Arınç, also acted to calm the protesters, by receiving a group claiming to represent them (Radikal, 2013).

These developments softened the atmosphere to a degree in the country. Nevertheless, the protestors were expecting a similar step from the Prime Minister whom they were mostly protesting against. However, when Erdogan got back to Istanbul,

thousands of people went to the airport to welcome him and voice opposition to the protesters, accusing them of having wider aims than stopping the development of the park. In a speech at the airport, Erdoğan blamed a supposed business lobby, “*faiz lobisi*”, for fomenting the trouble. During the speech, hostile slogans were chanted by the crowd, further heightening tension. “*Ya Allah, bismillah, Allahu akbar*” and “*Yol ver gidelim, Taksim’i ezelim*” (Allow us, let us go and let us trample on Taksim [the protesters]) (Hürriyet, 2013).

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June, when the police and the protesters clashed in the Beşiktaş neighbourhood, protesters running from the tear gas and water cannon, sought sanctuary in the Bezm-i Alem Valide Sultan Mosque in Kabataş. Most of the protesters went in without taking off their shoes, using the mosque as both shelter and first aid post. Later a few beer cans appeared in photos apparently taken in the mosque, and seeming to indicate that some protesters may have drunk alcohol there (Star Gündem, 2013). The media and others sympathetic to the government, used these pictures and reports for a long time to claim the protesters were disrespectful of religion. Much was made of the incident: Some claimed the muezzin allowed protesters into the mosque, and there was no disrespect displayed, while others claimed they threatened the muezzin and entered into the mosque by force (Haber Türk, 2013b; Türkiye, 2013).

When I enquired about this incident, protesters in the park denied the allegations about the drinking of alcohol in the mosque, and said entering with shoes in such haste, distress and commotion should be considered with understanding and tolerance. They believed it does not show that the protests are against religion and religiously observant people.

İhsan Eliaçık and the other members of the Anti-capitalist Muslims Society played a key role, during the Gezi Park protests, in the debate on the place of religion in the

protests. They were obviously a religious group with the female members wearing headscarves, the male members having characteristically Islamic beards, and with Islamic slogans on their tent, such as “*Mülk Allah’ındır*” (Property belongs to Allah). They organized Friday prayers in the park twice during the protests. While some protesters attended those prayers, others stood guard around them in order to show respect for religion and religiously observant people.

The *Isra* and *Mi’raj* (*Miraç* in Turkish) are the parts of a night journey of the Prophet Muhammad in 621. According to Islamic belief, he went from Mecca to Jerusalem and then he ascended to heaven where he spoke to God. This journey is celebrated in Turkey every year reciting some verses of the Qur’an, praying and distributing the pastry rings consumed in holy days. The anniversary of this journey is called *Miraç Kandili* in Turkish. The Anti-capitalist Muslims society organized a *Miraç Kandili* in the park, and almost all the protesters joined the celebration. Most of my informants mentioned these events as evidence that the Gezi Park protests were definitely not against religion, religiously observant people or principles, but, on the contrary, were rather against the Prime Minister and particular policies of his government.

We, in the middle of Taksim Square, in the middle of a lot of factions and neo-nationalists, celebrated the *Mi’raj*, recited the Qur’an, and prayed. I prayed, and then thousands of citizens came and said “*amin*”. The day after, we called the azan and prayed the Friday prayer. People welcomed it enthusiastically. They are still coming, hugging and crying. These two scenes have destroyed their claim of their “enmity to religion”. People think that the people who went to the gathering at the airport are the religiously observant populations of the country, and the people who come to the park are the having no religion, being disrespectful to religion, and

willing to live a modern lifestyle. What will happen after our religious organizations? (Eliaçık, 9/6/2013)

Actually we highlighted this in the social media saying that this is not against religion, but just against the government. Yes, neo-nationalists have an accumulated reaction against religiously observant people, and they reflect it, but these protests are not consisting of just that. There are many other political views coming here. Their discourse is not the discourse of Gezi Park. We are trying to prevent there from being any offensive discourses and attitudes. People are very careful in the park about not harassing religiously observant women wearing a headscarf. This is considered as a process of reconciliation. Everybody must try to accept others as they are. (Mavi, Female, Political Science, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

There were reports of harassment of headscarf-wearing women by protesters. Activists I spoke to about this in Gezi Park, including women protesters wearing the headscarf, rejected reports of this kind, while some of my informants who did not support the protests said that they and some of their friends were subjected to harassment away from the park, and even in Taksim Square, on account of their headscarf. Almost all of them blamed the neo-nationalists (*Ulusalcılar*) for these harassments. Zeliha was a female protester wearing a headscarf.

*As a religious person wearing a headscarf, do you have any problem with secularist people here?*

Not here. I have never had any trouble, and never heard from the others. I have just heard that Kemalists do harass women wearing the headscarf in other protests out of the park. *The Taksim Dayanışma Platformu* (Taksim Solidarity Platform) has

already made a statement saying, “Harassment towards women, also harassment and anger towards women wearing the headscarf is non-acceptable”.

*A woman I interviewed yesterday said that she has never come here because of the harassments she heard from her friends, and because of her anxiety of encountering harassment.*

It is normal. I know a lot of people like that. They think that the park is the place of neo-nationalists. As it is seen like it from the outside, they are worried about coming here. This is already the problem of the neo-nationalists as well. Most of them also have not come here; however they believe that the Gezi Park protest is their own attempt. Therefore there are some extremist neo-nationalists who attack women wearing the headscarf outside of the park. (Zeliha, Female, Environmental Engineering, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

Zeliha gave some examples she had heard from friends of attacks on religious women wearing the headscarf. They ranged from teasing, and swinging the Atatürk flag in their faces, to pushing and shoving and knocking them about, or banging a stick on their car. During the interview, she remarked that a friend sitting with us was the most recent example she had heard of. I asked her friend about this, and she told me of being in the capital city the previous weekend, walking on one of the main thoroughfares. There were many protesters in the street. Some shouted as they passed “*Başlarını kapatanların başlarını yollamaya gidiyoruz!*” (We are going to cut off the heads of the people who cover their heads!).

Ela was another university student studying Radio and Cinema. She had been wearing the headscarf for only a year, having grown up in Kadıköy, a secular neighbourhood of Istanbul. She has both a religious and a secular social circle. One of my

informants recommended to me that I interview her about her activism, she having been an activist almost since primary school. We met in another neighbourhood, Beşiktaş, and talked about her activist experiences and the Gezi Park protests in particular. I asked her to compare these protests with her previous experiences. According to her, a secular and Turkish nationalist atmosphere was dominant in the park. She was unhappy with the attitudes of some secular protesters towards some other protesters, especially the religious females and the Kurdish nationalists.

As a female wearing a headscarf, I do not feel myself belonging in the park. When I go there, if there are female friends wearing a headscarf, I go to them straightaway. There are some groups in the park, although I do not agree with some of their ideas, I feel comfortable near them. Gezi Park is not an area I completely feel comfortable in, and this is a problem for me. I think, the women wearing the headscarf are not the only ones who experience this. I cannot speak on behalf of them, but I think the Kurds experience this too. They have an area in which I always see them there. In my view, they think that they will not be accepted by the others. (Ela, Female, Cinema, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

She said that however uncomfortable she felt about these situations, these problems were not such big enough as to persuade her to move away from Gezi Park. She still went there and attended to the protests despite the “disagreeable things”, saying that this protest was not their protest only. She gave an example of a disagreeable experience.

We, as the Muslim girls, organised a meeting there. We were talking and writing some things. It was obvious that we were in a meeting. A woman came to us, interrupting the meeting, sitting near us without asking permission as matter of courtesy; she was saying some interesting things like “Oh, you girls wearing the headscarf are also here! Thank you very much for supporting us.” First of all, who

are “you”? Who are we supporting when we support you? What do you mean? In addition, what is it, to interrupt our meeting? It means that we are females wearing the headscarf, therefore they can treat us however they like! We know that if we got dressed in a different way, they would not have come and done things like that! They look down at us and speak to us like they were a teacher. During our meeting, 10-15 people came and said something like “Oh, women wearing the headscarf! Look at them! Can we take a picture?” Their way of speaking was actually so disrespectful!

*Is it generally like this, or does any particular group treat you in that way?*

Neo-nationalists, Atatürkists are like this. I have not experienced this with other people. (Ela, Female, Cinema, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

Most of my informants who talked of harassment of women wearing the headscarf mostly accused the neo-nationalist, or the Atatürkists, particularly the elderly (over 50s) Atatürkist women. I put these charges to two of my informants who identified themselves as neo-nationalists and Atatürkists or Kemalists. They did not accept the accusations. They indicated that, although there was some hostility between secularists and religiously observant people during the protests, the new secularist generation is more respectful of their religiously observant peers who embrace a different lifestyle.

How can the people accusing the neo-nationalist for the harassments towards the women wearing the headscarf, say something like that? How many neo-nationalists did they see and talk to? How do they come to this conclusion? We should distinguish between people and institutions. It is not right to tie an institution into something if the administrator or the authority of the institution did not say

anything about it. In that case, it would be an individual fault. (Tizcan, Male, Journalism, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

The harassment that is associated with the neo-nationalists concerns individual reactions. As the *Türkiye Gençlik Birliği* (The Youth Union of Turkey), it is not possible for us to embrace this kind of thought. It is also not possible for me to be uncomfortable with women who wear the headscarf. They have the right to do so, not only here, anywhere in Turkey, like I do (wearing western cloths). We just do not understand why some people cause disturbance with these statements. Because of these statements, when people see a neo-nationalist, they think that they are anti-religiously observant people. It is not possible to agree with that. People pray the Friday prayer here and some of our members attend it. We, both the religious and atheist people, meet and talk here every evening. There is not any discrimination here. (Berkay, Male, Chemical Engineering, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

For Turkish secularists, religiosity and political Islamism are different concepts. While they defend the right to practise religion, they are against political Islamism. Berkay says the government has to have no religion, and that religion exists for people. He says that Turkish secular youth believe that every person, in the individual sense, whichever religion he or she believes in, has got to have the freedom of practising his or her religion.

Tizcan, like Berkay, rejected the perception of Atatürkists as irreligious. “Those who lump Atatürkism and irreligion together, I believe, lack science, culture, and even religion!” He sought to demonstrate that Atatürk was respectful, personally and as a politician, towards Islam, saying, “Because Atatürk established the faculty of theology himself in 1926. He founded a mosque in China. In order that the religious scholars be educated in the best way, contrary to other secular countries, he generalized and he gave more importance to them than the faculty of medicine and the military academy.”

## **8.4 THE POSITION OF RELIGIOUSLY OBSERVANT PEOPLE IN THE PROTESTS**

Based on my observation, in the first days of the Gezi Park protests, there were a great number of religiously observant people who supported the protest through either the social media, especially Twitter and Facebook, or going to the park in person. Among them were writers, university academics, Islamist activists, and university students. At first they were criticizing the government about some parts of the new Taksim project that included removing the park, rebuilding an Ottoman-era military barracks, and constructing a shopping centre. This project involved the cutting down of several trees. Later they protested against the police brutality towards the protestors in the park. This was seen as a reflection of the style of the Prime Minister. Based on my own observations of the media and society in Turkey, there had been criticism among some religiously observant people, especially about his authoritarian style of speaking and acting. Nevertheless, most of the religiously observant people withdrew their support increasingly. There remained only the Anti-capitalist Muslims Society and some individuals.

When I went to Istanbul at the end of the first week of the protests, along with the protesters in the park, I also met with some religiously observant university students outside the park. My religiously observant informants outside the park criticized the Prime Minister for a variety of reasons, but they also criticized some of the protestors' methods and some of the things they were saying, and support was becoming more muted. Sevil, as a university student wearing the headscarf, was among my religiously observant informants who supported the protests although she never went to the park.

I still support the protest. I am one of the people who do not support the Taksim project, building the barracks on the place of the park. According to the last research I have seen, 75 per cent of people do not want it. In fact, I was going to go to the park on 31 May. I was busy and could not go there. When I went home, I saw the news that the police attacked on the protesters who did not do anything wrong. It provoked the protesters. I am thinking now, if I were there I would have become very angry after the attack with tear gas. (Sevil, Female, Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 8/6/2013)

Sevil gave some examples of criticisms levelled by religiously observant people against the government. According to her, there had been anger among the religiously observant or conservative community towards the so-called “tenderers” who got rich quick by corruptly tendering for government contracts. Secondly, she said that religiously observant people fumed over the Prime Minister’s authoritarian attitude: “like a sultan”. Another cause of anger among them, according to Sevil, was that the headscarf problem had still not been solved.

The history of lifting the headscarf ban at the universities is just two years old. Did they not come to power in 2002? I mean, what did they do in the first nine year period? Socio-political conjuncture and things like that, but I believe that, of course, it could have been done before, because they do whatever comes into their minds. On the one hand, yes, they line their own pockets, they also hold high positions, but they have forgotten the girls! They allowed some of them to go to universities, but where are the officers, where are the government agencies? This is a good card. It is always a support vote. They want to use it in all elections, part by part. I think they do not give priority to it. (Sevil, Female, Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 8/6/2013)

Faruk was a university student and a member of a religious group. When we talked about the complaints of the protesters concerning the authoritarian manner of the then Prime Minister, he said he was in agreement with them about it, and that the power of the Prime Minister should come to an end. “But our only problem is that there is no one else in Turkey like Tayyip Erdoğan. That’s why he’s becoming more and more authoritarian.”

Beril was another female religiously observant student. She also criticized the Prime Minister’s style saying, “Although I like the Prime Minister, I admit that his attitude towards the other fifty per cent of the citizens who did not support him in the elections, is hard. I cannot accept his style of a Prime Minister of a big country. It is possible that he has got some other faults apart from his style.”

During the Gezi Park protests, some religious writers also criticized the government, especially the Prime Minister, for the same reasons as the students quoted above, and they urged the government to show respect to the secularist people protesting in the park. Ayşe Böhürler was among those writers. She is also one of the founders of the AKP with Erdoğan, and a member of the central executive committee of the party. She wrote in the first week of the protests: “Until recently we (as the religiously observant Muslims) have been defending our own religious values and lifestyles by challenging the state’s attitude to impose a secular lifestyle as the only option for a way of life. And now, we should be respectful to the people’s objection to the bans and indoctrination presented within religious disguise like we were expecting at past” (Böhürler, 2013).

Despite their supports for the protests in the first few days, and despite the criticisms of the government and Prime Minister, religiously observant people withdrew their support as time went on. The foremost reason for this change was the violence: the fact that the protesters did not keep their distance from violence during the protests. In my interviews with religious informants, all of them criticized the protesters concerning this. In their

eyes, the protests, although they started “innocently”, lost their legitimacy when they resorted to violence. It was unacceptable to them. In the recent history of Turkey religiously observant people have felt themselves subjected to various injustices, some of which still continue to exist, such as the headscarf ban at universities and government institutions; the dissolving of the *Milli Görüş*, a religious political party; the banning of religious movements (*cemaat*), religious orders (*tarikat*), and dervish monasteries (*tekke*). Although they are still working to resolve these matters, they have avoided resorting to violence to get their rights. My religiously observant informants gave these examples and said they were exposed to much more oppression and unfairness, but tried to get their due in a democratic way.

There have been some people who vandalized and took down some cars... We saw them on the TV screens. There are obvious statistics. Some cars were burned. There has been material damage. We cannot ignore these facts, because we saw them. I think the people in Gezi Park have not excluded these. I have not heard any obvious disapproval. I wish I had heard. (Sevil, Female, Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 8/6/2013)

If everything was like it was on the same day, I mean, if the protest was like reading books and entertaining each other, it would have been a rightful, legitimate protest. Of course, I also do not want the cutting down of the trees. But the events moved away from the tree issue. It turned into a clash with the government and a desire for revolution. Those clashes and fights are not all there. (Fatih, Male, Geophysical Engineering, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

Of course I did not support the attack by the police. But I also do not support the people who reacted to the attack using violence and still resist. It is not our problem that the “innocent” environmentalist protesters are associated with provocateurs

and assailants. They should have seen the situation and withdrawn from there. It was their choice. (Beril, Female, Psychology, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 10/7/2013)

*Have you participated in the protests, or have you supported them from a distance?*

No. In the first three days I supported them from a distance, but I changed my attitude. There is not only one reason of this; there are a lot of reasons. But I think the most important thing is the hate speech that has been created by the people who are in the park and their supporters. (Aylin, Female, Medicine, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 9/6/2013)

Some of my informants were exposed in person, some of them heard both from their friends and the social media.

If you go to the squares, then your reaction (protest) is against the Prime Minister and the government. But if you do your protest with your pots and pans from your window, your are reacting to me, then! Because your protest disturbs and suppresses me. I look at it in terms of who you are disturbing. I see these protests are not against the government, rather, they are a reaction to the people who elected the AKP. (Sevil, Female, Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 8/6/2013)

The most notorious incident of harassment occurred on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013. According to the media, the daughter-in-law of the mayor of Istanbul Bahçelievler was attacked by a group of protesters. The 23 year old, wearing a headscarf and with a six-month-old baby, said 70 to 100 Gezi protestors, on seeing her had started shouting “Beat her! Whatever happened to us is because of the headscarf! We are the rightful owners of this country; do you understand? We are going to hang Erdoğan; do you understand?” She said she fainted and when she came to, she found they had urinated on her. The Prime Minister mentioned this incident and tension increased among religiously observant people (Haber7, 2013).

These events strengthened the perceptions of religiously observant people that the protestors were anti-religious. More importantly, these kinds of events reminded religiously observant people of the period starting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1998. In that period religiously observant Turks found themselves restricted in several ways. Thousands of female university students had to leave their schools or, as an interim solution, wore wigs at university. In addition to the government pressure, some secularists organized harassments such as banging pots and pans, and putting the lights off at a certain time in the evening. Some of my female informants look back on this as a traumatic experience.

Because of the headscarf bans, I had to wear a wig in the last year of high school and at university. I experienced many difficulties, had very big troubles. I mean, really very big troubles! It is still affecting me. Therefore, I still go through a trauma when I hear the sounds of pots and pans, and my tweets change immediately. All my thoughts, views, attitudes, keeping my balance, change! That period, 28 February, was also a trauma for a lot of friends of mine, like me. We are a generation that experienced these difficulties. Consequently, we must not be reminded of these traumas. (Sevil, Female, Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 8/6/2013)

Erdoğan came to power after the 28<sup>th</sup> February 1998 period, largely as a result of these events. Memory of that time still inclines many religiously observant people to back Erdogan against the secularists, despite his faults. Some religious groups and individuals, although critical of the government privately, see public criticism of Erdogan as dangerous for religiously observant people.

Another factor causing religiously observant people to withdraw support for the protestors was some complaints and demands made during the Gezi Park protests. According to some informants, Erdogan urging people to have three children, for instance, was just the offering of advice and not an encroachment on freedom. Alcohol regulation

was also not about lifestyle, but was necessary for social order. Some of them did not accept the claim that Erdoğan has become authoritarian; they think that it is just his personality and was one of the reasons he was elected. Slogans like “Resign Tayyip!” and “Government out!” because of his style and his way of speaking were perceived by religiously observant people as unjust to the Prime Minister. For them, there was no serious reason for the resignation of the Prime Minister and the government. They generally criticized the protesters for not making constructive criticism, and generally using only negative arguments. According to them, there was no other politician as powerful and charismatic as Erdoğan. There was no alternative.

Lastly, one of the most important reasons given for not supporting the protests and even for being against them, was the belief that the Gezi Park protests were organized by “external powers” (Star Gazete, 2013). Extended coverage by the foreign media, especially the BBC and CNN, the appearance of a German politician, Claudia Roth, at the protests, and demands by some protesters to, for example, prevent the building of the third Bosphorus bridge and third Istanbul airport, were seized on as evidence by people claiming that the main target of the protests was the overthrow of the Prime Minister and government for economic and political reasons.

## **8.5 DEMOCRATIZATION VS. POLARIZATION**

Although there were a confusing variety of issues during the Gezi Park protests, these protests, in my view, have developed a social consciousness especially among secularist people in Turkey. Based on my observations and interviews, the new generation, the university students in particular, are much more aware of the necessity to defend rights and freedom of all segments of society. The Internet, the social media, and the social

environment at universities play a very significant role in this democratic consciousness-raising. In socializing at university, students come to be familiar with other worldviews, political views and lifestyles. Berkay accepted that secularist people have changed in terms of social awareness in the last decade, especially through the universities.

*Do you accept that secularist people were not so sensitive about the difficulties of the women wearing headscarves?*

Definitely I do, because we, as the folk, learn some things slowly. We learn not to be afraid of one another. I am 21 years old. I do not know what exactly went on in the 28 February period you mentioned, but people learn in time. It might have been prevalent 10-15 years ago, but nowadays, we are university students, and we have female friends in our classrooms. So it would not be suitable to have such an anxiety, because we live together now. We are going to be together everywhere evermore. They are my classmates, and after the university, they maybe my colleagues in future. (Berkay, Male, Chemical Engineering, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

Communication in Gezi Park caused the young people to gain a greater depth of understanding. They spent days and weeks eating together, helping each other, discussing and observing worldviews and lifestyles, entertaining together, even praying together and striving together for freedom for all in society. Ela, as a religiously observant female university student wearing a headscarf, spent at least ten days in the park. Despite shortcomings she found there, she said that she continued going because of the importance of the protest for the future of Turkey.

Although there are some problems and shortcomings in the park, I think Gezi Park is a very positive thing. There has never been anything like this before in Turkey. So many people with different views in a park, without bothering each other! I

think this is definitely a positive development for both Turkey and us. I learn a lot of things listening to other people here. Others also learn a lot of things listening to others. We are going to move towards peace listening to the unpleasant experiences of the others and communicating. (Ela, Female, Cinema, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

The protests raised people's awareness of the distinction between majoritarian democracy and pluralistic democracy. After President Abdullah Gül released a statement in which he declared that "Democracy is not just elections" (Milliyet, 2013), there was discussion, in the park and elsewhere, of the importance of respect for people opposed to the government of the day. Protestor informants emphasized that "He [Erdoğan] must listen to us as well". Derya saw these developments as right and proper, seen in the context of the long imperialist past of the country. According to her, Turkey is now going through what the USA and Europe went through in the 1960s. She did not criticize only the AKP but warned all the political parties about keeping up with the new social situation.

I have always been opposed to this divisiveness. I come from a socialist family. There is no 'you' and 'I', there is 'we' as the whole Turkey. There is no other way than this. What the Prime Minister is doing now is a great sin. Dividing the society in two is to press the button of a civil war. Nobody will come out ahead. All the political parties must change their policies, because the society is changing, because the world is changing. (Derya, Female, Conservatory, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 9/6/2013)

Ceyda saw a difference between the previous secularist generation and the new generation. She criticized as "unhealthy" (*sakat*) the understanding of democracy of the previous generation. For her, the previous generation defended only their own rights and freedom, while the new generation defend the rights of all members of society.

I think that the most important duty of us, as the youth, is to persuade the previous generation about the necessity of objecting to all kinds of oppression. It is not limited to my parents. I should attend to different platforms and give the message that you should reject the oppression of everyone, not only yourself, because oppression of a section of society is an oppression to all of us; if we all object we can live happier, more freely, and more comfortable. The understanding of democracy by the previous generation was not right. The belief of secularist people who said that they believe in democracy is also invalid. If we do not want this movement to be limited here, we should build a bridge between the previous generation and the current generation. (Ceyda, Female, History, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

I asked Nejat's opinion of the anxiety felt by religiously observant people about a possible return to the situation of the 28<sup>th</sup> February period. He understood their fears, but was sure that Turkey would never return to that situation. According to him, nobody in the park wanted that: even the people shouting, "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal". He explained "The freedom of one segment of the society is also my freedom. I think we understood this now."

Religiously observant students, who did not go to the park and did not distinguish between the protest in the park and other, supporting, protests outside it, tended to view the protests as the reaction of secularist people unable to overthrow the AKP democratically through the ballot box. They did not recognize that the Gezi Park period was a decisive moment for the new generation regarding the future of Turkey, and supported equal rights for all in society. The rights being ones like freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of lifestyle, and right to education. Emphasis was given to the importance of a pluralistic democracy, respecting the other's worldview and lifestyle, and for justice in the

country. Notably absent was any mention by religiously observant students of a desire to Islamize the legal and educational system, nor any other areas of public life in the country. Common points in their statements were justice, freedom and respect. Bedri and Aylin were among the religiously observant students interviewed.

We need to decide first. Are we going to will to live together, accepting the existence of different views and beliefs? The people who answer this question as “no” are going to be recorded as the people who desire polarization in the country. (Bedri, Male, Business Management, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 28/7/2013)

The people who stand firm on justice and equity are going to develop a common word and actions that underlie healthy social relationships. I hope so. (Aylin, Female, Medicine, 1<sup>st</sup> year, 9/6/2013)

The university students I interviewed seemed strikingly limited in their partisanship. They readily offered criticism of the political party they had voted for at the election, and seemed ready to consider switching support.

I think that the main factor that put the AKP into power is the CHP, that hindered female students wearing headscarves from going to universities. Frankly speaking, that's what I think. The CHP had a lot of wrong policies. (Ceyda, Female, History, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 10/6/2013)

I voted for the AKP but I am not a partisan person. I voted for them, because I believed they were going to do a good job. If there are elections now, I will vote for them again. But if there were alternatives working much better, realizing good projects in terms of the development of Turkey, my vote would change then. I mean, I am not a fanatic. I am not a person who will be the partisan towards the AKP or the CHP for life. (Mehmet, Male, Science Teaching, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 13/6/2013)

The Prime Minister did not manage the crisis properly. His saying “We decided once!” was really... (Sevil, Female, Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> year, 8/6/2013)

## **8.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has analysed the Gezi Park protests, which started on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013 in Gezi Park, Istanbul, Turkey, in terms of the place of religion in the protests. Making observations in and outside the park for two weeks, and conducting interviews with both secularist and religiously observant university student protestors, and with other religiously observant students not supporting the protests, I concentrated on the following questions: What were the objectives of the protests? Were religion, Islam, religiously observant people, and the religious identity of the current policy makers among the main objections? What was the attitude of religiously observant people during the protests? Why did many religiously observant people withdraw their support from the park, and from the protests generally? What has been the result of the protests in terms of democracy and polarization in Turkish society? Have these protests contributed to the raising of a democratic consciousness, or have they rather contributed to polarization between secular and religious Turkish citizens?

Among the protestors and others, I particularly focused on university students. And among the protests in different neighbourhoods of Istanbul and in most of the cities of Turkey, I focused on Gezi Park, which was the starting point and symbolic heart of the protests. In this chapter, I presented my observations and interviews and analysed them, linking them with the whole thesis and the general theory of the thesis. This chapter has given an opportunity to test the hypotheses of this thesis as seen mostly from the points of

view of secular university students, and the opportunity to crosscheck the analyses of the previous chapters.

Based on my observations and interviews, the protests in Gezi Park had certain objectives. People went in limited numbers to the park at first in order to stop its destruction and replacement with a reconstruction of a historic barracks and with a shopping centre. After the attack by the police on the protesters, thousands of people went to the park to support the protesters and to protest against police brutality. Later the protests spread all over the country and developed into protests targeting government policies, and the attitude and rhetoric of the then Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The main points of criticism were interference in people's chosen lifestyle; women's rights; authoritarian attitudes and policies; anxiety regarding the possibility of the transformation of the country into an Islamic state; freedom of expression, especially the freedom of journalists and the media; oppressive alcohol regulation; abortion law; the Atatürk personality cult; the capitalist economy; and the lack of a satisfactory opposition in parliament.

During my fieldwork and my research through the social media, I never witnessed or heard any opposition to religion, religiously observant people or the religious identity of the policy makers of the country. As mentioned, I took hundreds of photographs in Gezi Park and Taksim Square and wrote down all the slogans, which were more than three hundred, in the area, and there was not any slogan targeting religion and religiosity in general. Only a small number of them criticized the then Prime Minister in terms of his way of practising religion. In addition, when I asked people whether the protests were about religion and religiously observant people, they were surprised and said that they were also believers and respectful of religion, adducing evidence such as the presence of female protesters wearing headscarves at the protests, observance of Friday prayers in the

park without problem, and the celebration of the Mi‘raj religious festival and meal together in the park. While they had no problem with religion and religiously observant people, and defended their rights to believe and practise, they were sensible about political Islam. The statements of the Gezi Park protestors concerning politics as related to religion and secularism confirmed the ideas of my other research participants, presented in Chapter Four. Like these others, the protestors also defended the idea of a secular country and were against Turkey being a religious state or of the government referring to religion when making its laws. Religious protesters defended the same set of ideas. They also wanted a secular state, rather than a strictly secularist state, giving equal rights to all religions and sects.

Religiously observant people also criticized the government and the policies and the statements of the then Prime Minister in particular. There were a great number of religiously observant people involved; some of them went to the park to support the protests and some of them gave support through social media in those first days. Along with protesting the redevelopment of Gezi Park and police brutality, they criticized the government for its capitalist policies; corruption; lawlessness; the then Prime Minister’s authoritarianism; the intervention in secularist people’s lifestyles and lack of respect shown them; delaying the resolution of the headscarf issue; economic policies and urbanization policies.

Many religiously observant people withdrew their support after the first few days of the protest, and when I asked them about this, I was given the following reasons: hate speech heard from some protesters; the failure of protesters to maintain a suitable distance from violence and extremist left-wing people; harassment of women wearing headscarves in other places where protests were held; memories of the 28<sup>th</sup> February period stirred up by the pots and pans protests of secularist people in other neighbourhoods of Istanbul, and

in other cities; reports in the media which made religiously observant people suspect protesters of being anti-religious, with the actual target of the protests being Islam and religiously observant Muslims. Some religiously observant people compared the country now to the situation of a decade and more ago, and were eager not to return to the problems with the economy and the lack of freedom of past times. They thought the protesters, although right in some of their criticisms, did the then Prime Minister an injustice, with demands for his resignation and that of the government. Doubts were expressed about the wisdom of stopping building work on the third Bosphorus bridge and the third Istanbul airport. Most did not see an acceptable alternative for the then Prime Minister or an acceptable alternative to the AKP. And then there were the ideas put about that foreign countries were interfering in Turkey's domestic affairs. For these reasons, religiously observant people, except some Islamist groups, like Anti-capitalist Muslims Society, and some individuals, withdrew their support from the Gezi Park protests and then the protests transformed into a secular reaction movement.

There was great ambiguity among people, especially religiously observant people, after the protests spread to other neighbourhoods of Istanbul and other Turkish cities, and when the extremist protesters, who responded police brutality with violence, cars and shops, and the neo-nationalists (*Ulusalcılar*), some of whom were against headscarves and the religious identity of policy-makers, got involved in the protests. Especially after some items of news, which were make-up and/or manipulated news for the protestors, - such as entering a mosque without taking shoes off, drinking alcohol in the mosque, attacking a pregnant woman wearing a headscarf, and harassing women wearing headscarves, it became easy to believe that the main target of the protests was the overthrow of the then Prime Minister and the AKP because of the increasing power of religiously observant people.

Although the political effects of the Gezi Park protests created conflict, they also resulted in significant negotiations during the protests between religiously observant and secularist participants, especially in the park. Based on my observations and interviews in the field, the park became a public sphere in which people gathered, encountered and negotiated with other people having different worldviews, political views and lifestyles. People ideas about religiosity and secularism were influenced by what they experienced in the park. Various religiosities were encountered in the park and this encounter created significant results for my research. Firstly, both secularist and religiously observant research participants were against a strictly secularist state or an Islamist state. The main purpose of the gathering in the park was to protest against all kinds of authoritarianism, the authoritarian policies of the then government in particular. Most of the secularist protestors realized there that not all religiously observant people were demanding an Islamist state; and most of the religiously observant protestors realized there that not all the secularist people were eager to push religion into private sphere. On the contrary, both sides were agreed on the non-privatization of religion. The religious activities in the park presented in this chapter were the indicator of this social agreement, and they are compatible with the findings of Chapter Four.

The encounter between different understandings of religiosity was significant event during the protests, arising from interaction in the park itself. Like the perceptions of my other research participants, presented in Chapter Five, secularist protestors among my informants who identified themselves as believers (*inançlı*) and religious (*dindar*), met a different religiosity that comprises observance of the rulings and practices of religion as well as opposing a conservative or Islamist government for the sake of freedom and justice. At the same time, religiously observant informants among the protestors met another kind of religiosity that concentrates on belief and morality, rather than rulings and

practices. The negotiation between these two sides created an interaction and new perceptions about politics, religion and the place of religion in the public and political spheres.

Finally, both secular and religious university student informants were optimistic about the future of the country in terms of democratic consciousness. They were against a polarization of the country, oppressive government, the limiting of freedom of expression, and freedom for all lifestyles. As the previous chapters of my thesis indicate, the main problem for all segments of society, especially for university students, was rule by oppressive and authoritarian governments, whether secular or religious.



Picture 1 – The tents and flags of the Anti-capitalist Muslims Society



Picture 2 – The members of an Islamist society, “tokad”. “Let’s resist together against the capitalist policies that plunder city, nature, and human!”



Picture 3 – Friday prayer during the protets in Gezi Park



Picture 4 – Traditionally dressed Kurd women



Picture 5 – “We are Muslims, Tayyip, you do not believe in our religion – Çapulcus<sup>2</sup> from Kasımpaşa”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Protestors called themselves “çapulcu” (looter), in response to the then Prime Minister Erdogan’s description of them as looters. Protestors took up this name as a symbol of pride, describing their peaceful and humorous civil disobedience actions.

<sup>3</sup> Kasımpaşa is a neighbourhood in Istanbul, in which Recep Tayyip Erdogan was born and grown up.



Picture 6 – “Gezi speaks – Wish tree”



Picture 7 – “We can take care of the religion without AKP; Ataturk without CHP; the nation without MHP; the Kurds without BDP. We are the people.”

## CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

This research has explored the ways in which university students in Istanbul understand, express and negotiate religion and secularity in the early twenty-first century amidst changes in the historically constituted, politically affirmed and culturally mediated polarization between Islamism and secularism. Examining this issue, I have explored the perceptions and views of university students on secularism and Islamism, the secularist state and the Islamic state; their understanding and experience of religiosity and secularity; the impact of religious groups in Turkey regarding the relationship of university students with religion and secularity; and finally, the existence of division or cohesion in society based on religion, culture, and lifestyle.

The main argument of this thesis is that Turkish university students, both secular and religiously oriented, do succeed in negotiating the relationship between religion and secularism successfully; they develop new kinds of religiosity and new understandings of Islam that shape their attitudes towards the state, politics, the public sphere, and those who embrace different lifestyles.

This thesis has examined the interaction between Islam and secularity as understood and experienced by university students in Turkey. I have looked at the different aspects of the issue in order to explore the real dynamics of secularization and Islamization among the university students of Turkish society.

An examination of daily experiences of university students in a secular setting is interesting because Islam is a religion with specific interventions into the daily life of the community of believers; it includes having a legal system, Shari‘a, with certain rules ranging from general morality to everyday life, and distinctively specified traditions.

The phenomenon is worth further exploring since the terms ‘secularization’ and ‘secularism’ are not used in the same way in the West and in Turkey. Both political and sociological meanings needed to be debated in the Turkish context. In this study I contend that political secularism has various meanings and interpretations in Turkey. My qualitative research makes it possible to unveil the perceptions of university students about secularism and explore what are the roots of on-going political debates using the terms political Islamism and secularism.

In this study I differentiate between political Islamism and civil Islamism, indicating that political Islamism is a different ideology, implying the Islamization of the country using political tools, while the latter gives importance and priority to civil works and the everyday lives of Muslims.

The point I emphasize is that most of my research participants prefer secularity in government agencies and freedom for all religions, ideologies, views and practices in the country. However, this form of secularity is not that implemented by the state since the beginning of the republic of Turkey. The mode of secularism that is preferred by a majority of Turkish university students seems to be essentially along the lines of the Anglo-Saxon style of secularism, which is defined in Chapter Four.

I also show here that spheres where religion is lived are not distinctly separated from each other, rather they are overlapped. This is not so much visible in the social and political areas as it is apparent in individual spaces. In this respect, religiosity and secularity cannot be measured by only looking at political views and attitudes.

Through empirical research with forty-five university students in Turkey, I attempted to answer the following four main questions:

1. What are the understandings and experiences of university students in Turkey related to Islam and secularity? How do they perceive religion and religiosity?
2. What tensions and conflicts are there between Islam and secularity, the process of secularization and the state ideology of secularism, as experienced by Turkish university students?
3. What are the roles of the major actors struggling to develop and maintain an Islamic consciousness among university students and what influence do non-governmental organizations and religious groups have on the lives of university students, on their religiosity and religious or non-religious sense of identity?
4. To what extent may polarization and conflict be observed among young people of Turkey, particularly university students, in relation to religion and lifestyles?

In Chapter Three I reflected on the methodological approaches I utilized in this research. Since qualitative research was the most appropriate method for my study, interviewing and observations were chosen as the research methods. Considering ethical issues first, I conducted in-depth interviews in my fieldwork site in Istanbul. The semi-structured interviews were a good tool, first, to get the views of university students concerning the research questions, and secondly, to get personal stories, experiences and views relevant to the details of the main issues and sub-topics. As for the methodological tools I used, qualitative individual interviews enabled me to obtain in-depth narratives from respondents. Participant observation over a period of nearly seven months in Istanbul aided my understanding of students' social contexts as they negotiated social spaces such as university settings.

I used systematic and purposive sampling and I accessed research participants with the help of my gatekeepers. Through this method, I conducted forty-five in-depth

interviews with male and female university students. In the fieldwork, my position was both insider and outsider to the society because I had lived in Turkey until I graduated from university there, and I have been working and studying in Europe for twelve years. This position created various advantages such as easily finding the right gatekeepers and properly choosing the research participants. At the same time, I could easily distance myself from the society when necessary, viewing my respondents' understanding and experiences from the outside.

I presented the relevant theoretical debates in Chapter Two to frame my research. The literature on this relationship between religion and secularity is mostly from and concerning the West because terms such as secularization, modernization and sacralisation emerged first in the West, and this necessitates consideration of their meanings in their original context, in order to establish their significance in modern Turkey.

I began by demonstrating that there is no single definition of secularism: American secularism, Anglo-Saxon secularism, the French style of secularism, and the Turkish each has its own characteristics. This poses questions about the peculiarities of the Turkish style. Since the beginning of the republic, Turkish secularism has not been merely related to the political sphere. It aims to secularize the country in both its institutions and culture. It has been successful in secularizing institutions such as education and law, while less successful at secularizing the consciousness and culture of the society. I contend that the tension between state and society in Turkey has arisen especially in this second area.

I discussed one of the main characteristics of Turkish-style secularism, that is the centrally institutionalized *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (The Directorate of Religious Affairs). Although Turkish secularism is often likened to the French form, the *Diyanet*, which is generally seen as the Turkish state's dedicated tool for control of religion, marks a big difference between them. Although there is no consensus among scholars on this issue, it

seems that Westernizing and modernizing reforms in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire led on to the far more thoroughgoing and systematic secularization of the Republic, with the institutionalising of strict secularism by the founders of the Republic, aiming to secularize the country from top to the bottom.

In terms of secularization, I have argued that the different definitions of the notion vary from one scientific discipline to another, and on the country being examined, as each country has its own experience of religion and secularity. It would definitely mislead researchers to treat all Muslim countries and societies as a homogenous group, as almost every one has its own mixture of cultures and interpretations of Islam.

This thesis focuses also on the roots of secularism in Turkey. I have argued that the definitions of religiosity and secularity need to be reconsidered in the context of Turkish society. As my research and fieldwork shows, secularity in Turkey is mostly debated and considered in the political arena rather than the philosophical and religious spheres. Supported by my qualitative research, it appears that even many politically secularist Turkish university students can identify themselves as religiously observant (*dindar*). At the same time, my research shows that practising or religiously observant university students generally do not want *Shari'a* Islamic law in Turkey. This finding in itself necessitated further research to develop a better understanding of the secularization and Islamization of Turkish society. Thus, this research will contribute to the area approaching the phenomenon from a different perspective and allow to deep dive into the issue through qualitative method and gathering insights directly from field.

I did not confine consideration of the tension that is experienced between religion and secularity, to the political and sociological areas. It also has a philosophical dimension. The debates on the compatibility of Islam and secularity are diverse and vary from scholar to scholar. Traditionalist scholars mostly argue that Islam is a complete and closed system

and cannot be divided into religious and secular practices, nor can the religion be modified to accommodate new circumstances. Other scholars divide Islamic rulings and principles into two parts: *'ibadat* (rituals and modes of worship) and *mu'amalat* (worldly transactions). Modernist scholars generally suggest that religion is concerned with the first, and not the second. I have argued that Turkish university students generally approach the issue from the point-of-view of modernist scholars. While they embrace Islamic values in their private lives, they defend the idea that government agencies and the legal system should be organized according to secular universal principles. Islamic jurisprudence does allow for legal changes according to new circumstances, on condition that the changes are not contrary to basic Islamic values and principles. This characteristic creates the possibility of integrating Islam into a modern lifestyle.

The first empirical chapter (Chapter Four) looked at how Turkish university students understood and experienced the relationship between religion and secularity in its political aspects. I also provided a framework for understanding how the lifestyles of Turkish society are changing, and how these changes are impacting on the new generation's lives. My object was to explore if polarization exists in Turkish society today, and whether Kemalist-secularist and political Islamist projects may be deemed to have thrived or failed in their aims. I discussed the difficulties students experience in practising their religion in the public sphere, the current condition of political Islam and the views of my research participants on this.

I argued on the basis of the interviews that although it has some similarities, secularism in Turkey differs from other kinds. My research found that Turkish university students, both religiously observant and secularist are not generally opposed to having secularism as a state ideology; rather, they are opposed to the Turkish style of secularism, which is strict, authoritarian and anti-religious. On the contrary, university students believe

that a “genuine secularism” can safeguard religions and religious activities in a country. The complaints are of unjust policies, and the desire is for what is conceived of as a genuinely secular and democratic state.

There are some particular tensions and conflicts experienced by university students with the secularist state. According to my research, the following issues caused problems for students in the past and during my research, nevertheless some of them have been partially solved during the time of the AKP government in the last decade. This included difficulties practising their religion (lack of facilities, tools, the study schedule); inadequacy of school religion lessons in terms of “quality”; problems for women with the headscarf at school and university, and in the workplace and public spaces; unjust policies concerning ethnic, denominational and religious minorities such as the Kurds, Alevis and non-Muslim foundations; obstacles put in the way students of İmam-Hatip religious high school students gaining entrance to universities; and a serious anxiety about finding a good job while displaying their religious identities and practices or with their relationship with some religious groups both in the strictly secularist public and private sectors.

A key finding was that there is ambiguity and uncertainty expressed by university students in the field of politics and religion. They tended to be uncertain on political issues and in particular on matters such as: the banning of headscarves at public schools and civil institutions; the upholding of Islamic law; media censorship for the sake of some religious rules; religious education by the state educational system; and the state institution of the *Diyanet* (Directorate of Religious Affairs). Some students objected to seeing women in public places dressed in a way contrary to Islamic principles and rulings, and would like, in these matters, to return society to the status quo ante of the Ottoman Empire in which social spaces were organized according to the religions of residents. However, those

Islamist students were not sure what the solution would be in the modern Turkish context, and how Muslims could completely practise their religion in the new social circumstances.

Another result of the strict secularist state policies on religiously observant students was the need to hide their religious identity and activities, to avoid problems at school and, later, at work. The reason for hiding their religious connections varied depending on the student's sex, occupations, and future expectations. This difficulty, even though it has not disappeared fully yet, has decreased during the AKP era. However, in recent years some segments of Turkish society opposed to the AKP government, are anxious about being blacklisted by the government and having difficulties in some areas of the life. While most of these segments are secular, interestingly there are also religious groups in opposition. This requires further research because it is important to explore if other religious groups experience difficulties regarding their religious practices and lifestyles during the time a religious government is in power, claiming to deal with the publicity of religion.

Although religiously observant students believe, I found, that Islamic principles should be implemented, they were not certain of the feasibility of this in modern Turkey in the immediate term or, indeed, ever. At election time, however, religious population admitted to being concerned about the religiosity of politicians and still more so the policies of political parties regarding religion.

The AKP's role in the Islamization and secularization of the country has been much debated in Turkey. Secularist students worried that the country was gradually Islamizing under the AKP government. Some students asserted, however, that the Arab Spring came to Turkey when the AKP came to power and overturned Mustafa Kemal's regime. There have been significant changes in the last decade, on both the religious and secular side of society. With the new "conservative" government, religiously observant people have entered the upper echelons of the state, and have established peace to a degree within the

secular system and with the secular tools of the state. Although there still are tensions between religiously observant and secularist people, I found, there is an increasing convergence, interaction and accommodation, particularly among university students. Students generally are most concerned about problems such as democracy, injustice, inequality, the economy, and liberation for all ethnic and religious groups.

The findings of Chapter Four clearly support Casanova's idea of the non-private nature of religion, as we saw in Chapter One. According to Casanova, "we should expect religion and morality to remain and even to become more contentious public issues in democratic politics" (2007: 22). The findings of this research also show that there is significant negotiation in the political arena between the religious and secular in Turkey. Secularist students negotiating religion and secularism accept the existence of religion and the appearance of religious symbols in the public sphere, seeing this as necessary in a democratic country. Similarly, religiously observant students also successfully negotiate the secular spaces of the public sphere and religiosity, and accept the validity and necessity of secular democratic principles in the political sphere, interpreting the terms "Islamic" and Islamic politics in a restricted way. Except for radical Islamist students, the students I studied do not see a deep-rooted contradiction in politics between democracy and Islam.

In Chapter Five, I examined religiosity, being religiously observant and secularity as understood and perceived by today's university students. I also examined the secularization thesis as it may be applied to the university students of Turkey. The approach adopted was to consider the beliefs and values of the students, rather than examining such metrics as the percentage of them attending prayers at mosques, for instance.

In the understanding of my informants, religiosity consists not only in worship and prayer but also in ethics in every sphere of public as well as private life. The prioritising of

moral values is a significant development in Turkish society in the understanding of religiosity. I found that today's religiously observant students place emphasis on embodying religion in their lives and activities, rather than limiting it to formal obedience to Islamic rulings.

Religiousness has various meanings and perceptions among university students. A student who is very active in a secularist party and drinks alcohol might, according to their own perception of religion, identify him or herself as religiously observant. While a student who performs the daily religious practices and wears the headscarf, can declare that she does not regard herself as religious. The students generally agreed that religiosity was not a constant feeling. On the contrary it could change from time-to-time and from context-to-context, and this was therefore a continuous, divine challenge (*imtihan*), namely endeavouring to keep religious feeling and thinking alive at all times.

Religiously observant university students rejected the Kemalist ideology in so far as it aims at restricting religion to the areas of belief and worship only. Generally the students also objected to their parents' and grandparents' understanding of religion, arguing that traditional religiousness (*Kültürel müslümanlık*) concentrates on the form of religious rituals and rulings rather than the inner meaning or, 'soul', of them, while neglecting rational and critical thinking. They typically held the view that they do not have to follow mere culture arising from historical circumstances, but rather follow the religious principles and rulings rationally, creating their own way of living.

Of all the factors affecting the religiousness and secularity of university students, I found that family background remained the most important. Students embraced the worldviews of their parents while generally critically appraising them to create their own perceptions and lifestyles. They saw formal religious education in schools, even religious high schools and theology faculties at universities, as an insufficient basis for their

religious lives. This led them to attend unofficial Qur'an courses and various religious events organized by religious groups and movements.

Performing the worship of *salat* or *namaz* five times a day and performing ablutions before each *namaz* were the biggest difficulties students encountered in their daily routine of carrying out religious practices. Secular environments in Turkey limit the consistency of religious observance, thus causing tension in the minds and social relations of religiously observant students. The marginalization of the religiously observant people directly or indirectly by some secularist people is another cause of tension.

Secularism, understood as Westernization, was not an acceptable process for religiously observant students, since they generally understood it as anti-religiosity, being against Turkish culture and tradition, and imitating European culture, way of thinking and lifestyle. Even secularist students were opposed to Westernization.

Almost all students consented to political and institutional secularization, though many were concerned at being unable to practise adequately so as to follow religious principles in the areas of economics and education, and in their private lives. This shows that the modernization theory of the privatization of religion seems not to have been valid for the university student participants.

All these findings support what Casanova (1994) suggests about the term 'secularization'. According to him, in order to analyse secularization properly, we need to distinguish between three meanings of the term: decline of religious beliefs and practices; privatization of religion; and differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms. Taking into account these three meanings, the third connotation seems to fit the situation of my research participants as they accept the secular democratic political system, while opposing pressure on their religious lifestyle in the public sphere.

Thus, as Casanova suggests, the classical modernization theory of secularization is no longer a proper basis for research into religiosity and secularity in a society; we need to develop new approaches.

In Chapter Six I examined Islamic religious groups and associations in Turkey and their place in both the private and public lives of Turkish university students. After considering who the main targets are of the various Islamic groups, I looked at the issue from the students' point-of-view: considering their views and experiences; the object being to elucidate the perceptions university students have of Turkish religious groups, and the ways these groups affect their lives in terms of religiosity and secularity; how they influence the students' political attitudes towards the secular Turkish state; the impact on the lifestyles of the students publicly and privately; and what students think of the religious groups for good and for ill.

In the light of my finding, it would seem that depending on their interests and needs, most Turkish religiously observant people have or had a interaction with at least one religious group in their political, public or private lives. With all their varied characteristic interests, concerns and constituencies, the various religious groups have in common the aim of strengthening the religiosity of individuals, Islamizing society, and eliminating the barriers to the practice of religion in public and private. To further these objectives they employ various methods, establishing organizations and institutions such as student accommodation, political parties, local and international aid organizations, university preparatory courses, private schools and universities. I found therefore that religious groups have a significant role in the religiosity of Turkish society and particularly in the lives of university students.

The history of Turkish religious groups is, at the same time, the history of the relationship between religion and the secularist state in Turkey. It can be seen as a conflict

between privatization and non-privatization of religion. The Turkish state, since its foundation, has striven to push religion into the margins and into the private sphere. Religious groups and their activities were seen as a threat by the state and secularists, who are inclined to suspect the religious of being against the secular republic and wanting to return (*irtica*) to an Islamic regime implementing *Shari'a* law. The finding of this thesis is that religious groups, rather than threatening the secular state, are placing religion, religiosity and religiously observant people into the public sphere, and in the meantime, securing for university students suitable alternatives to "unsuitable" secular spaces, social relations and leisure activities. They seek to educate the new generation in Islamic values, teaching them Islamic beliefs and principles. According to the students, private schools and universities established by religious groups respond to the needs of religiously observant people, giving a quality science and religious education. It is notable that, as this research shows, religious groups are conspicuously lacking in the political ambitions ascribed to them by many those who are not religiously observant.

Religious groups are nevertheless achieving their aim of creating social surroundings suitable for practising religion, by providing opportunities for socializing through their institutions and events. This also responds to the felt need of both parents and students, particularly conservative or religious female students with their home at a distance from Istanbul. There is reason for thinking, therefore, that religious groups make a significant contribution not only to the mobilization but also the modernization of Turkish society. In addition, there has been strong resistance by religious groups to the privatization of religion and moves to restore it to the political and public spheres.

Although religious groups are common and effective in Turkish society, this does not mean, I found, that the new generation, particularly university students, are dependent on them in their private and social lives. On the contrary, students appear to becoming

more and more individualist. Instead of secularization in society, individualization seems much more appropriate to describe the current situation of university students. Even religiously observant students criticize religious groups for some of their characteristics. While they appreciate their importance, they complain of them discouraging independent thinking. Not all groups are authoritarian, but students do generally feel the need to take control of their own lives and take their own decisions. Similar criticism was made by the students who had a relationship with these groups but had left later because of lack of respect for individuality.

In Chapter Seven, I questioned whether Turkey has a society divided into those who are religiously observant and those who are secularist. I looked at this issue through observing the greetings used, words preferred, hotels people holiday at, and so on.

I showed that religious individuals, and religious groups which have softened state oppression and worked underground to avoid surveillance, are now able to be more open. They are more powerful than before in politics, economics and culture. The most significant factor behind this has been the AKP government ascendance to power since 2002. The AKP government has given rise to a new elite, and has come as a relief to religiously observant people, who now feel independent more than before to express and practise their religious beliefs and principles.

My findings and observations indicate that the creation of new spaces, in which religiously observant people are able to practise their religion, does not mean necessarily that there is a polarization in the society in terms of religion and secularity. I argue that these developments are the natural results of becoming more openly pluralistic society and endeavouring to live as practising Muslims in a secular environment.

Living in a secular state and country and aspiring to practise religious principles in daily life, at work, in business, education, and holiday leads religiously observant Muslims to seek solutions that would emancipate them from dilemmas, ambiguity, and tension they experience particularly in their social and public lives. Along with intellectual endeavours, religious activists, religious movements, charities and societies take concrete steps to resolve this problem within the bounds of possibility, creating alternatives. As a result, having their own spaces in private and public lives, people can have opportunity to live their lifestyles without any clash with the other people who choose a different lifestyle.

In the Islamic literature, while the term *din* is used for the religion and religious affairs, the term *dunya* is used for the world and worldly affairs. These two key terms are not generally seen as in conflict or as completely separate areas from each other. My research participants agreed with this, and both secularist and religiously observant students said that religious and worldly affairs should not be seen as in contradiction with each other. However, problems appear when they discuss what religion and religious requirements are. Although all of the students I met were Muslims, they grouped with respect to their understanding and interpretation of religion and religiosity. Each interpretation results in a particular lifestyle that separates its followers from others. And this separation appears diversely, from discourse to language, from private institutions to choices in daily life.

During my fieldwork, including interviews and my involvement in the everyday activities of students, I observed a general discourse of “us” and “them”, the referents of these pronouns depending on the speaker. I also observed great differences between the everyday language of religiously observant and secularist students. In some spheres of life religious lifestyles are very apparent: attending Friday prayers; praying five times a day; fasting during Ramadan; abstaining from alcohol and wearing the headscarf are some

prominent examples. Having different lifestyles results in differentiation in places for socialising. Although religiously observant and secularist people in Turkey share the same spaces, religious duties and principles, with their associated lifestyles, create the need for certain places, and keep the religiously observant out of others. Man-woman relationships, drinking or not drinking alcohol, praying five times a day, educating children in accordance with their parents' values and principles in "suitable" neighbourhoods and schools, are other examples that might cause social and spatial divisions. However, although all religiously observant students see these issues as being among the divine challenges (*imtihan*), the degree of sensitivity varies depending on their culture, family education, and sense of religious priorities. In my observations, the social relations of males and females are no longer strict in the spaces frequented by those who are religiously observant.

Students in their public life feel the religious-secular social divide to varying degrees. While some religiously observant students complained about the contemptuous attitudes of their secularist classmates, some female students were of the view that those wearing the headscarf feel the social division much more than others, as its existence or its absence is the most visible sign of a woman's world view. When I asked the same students whether they experience these problems with all lecturers and all secularist friends, they said that they do not. It can be asserted that although these kinds of problems were and are experienced among the older generation, the new generation does not experience these troubles as much as the previous one.

Living in a secular state and country and aspiring to practise religious principles in daily life, at work, in business and education, leads religiously observant people to seek solutions that would emancipate them from dilemmas, ambiguity, and tension between their Islamic faith and secular life. Along with intellectual endeavours, activist religiously

observant people, religious movements, charities and societies take concrete steps in order to resolve this matter within the bounds of possibility. The key word for this solution is ‘alternative’.

Religiously observant Muslims in Turkey, except for some fundamentalists and extremists, want to practise their religion while accommodating themselves to their understanding of “modernity”. However, they realize that there are conflicts between Islamic lifestyles and modern lifestyles. Under these circumstances the majority of religiously observant Muslim individuals and religious groups, instead of completely rejecting the values and institutions of the modern world, try to negotiate and reconcile them with Islamic principles, as with so called interest-free ‘Islamic banking’, and at colleges and universities, holiday places, choose of online dictionaries, use of media etc.

As Toprak points out, “Social and geographical mobility, coupled with the development of modern communication networks, to a large extent have integrated the periphery with the center” (Toprak, 1995: 94). New social, geographical, and economic conditions have brought significant changes in society.

I argue that in the new social structure of Turkey, young people have much more interaction with each other and spend more time together. Nevertheless, even though they get closer with the passing of time and know each other better than before, both secularist and religiously observant students still their have prejudices about each other. Based on my own experiences, observations and the statements of my informants, I argue that although big social tensions in the political area do still exist in Turkish society between the religiously observant and the secular, social distancing and prejudices have dramatically decreased in the last decade.

In Chapter Eight I addressed the main subject of my thesis with reference to the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul that occurred mainly in May and June 2013. Observing developments through the various media, including social media, much of the population was unsure whether the protesters were engaged in action against the government and some of its policies, or whether it was an objection rather to the religious identity of the Prime Minister and the religiously observant people who he particularly represents. Was religion the main issue, namely, the Islamic revival in the country? And were these protests headed for another 28<sup>th</sup> February crisis in Turkey, with who-knew-what consequences for the traditionally religious population? Did these protests demonstrate that religion cannot co-exist with secularity, and that there is a deep-rooted and irresolvable tension between religious and secular Muslims in Turkey?

My research in Gezi Park was an outstanding opportunity to test all the arguments of my thesis. Based on my research, I found that the main points of criticism during the protests were the non-environmentalist policies of the government, interference in people's chosen lifestyles; women's rights; authoritarian attitudes and policies; anxiety regarding the possibility of the transformation of the country into an Islamic state; freedom of expression, especially the freedom of journalists and the media; oppressive alcohol regulation; abortion law; the Atatürk personality cult; the capitalist economy; and the lack of a satisfactory opposition in parliament.

From my observations and interviews with protesters, I concluded that there was negligible opposition to religion, religiously observant people or the religious identity of the policy-makers of the country. I took hundreds of photographs in Gezi Park and Taksim Square and wrote down every slogan I encountered: more than three hundred. I failed to find one targeting religion and religiosity in general, just a few criticizing the Prime Minister's ostentatious practice of religion. Statements by the Gezi Park protestors about

politics in relation to religion and secularism confirmed comments by my other research participants, presented in Chapter Four. They were in defense of the idea of a secular country and were against Turkey becoming a religious state or of the government referring to religion when making laws. Religious and secularist protesters wanted a secular state giving equal rights to all religions and ideologies.

The Gezi Park/Taksim Square protests resulted in much discussion and negotiation between religiously observant and secularist people, especially in the park. Based on my observations and interviews in the field, the park became a sphere in which people gathered, encountered and engaged in debate with people with different backgrounds and world views, political views and lifestyles. Along with other developments, the ideas of people about religiosity and secularity were influenced by what they experienced in the park. Various religiosities encountered one another in the park, with significant results for my research. Both secularist and religiously observant research participants were against a strictly secularist state and an Islamist state. The main purpose of the gathering was to protest all kinds of authoritarianism, the authoritarian policies of the government in particular. Most of the secularist protesters realized there that not all religiously observant people were demanding an Islamist state; and most of the religiously observant protesters realized that not all the secularist people were eager to push religion into the private sphere. On the contrary, both sides were agreed on de-privatization of religion. The religious activities in the park presented in this chapter were an indicator of this social agreement, and they are compatible with the findings of Chapter Four.

Encounters between those with different understandings of religiosities were significant events during the protests. Like the perceptions of other research participants presented in Chapter Five, secularist protesters among my informants, who identified themselves as believer (*inançlı*) and religious (*dindar*), met a different religiosity that

comprises observance of the rulings and practices of religion combined with opposition, for the sake of freedom and justice, to religiously conservative or Islamist government. At the same time, religiously observant informants among the protestors met another kind of religiosity that concentrates on belief and morality, rather than rulings and practices. Debate between these rival understandings created new perceptions of politics, religion and the place of religion in public and political spheres.

My university student participants having different world views were optimistic about the future of the country in terms of democratic consciousness. They were against polarization, oppressive government, the limiting of freedom of expression, and in favour of freedom for all lifestyles. As the previous chapters of my thesis indicate, the main objection for all segments of society, but especially for university students, is to rule by oppressive and authoritarian governments, whether secular or Islamic. Turkish university students, both secularist and religiously oriented, do successfully negotiate the secular spaces of the public sphere and religiosity; they develop new kinds of religiosity and Islamic understanding that shape their attitudes towards the state, politics, and those who embrace different lifestyles.

Finally, some ideas for further research in other contexts, in order to gain a more comprehensive view...

A parallel study to this could be done in other cities of Turkey in order to find out if we would be justified in generalizing the findings of this research. That kind of study would make it possible to compare the university students of Istanbul with those at university in towns and cities large and small across Turkey.

As discussed in this thesis, there have been big changes in Turkey since the AKP came to power in 2002, and in just the last few years especially, regarding religion,

religiosity, the position of religiously observant people, and policies related to religion. Research concentrating on recent developments in Turkey, such as the corruption scandal of 17–25 December 2013 and R. Tayyip Erdogan's becoming the President of Turkey, would be useful in order to find out how these developments and changes have affected perceptions, understandings, and relationships of both religiously observant and secularist students of the country with respect to religion, Islamism and secularism. Especially valuable would be a study of the anxieties and experiences of secularist students in recent years.

Research into the thinking of university students in other Muslim countries could be very valuable in making comparisons between Turkey and those countries. Muslim countries have a variety of state ideologies, with differing understanding and interpretation of religion and experiences of modernity, and with other differences of character and demographic structure etc. Studying the perceptions and experiences of other Muslim countries can allow social scientists to develop a better understanding of secularization, secularism, modernity, Islamism, Islamic movements, religiosity and secularity. Such studies would also provide an opportunity to compare the experiences and perceptions of the Christian West and the Muslim East with respect to these issues.

My ambition for the near future is to conduct research on Islam in the European context. Millions of Muslims in Europe, born and raised in Europe and citizens of European states, have a very different experience from those of traditionally Muslim lands, since they negotiate religion and secularity in a Christian context. Being a British citizen and embracing Britishness as part of one's identity, for instance, and at the same time having a sense of belonging to the Muslim community, results in new perceptions and understandings of identity, religiosity, secularity, and politics. How European Muslims negotiate different identities and senses of belonging in the European context, and how

they perceive and interpret Islamic rulings and principles in a secular or Christian country would be the main questions of the research.

It is hoped that this thesis creates the opportunity for further studies in order to make these comparisons.

## APPENDIX ONE - Demographics

|    | <b>Pseudonyms of<br/>the participants</b> | <b>Sex</b> | <b>Faculty</b>          | <b>Year</b> | <b>Date of<br/>interview</b> |
|----|---|------------|-------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 1  | Emre                                      | Male       | Computer Engineering    | 4. year     | 20.04.2012                   |
| 2  | Can                                       | Male       | Chemistry               | 4. year     | 02.04.2012                   |
| 3  | Kudret                                    | Male       | Law                     | 4. year     | 11.04.2012                   |
| 4  | Ali                                       | Male       | Electronic Engineering  | 2. year     | 10.04.2012                   |
| 5  | Faruk                                     | Male       | International Relations | 3. year     | 23.03.2012                   |
| 6  | Baran                                     | Male       | International Relations | 3. year     | 24.04.2012                   |
| 7  | Muharrem                                  | Male       | Mathematics             | 4. year     | 01.04.2012                   |
| 8  | Hakan                                     | Male       | Theology                | 4. year     | 02.04.2012                   |
| 9  | Yahya                                     | Male       | Biology                 | 4. year     | 27.03.2012                   |
| 10 | Birol                                     | Male       | Sociology               | 2. year     | 27.04.2012                   |
| 11 | Osman                                     | Male       | Sociology               | 3. year     | 27.04.2012                   |
| 12 | Bedri                                     | Male       | Business Management     | 4. year     | 28.07.2013                   |
| 13 | Fatih                                     | Male       | Geophysical Engineering | 1. year     | 10.06.2013                   |
| 14 | Mehmet                                    | Male       | Science Teaching        | 4. year     | 13.06.2013                   |
| 15 | Mahmut                                    | Male       | International Relations | 2. year     | 24.04.2012                   |
| 16 | Adem                                      | Male       | International Relations | 3. year     | 24.04.2012                   |
| 17 | Galip                                     | Male       | Radio Art and TV        | 4. year     | 30.03.2012                   |
| 18 | İlyas                                     | Male       | Mechanical Engineering  | 4. year     | 30.03.2012                   |
| 19 | Nejat                                     | Male       | Electrical Engineering  | 3. year     | 11.06.2013                   |
| 20 | Ahmet                                     | Male       | Mechanical Engineering  | 4. year     | 11.06.2013                   |
| 21 | Berkay                                    | Male       | Chemical Engineering    | 3. year     | 10.06.2013                   |
| 22 | Tizcan                                    | Male       | Journalism              | 3. year     | 10.06.2013                   |
| 23 | Berna                                     | Female     | Sociology               | 3. year     | 10.12.2012                   |
| 24 | Bahar                                     | Female     | Philosophy              | 4. year     | 30.03.2012                   |

|    |        |        |                         |         |            |
|----|--------|--------|-------------------------|---------|------------|
| 25 | Buse   | Female | Theology                | 4. year | 27.08.2012 |
| 26 | Fatma  | Female | Architecture            | 3. year | 02.04.2012 |
| 27 | Sema   | Female | Photography             | 2. year | 25.03.2012 |
| 28 | Hale   | Female | Theology                | 3. year | 01.05.2012 |
| 29 | Ferda  | Female | Philosophy              | 4. year | 26.03.2012 |
| 30 | Ebru   | Female | Theology                | 4. year | 27.08.2012 |
| 31 | Kübra  | Female | Philosophy              | 1. year | 20.04.2012 |
| 32 | Atiye  | Female | Sociology               | 4. year | 20.04.2012 |
| 33 | Meryem | Female | Sociology               | 4. year | 24.05.2012 |
| 34 | Ela    | Female | Cinema                  | 1. year | 10.06.2013 |
| 35 | Zeliha | Female | Environm. Engineering   | 4. year | 10.06.2013 |
| 36 | Sevil  | Female | Sociology               | 4. year | 08.06.2013 |
| 37 | Beril  | Female | Psychology              | 1. year | 10.07.2013 |
| 38 | Reyhan | Female | Political Science       | 3. year | 09.06.2013 |
| 39 | Derya  | Female | Conservatory            | 4. year | 09.06.2013 |
| 40 | Aylin  | Female | Medicine                | 1. year | 09.06.2013 |
| 41 | Ceyda  | Female | History                 | 4. year | 10.06.2013 |
| 42 | Lale   | Female | English Teaching        | 4. year | 09.06.2013 |
| 43 | Mavi   | Female | Political Science       | 1. year | 10.06.2013 |
| 44 | Zeynep | Female | Economics               | 1. year | 10.06.2013 |
| 45 | Aslı   | Female | Primary School Teaching | 1. year | 19.06.2013 |

## APPENDIX TWO - The List of the Secularist Reforms of Turkey

1921 and 1924 – Constitutions of the Republic

1922 – Abolition of Sultanate

1923 – Proclamation of the Republic

1924 – Abolishing the religious courts (*Ser'iyye mahkemeleri*)

1924 – Abolition of Caliphate

1924 – Abolition of the religious schools (*medreses*)

1924 – Establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affair (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*)

1924 – Unification of education (*Tevhid-i tedrisat*)

1925 – Closing down the religious shrines (*türbes*) and dervish convents (*tekkes*)

1925 – Prohibition of turban and fez, replacing them by the Western-style hat or cap

1926 – Adoption of the Italian penal code

1926 – Adoption of the Swiss civil code; the abolition of religious marriages and polygamy

1926 – Adoption of the Western clock and Gregorian calendar

1928 – Adoption of the Western numerals and the Latin alphabet

1928 – Removal of the statement of “The official state religion is Islam” from the constitution

1930, 1933, 1934 – Enfranchisement of women

1931 – Adoption of the Western weights and measures

1932 – Language reform; removing some Arabic and Persian words and grammar rules

1932 – Replacement of Arabic *ezan* (call to prayer) with a Turkish one

1934 – Abolition of all courtesy titles (*Bey, Effendi, Pasha*) except in the army

1934 – The introduction of family names

1935 – Change of the official day of rest from Friday to Sunday

1937 – Inserting the principle of laicism or secularism in the constitution

## APPENDIX THREE - Interview Schedule

The semi-formal interviews young Turkish university student and followed the following schedule:

Tell me about yourself.

Do you define yourself as Muslim?

Do you live with your family?

What are you studying? What year? Why did you choose this subject?

Do you belong to any student group?

Who are your main friends at university?

Can you describe your daily routine?

Do you belong to any student groups?

Who are your main friends at the university?

Do you participate in the organizations of any religious or secular group? Since when?

Do you celebrate your birthday? How about your family?

Would you say that you are a religiously observant (*dindar*) Muslim?

Do you pray five times a day, for example? How often do you pray?

Do you observe prohibitions on alcohol?

Have you ever attended a Qur'an course?

How would you describe a religious person?

Are you interested in Turkish politics? Is there a particular political party who views you agree with? Have you ever voted? Which party did you support?

Do you think the society is secular in Turkey?

Do you think the society should be more – or less – Islamic?

What kind of place does religion have in Turkish daily life? In the economy? In culture? In politics? In the state?

What do you think about the direction Turkey is going in?

Do you think religion has lost its appeal for young people today? Why is that?

Are there any tensions in Turkish society due to imposed secularism?

Are there some core values of Islam, as you understand it that clash with secularism?

What is Shari'a? What do you think of Shari'a?

Could you give me an example of a proper Islamic state now and or in the past?

Some people believe that Islam and secularism complement and enhance one another; others believe that this is impossible. What is your view?

What kind of place is there in your opinion for non-governmental organizations, and for religious groups?

Do you think religion has now been privatized? If so, why has that happened?

What is your view about the future of Islam and secularism in Turkey?

Has there been a change, in your opinion, in the way that religion and secularity are understood nowadays by young people in Turkey?

Has the secularization project of Kemalism failed or succeeded? What are the various factors in this failure or success?

What do you think of the fact that women are much more visible in social and economic lives?

In future, would you be happy if your child marries an Alevi or Sunni?

Which newspaper do you read generally?

Which TV channels do you watch generally?

Which TV programs do you watch?

Which social medias do you use?

What type of marriage ceremony would you like to have for yours?

Which writers are your favorites?

Which Islamic scholars do you like best?

What do you think of the following people: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Adnan Menderes, Turgut Özal, Tayyip Erdoğan, Fethullah Gülen, Yaşar Nuri Öztürk.

### ***Questions for the Gezi Park protests***

How do you identify yourself?

Are you a religiously observant (*dindar*) or secularist person?

Are you a practicing Muslim?

Why do you support the Gezi Park protests?

In your opinion, what are the aims of the protests? What are the activists against?

Do you think that religion, religiously observant people, and the religious identity of the Prime Minister are the main targets of the protests?

What government policies and practices are you criticising?

Why do not you support the Gezi Park protests? Why are you dissatisfied?

Do you think the AKP is a political Islamist party?

Did you vote for the AKP in the previous elections? If so, have you got any criticism particularly in terms of their attitudes towards secularist people?

Although some religiously observant people supported the protests by either going to the park or expressing sympathy on social media, why did most of religiously observant people withhold their support?

Is there conflict between secularist and religiously observant Muslims in Turkey and, if there is, what has been the impact of the Gezi Park protests on this?

## **APPENDIX FOUR - Letter of Invitation**

Address: .....

Dear .....,

My name is Emrah Çelik and I am currently undertaking a Doctorate in Sociology at Keele University, Staffordshire, England. As part of the Doctorate I am carrying out research into the understandings and experiences of university students in Turkey.

The specific aim of this study is to investigate the tension between religion and secularism as understood and experienced by Turkish university students.

I would like to invite you to take part in the study and would be very grateful if you would consider participating.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the attached information document carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish.

My research supervisor is Dr. Farzana Shain, who is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Keele University.

Please direct any questions you may have to me or my supervisor, if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information about the study.

With best wishes,

Emrah Celik

## APPENDIX FIVE - Information Sheet

**Study Title:** “*Between Religion and Secularity: An ethnographic enquiry into the understandings and experiences of university students in Turkey*”

### **Aims of the Research**

This research will examine the views and perspectives of university students on religion and secularism in Turkey. I am particularly interested in students’ understandings of Islam and secularism, and the various factors that contribute to these understandings. I also aim to explore the extent to which students might have experienced any tension between religion and Islam in their own lives.

### **Invitation**

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study “*Between Religion and Secularity: An ethnographic enquiry into the understandings and experiences of university students in Turkey*”. This project is being undertaken by Emrah Çelik who is conducting a PhD project in sociology at Keele University.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen, because this research project is about Turkish university students. Your current status as a student makes you an ideal candidate for this research.

### **Do I have to take part?**

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked if you are willing to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for our records. You can also give your consent verbally, or on tape. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons.

### **What will happen if I take part?**

After you consent to take part in this research, you will be asked some questions face to face related to your life and experiences, particularly about the topic of my research. There

will be only one session for the interview, and it is expected to last approximately two hours.

**If I take part, what do I have to do?**

We will only meet once wherever is comfortable for you, and talk on the research questions about two hours or more. You will be asked to answer questions about your understanding and experiences related to the tensions between religion and secularization.

**What are the benefits (if any) of taking part?**

There will not be any benefit for you personally, for taking part but you will be making a contribution to knowledge and understanding students in contemporary Turkey.

**What are the risks (if any) of taking part?**

There are no risks. This is because I will not give the records to anyone else and I will not disclose your name. The data will be anonymised before it is submitted for publication.

**What if there is a problem?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you can contact me on: [e.celik@keele.ac.uk](mailto:e.celik@keele.ac.uk). Alternatively, if you do not wish to contact the researcher(s) you may contact Nicola Leighton, Research Governance Officer on 01782 733306 or [n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk](mailto:n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk), and also you may contact: Istar Gozaydin, [isavasir@dogus.edu.tr](mailto:isavasir@dogus.edu.tr)

If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address:

Nicola Leighton

Research Governance Officer  
Research & Enterprise Services  
Dorothy Hodgkin Building  
Keele University, ST5 5BG  
E-mail: [n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk](mailto:n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk)  
Tel: 01782 733306

**How will information about me be used?**

Our meeting(s) will be recorded by a voice recorder and will be used in my thesis. The data also might be retained for use in future studies such as publications arising from the study. Any such data will be anonymised.

**Who will have access to information about me?**

Your confidentiality will be safeguarded during and after the study.

The data will be securely stored on a password-protected computer. It will be coded.

The researcher will retain the data for at least five years.

The data will be securely stored and the Keele guidelines of five years for the period of time for the storage of data will be adhered to and then securely destroyed.

**Who is funding and organising the research?**

The research is self-funded.

**Contact for further information**

Emrah Çelik: [e.celik@keele.ac.uk](mailto:e.celik@keele.ac.uk)

## APPENDIX SIX - Consent Form

**Title of Project:** “*Between Religion and Secularity: An ethnographic enquiry into the understandings and experiences of university students in Turkey*”

**Name of Principal Investigator:** Emrah Celik

Please tick box

- 1 I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- 2 I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.
- 3 I agree to take part in this study.
- 4 I understand that data collected about me during this study will be anonymised before it is submitted for publication.
- 5 I agree to the interview/focus group/observation being audio taped/video recorded.
- 6 I agree to allow the data collected to be used for future publication.
- 7 I agree to be contacted about possible participation in future research projects.

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Name of participant

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Date

---

Signature

---

Researcher

---

Date

---

Signature

## APPENDIX SEVEN - Ethical Approval Letter



26 March 2012

Emrah Celik  
138 St Paul's Road  
Smethwick  
West Midlands  
B66 1HA

Dear Emrah

**Re: 'Between Religion and Secularization in Turkey: An ethnographic enquiry into the understandings and experiences of Turkish university students'**

Thank you for submitting your revised project for review.

I am pleased to inform you that your project has been approved by the Ethics Review Panel.

If the fieldwork goes beyond the date stated in your application (June 2012) you must notify the Ethical Review Panel via Michele Dawson.

If there are any other amendments to your study you must submit an 'application to amend study' form to Michele Dawson. This form is available from Michele (01782 733588) or via <http://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchethics/>

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Michele Dawson in writing to [m.dawson@uso.keele.ac.uk](mailto:m.dawson@uso.keele.ac.uk)

Yours sincerely

**Dr Nicky Edelstyn**

**Chair – Ethical Review Panel**

CC RI Manager, Supervisor

## APPENDIX EIGHT – Glossary of Turkish Words

*Cami*: Mosque

*Cemaat*: Religious group or movement

*Diyanet*: Religious affairs

*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*: The Directorate of Religious Affairs

*Ezan*: Call to prayer

*Hadith*: The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad

*Halife*: Caliph

*İmam-Hatip Lisesi*: Religious high school

*İmam*: An Islamic leadership position; worship leader

*Medrese*: A type of educational institution, secular or religious.

*Qur'an*: The holy book of Islam

*Shari'a*: Islamic law system

*Sunna or Sünnet*: The sayings, deeds, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad, and also his lifestyle

*Tarikat or Tariqa*: Religious order, Islamic brotherhood

*Tasavvuf*: Sufism, Islamic mysticism

*Tekke and zaviye*: Islamic monasteries

*Ulama or Ulema*: Islamic jurists and scholars

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