CHAPTER IV

GYPSYNESS IN THE TOWN

"There is no real Roman here although people out there call us Çingene." 257

In Bayramic, three main Gypsy groups can be distinguished; sepetcis, locals and muhacirs. The sepetcis were not in the town during the attacks, but settled more recently. Therefore, they are not part of our story, but they are nevertheless important for the perception of Gypsyness in the town. They are associated with nomadism and referred to as “the most/real Gypsy.” Their profession was weaving baskets. While their baskets were used in several areas in houses, farms and workplaces to keep and carry goods before, with the introduction of industrial products, the profession lost its importance. They then shifted to petty jobs, peddling and begging in the town. Now, they are the poorest among the Gypsies and despised by the local Gypsies and muhacirs along with other townspeople not only because of their poverty and their nomadic past, but also because local Gypsies and muhacirs distance themselves from them. Some of sepetcis now live near Çamlık in a few houses while some still have not settled down. Their numbers are small and less than a hundred of them live in Bayramic.

On the other hand, the local Gypsies are seen as belonging to the town. They are associated with a specific neighborhood and many townspeople feel most close to them. There are four main families of local Gypsies; Adalilar (Islanders), Akkaslar, Kirkislar and Kepekliler. It is unclear when they arrived in Bayramic and most people assume that they have long establishment in the town. Some townspeople argued that they are deeply

257 A common saying of muhacirs in Bayramic. See Narrative 2 in Appendix D.
rooted in the town, just like the Hadimoglu family, who are considered the most prototypical and autochthonous Bayramic family.258 Some however, indicated that they came from the Greek islands as the biggest family among them is called Adalilar (Island). They are considered locals even more than some local Turks.

Among them, there are families who have been very close to Turkish townspeople, especially before the attacks. Their traditional professions were blacksmithing and music. Blacksmithing is not a relevant profession anymore in the era of mass consumption and production. And maybe partly for this reason they are considered most close to Turkish traditions. Moreover, among the former smiths families, there are people who have petty jobs in bakeries, groceries, barbers, coffeehouses, but also as seasonal workers and in trade. The musicians, on the other hand, preserved their professions. They are considered closer to the Gypsy image because of this traditional occupation, life styles, behavior codes and attitudes. There are few relatively wealthy people among the musicians while others suffer from poverty. Some go to the coastal areas seasonally to perform their music and make a living.

The panayirs are also places that Gypsy musicians attend. These local bazaars are held once or twice a year and historically they were important economic and social gatherings for the people in the region. The Bayramic panayir is twice in a year; one in August and the other is in May. There are also musicians who play in restaurants and bars in the city center of Canakkale. However, as the traditional way of celebrating weddings with live music is losing ground, their traditional market also shrinks. The local Gypsies’ estimated population in the town is around five hundred,259 while they might have been close to seven hundred before the attacks. They are relatively easy to talk to about their Gypsyness.

258 See Chapter Three for their presence in Ottoman records.

259 The numbers are estimated, as Gypsies are not distinguished as such in the census.
The last group of the Gypsies is the muhacirs. They are the ones who came during the population exchange from Greece in the mid-1920s and were the main target of the attacks. Among them were porters, drivers, domestic workers, petty workers, petty merchants (ziareci), and shoe polishers. The women of this group work as domestics and maids while men do some small transportation and house painting. Finally there is one person who works as a state official in the department of public finance, and furthermore some who have retired as state officials from the post office. Many people from this group, however, left the town in 1970 and did not return. The main family that was involved in the attacks now lives in Ankara, while two sisters are still in town. Now, the whole community approximates a hundred in Bayramic, whereas they are estimated to have numbered around five hundred before 1970.\textsuperscript{260} Among them, the identification with Gypsyness is very low and they are easily offended when people label them as Gypsies.

Although during the time I conducted oral history in the town I focused on life stories and local history, among the Gypsies in the town, the word that I was gathering information on Gypsies spread quickly. My questions about Gypsyness and their experiences before, during and after the attacks disturbed the Gypsies. In my very first week, the atmosphere was quite tense in the neighborhood dominated by the Gypsies. A muhacir told me if I wanted to listen to Gypsies' life stories, I had to go somewhere else. This was a significant remark, which showed that they resented being called Gypsy. It was not only the terminology of Gyspy or Roman,\textsuperscript{261} they opposed any identification with Gypsyness. Some felt insulted while others were fed up explaining how different

\textsuperscript{260} See Table 2 in Chapter Three for the number of the initial muhacir immigrants in the town (360).

\textsuperscript{261} In some other cities such as Balikesir and Bursa, people resent to be called Çingene and prefer the term Roman. That is why I always use Roman during my research in the field while on a theoretical level, I prefer the term Çingene which is the dominant term in society and due to reasons that I explained in the theoretical chapter.
they were from the image of Gypsies by non-Gypsies. This urge to struggle against prejudices and stereotypes initially made some feel discontent and framed the relationship in a Gypsy-non-Gypsy dichotomy.

My first contact with the Gypsies in Bayramic was with a muhacir whose family had been the target in the attacks and who later on had become a respectable and good musician who also can be admired on national television in Ankara. I paid my first visit to his aunt in the town. It took only a few days for rumors to spread that I was asking questions about Gypsyness and the attacks. For many, especially muhacirs, it took some time to talk with me about their past and they would sometimes just skip the attacks or tell that they did not remember.

For some, the attacks themselves were the symbol of the negative perception of them by non-Gypsies. The attacks formed their peak experience that influenced their approximation to and secession from their Gypsyness. The attacks homogenized and reduced people to one category. Through the violent experience of such discrimination, muhacirs’ and local Gypsies’ collective experience relied on a negative commonality. Thus, their reluctance to talk about the attacks was linked to their silence on their Gypsyness as it was associated with a degraded position. After some time however the ice was broken and my presence was accepted by the community. The crucial moment was during the Hidrellez celebration (Turkish Gypsies’ annual day when the beginning of the Spring is celebrated on May 6. It is known as Ederlezi in Balkan countries) when muhacir Seyyal expressed her trust and belief in my research. She is a descendant of the main target family in the attacks and lives in Edremit, nearby Balikesir. After her ‘blessing’, some muhacirs who had previously declared that they had not remembered anything started sharing their own experiences with me. Later on, my communication

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262 For the information on the narrators; their community links, age, date of interview and further explanation, see the Appendix A.
with some muhacirs became easier although some still felt reluctant to tell certain things, as we will see in the following parts.

There also were differences in narratives between local Gypsies, muhacirs and between different families within these communities. Their stories very much constituted their relation to Gypsyness, how they perceived and experienced it in the town and wanted it to be remembered. Their tales also could change according to their trust in me. Some, thus, did not reveal their Gypsyness freely, but only revealed information by implication. Others did not directly talk about it but used other ways, such as referring to Turks with the term goray (a term used for Turks in the town). Some denied their Gypsyness until my last days in the town, whereas others had no problem to talk about their Gypsyness. Generally, the local Gypsies felt more eager to stress their Gypsyness, whereas most muhacirs denied it.

It is noteworthy, in all narratives with Gypsies, without a particular reason, that they stressed how honest, clean, well behaving and integrated they were. Moreover, they asserted that “naturally” they were not like those Gypsies who misbehaved. They tried to prove that they were not like those referred to by dominant Gypsy stereotypes. In general, they did not openly oppose the stereotypes, but instead they emphasized how different they were. This indicates how difficult it is to escape the Gypsy stigmatization. They rather try to protect themselves from falling into that category altogether: “Do we look like a Gypsy to you?” “If somebody calls me Gypsy, he should be the one who should be ashamed.”

Among Gypsies, Gypsyness can be related to social status, an economic condition and a life style as well as descent. The general trend in the representations of Gypsyness by the Turks, on the other hand, relies more on descent and taken for granted

263 Local Gypsies use the term, in contrast to the muhacirs.

264 For the function of scapegoating among Gypsy groups as such, see Acton, Gypsy Politics, especially pp. 80-82.
perceptions. Many were not able to tell what really differentiated them from Gypsies. They were confused about the differences although they were sure about who the Gypsies were in the town. The obscurity on Gypsyness was replaced by the certainty on how to detect a Gypsy. It was usually not the family name but common knowledge on every families’ descent in the town. They generalized many people under the same category of Gypsyness without even knowing what exactly made them Gypsy. This confusion was mainly caused by the fact that many Gypsies adapted similar life style and traditions as the Turks in the town. Along with that, many Turks could not find evidence of Gypsyness and relied on stereotypes. There also were many people who emphasized the closeness between them and the Gypsies and recognized the effect of the Gypsy stigma on the ‘othering’ of Gypsies, from whom they otherwise did not differ so much.

For the townspeople who lived in close proximity to Gypsies, the Gypsy image is more complex and goes beyond general stereotypes. After all, there were many Gypsies who had been neighbors, friends, workers, servants, classmates or only acquaintances to many Turks. The proximity furthermore enables one to know the ancestry of someone in the town. “What is your ancestry?” appears as a crucial question for introducing oneself. It is a guideline for someone’s socio-economic background and is an indication of one’s social status. This information is salient for the social order, because it enables people to determine their own positions and to draw the lines of relationships with one another.

In the following part, we will see how Gypsyness fits in this hierarchy and what being a Gypsy means for the townspeople’s relations. In this part, I will analyze the determining features such as physical appearances, residential and occupational boundaries, and references to manners and morals. Throughout this chapter, the traces of the attacks will appear while the chapter will prepare us for the next one in which we will focus on the attacks themselves. This chapter moreover will represent the tension between the fixed Gypsy stigma and the historical changes in relations and perceptions.
The stigma persists especially connected to the attacks while most people emphasize good relationships before and after the attacks. The moments of confusion also reveal that the stigma has become less functional in the present context, as nostalgia, confusion and the questioning of categories occupy a greater place in the narratives on present relations.

Social Order: Relations, Hierarchies and Discrimination

Nowadays, many townspeople including Gypsies and Turks emphasize equality and the absence of discrimination before and after the attacks. In their narratives, historical solidarity prevails. The commonality through past experiences, cultural proximity and the shared locality is stressed, whereas differences and the Gypsy stigma is reserved in stories about the attacks. The emphasis on similarities and the appreciation of Gypsies as “our Gypsies” downplays the stigma in the present context.

Many townspeople characterized their relationship with the Gypsies as close, especially in comparison to the ones in Canakkale. “Our Gypsies are good” “not like the ones in Canakkale” “We intermingled” are typical narratives. Good neighborhood memories take shape in a nostalgic tone. The current relations in the town, the distance between people, and the decrease in solidarity caused by the immigration of villagers accompany the narratives of the good relations in good old days. They usually do not mention any discrimination before the attacks. “The attacks occurred suddenly” “There was no discontent or discrimination before” “We lived happily together”. Similar narratives came from a Turkish neighbor in Tepecik neighborhood, Necla’s mother Ayfer. She told about her relationship with their local Gypsy neighbors who had lived in the neighborhood of Tepecik for over half a century: “We were neighbors like you and me. They had been very nice. [‘Muslims’—Necla would add]. With ritual ablution and
praying [*namaz*]. They would not get involved in something like that [assaulting girls]. They still live in their houses, look. […] They were not separated from Turks like a Gypsy.”

Similarly, an old Turkish neighbor Munnevver expressed how good their relationships were before the attacks and how the tension during the attacks changed their relationships: “The relations were good before. The Turks would go to their weddings for instance. Let’s say there are some that you talk with, some that you are friends with… You go and they come to one another’s house. [But during the incidents], we even got estranged from our next neighbor…”

Similarly, Canan who was a highly educated daughter of one of the founders of the Republican Party in the town and mayor in the years 1944-1948, emphasized the commonality with muhacirs in contrast to today’s situation where the town is full of villagers:

She [the muhacir housemaid] was 14 years old, can you imagine? Her [their housemaid’s] father was Arap Emin; he gave her [their housemaid] into the custody of my father. She started working here. I always say, of the original local population, only we are left. Really, there are village people everywhere. There is no discrimination [against the Gypsies]. They all had been born and grown up here. Not any thievery by them has been heard of. I entrust my house to her. 265

In comparison to the villagers, Canan constructed a commonality with muhacirs and emphasized their reliability. Modernity discourse underlines Canan’s narrative as she complained about backwardness of the villagers and the town’s degeneration as a consequence of their overpopulation. The time from the 1950s to the 1970s is referred to as modern, mainly illustrated by the increased mobility of the townspeople, especially the women “in their more Western look.” Their presence in the public sphere was part of the more intense interaction with urban culture and lifestyles, including going to the cinema. The nostalgia of that time is constantly brought up, especially by many old

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265 See Narrative 3 in Appendix D.
middle and upper class townspeople, as the discourse of modernity and Westernization was a significant component of the dominant ideology in the modern nation-state. As we will see in the Gypsies’ reactions, muhacirs also employ this discourse extensively.

The narratives on neighbors were usually very intimate. Many Turks appreciated their Gypsy neighbors’ good hearts and stressed their good relationships. These were mostly relationships between Gypsies and Turks who had occupied more or less similar economic segments in the neighborhood that they shared. Some of these people did not continue those intimate relations after the attacks. Some of their neighbors moved out due to the attacks, some passed away and some of the Turkish narrators left the Gypsy neighborhoods. There were many who got upset because their Gypsy neighbors were forced to leave during the attacks. Gypsies also told about several of their Turkish neighbors who protected them, which I will analyze more in detail in the next chapter on the attacks.

Many Turks referred to some Gypsy families and praised their outstanding integration and acceptance in society. Especially blacksmiths from the local Gypsies are among the ones who integrated to a large extent and crossed the boundary between Gypsyness and Turkishness. Sengul’s family was most mentioned among these families. They were from local blacksmith Gypsies and known as “not-like-a-Gypsy.” Her husband “Tailor Selahattin” worked as a tailor and was regarded as a respectable and colorful person by many Turks. He did not practice a traditional Gypsy profession and “they did not see themselves as Gypsies or act like them.” Their economic situation was also relatively better and they lived in a non-Gypsy neighborhood. They had very close

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266 It should be noted that a neighborhood allocation in the town does not follow strict economic differences, but still sustains various segments combining low and middle class people. Thus, in a neighborhood a teacher, a blacksmith, a farmer and a businessman may live together. The class differences would not be expressed as much compared to urban life and after the 1980s when the ties between class differences, competition and consumption have widened.

267 Alba and Nee, Remaking the American mainstream.
relationship with some Turkish families and developed friendships and business partnerships.

The wealthy families, who employed Gypsy women in their houses, told how close and trustworthy the Gypsies were as workers. Hale from *belvaas* (halva makers and sellers) told about their local Gypsy housemaid and nanny as follows:

Sister Ummuhan was very different from them [other Gypsies]. Maybe your grandmothers would know. She was from the Adalis. She grew up in our neighborhood. There was a mosque; their house was over there. She was a very nice, honest person. She is dead now. […] Anyhow, Dilaver had started the incident. Her [Ummuhan] son is married to Dilaver’s youngest daughter. But sister Ummuhan did not want her [as a bride] at all.269

Although Hale’s family protected Sister Ummuhan and went on employing her after the attacks; she differentiated her from other Gypsies. Here, “the individual was Gypsy but nice” also appears to have been a justification for protecting those people and thus defending themselves. They did not protect anyone who was a Gypsy but only “Gypsies but not like a Gypsy.” Thus, the category of Gypsyness persists in the stigmatization of other Gypsies and these ones would only serve as exceptions that should not be considered as Gypsy.

Some, however, remembered the limited relations before the attacks as well and pointed at their own closeness within that limitation. Hulya whose husband was a close friend of the local Gypsy Barber Hikmet and who had a Gypsy worker in his automobile repair shop, had close relationship with some Gypsies. She asserted the extent of their closeness:

There were not many who would go to their houses. Everybody stayed at his or her own side. We would only go to Sister Melike and it was because of my mother-in-law. They are very close. There were also ones who lived in a street down of my parents’ place. We were going to one another’s houses with Sister Sengul. They were our neighbors [her parents lived in another neighborhood.

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268 The most important local Gypsy family.

269 See Narrative 4 in Appendix D.
where only few Gypsies lived]. Look, they were also Gypsies but... we were very good neighbors. We were very close. 270

Moreover, people’s representations on specific issues about their relations, their anecdotes, way of talking, perceptions and reservations all revealed a flexible degree of discrimination that influenced everyday relations. The relative social distance that had become greater during the attacks has remained.

Social Distance, Hierarchies and Everyday Discrimination

While some people indicated that the Gypsies were equal to the Turks in the town and the Turks had not ever discriminated them before the attacks, some revealed that the Gypsies had always been second-class citizens. The story that my uncle Mahmut told is devastating, as it displays the degree of discrimination through a particular anecdote before the attacks:

The restaurant owner Babacin Ismet worked with the Gypsies to carry his materials. He would also hire a Gypsy as a servant while we were going on a picnic together. On the way to the picnic place, the Gypsy would follow us at some distance carrying the basket. I remember Babacin Ismet’s humiliation of the Gypsy. We were all sitting and drinking in the presence of the Gypsy man a few meters away from us. Babacin Ismet shouted at the Gypsy: ‘You are staying towards the wind, your Gypsy smell comes to me. Do not stay there!’ 271

Many people disclosed their negative feelings towards Gypsies in several ways. Some ignored them in their narratives. Some did not even want to talk about them as they found them not important enough. Some whispered while they were using the term “Gypsy” as if it was a curse. Some pitied them as they had been a poor and marginalized people pushed out of the majority society. Their attitudes revealed the traces of discrimination that Gypsies might experience.

270 See Narrative 5 in Appendix D.
271 See Narrative 6 in Appendix D.
The Gypsies, on the other hand, did not talk about discrimination easily. The primary attitude was to declare: “There is no discrimination here.” However, during our conversation, they would point at discriminatory attitudes, boundaries and behaviors. Among those, the limited relations and the taboo on intermarriage were stressed as will be analyzed below. Many Gypsies also stressed the boundary between Gypsies and Turks as “us” and “them” in direct or indirect ways. Their reaction against the term Roman and people calling them as such reveal how they felt about the pejorative usages of the term in the town. Their reluctance to talk about Gypsyness was also born out of fear. Moreover, some did not trust Turks, as “they might be good with you in some situations, but they could be very harsh if they get tempered.” They also felt reluctant to move to other neighborhoods of the town and to go out at night.

A local Gypsy, Fazil, acknowledged different dimensions of the discrimination. He asserted that there was discrimination between people, but according to him, it was not about ethnicity, but about how one behaved. Indeed, behavioral differentiation is one of the most common legitimizing versions of racism and in most cases, discrimination works through associating some features with existing stigmas.

Behavioral differentiation does not necessarily build on direct identifiers, but on signifiers. Moreover, instead of individual differences, the appreciated ways, manners and morals are seen as collective specificities such as the way of talking, walking and acting. Thus, for instance while a typical type of talking or way of acting could be perceived as superior, others would be seen as improper. Gypsies mostly are considered loose, too easy-going and relaxed, as we will see in details in the following parts. In a Bourdieuan

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272 See the part on Gypsies’ representations on Gypsyness.

273 See Narrative 7 in Appendix D.

274 See Meral’s narrative that I used in the morality part, where she reflected on the unreliability and immorality of the Turks and her fear of her son’s staying out late at night.

275 See Chapter Two.
sense this differentiation works to exclude people from joining higher status groups and at the same time disciplining individuals with the promise of social mobility, better life conditions and even chances to cross boundaries and being redefined as a member of the dominant group.\footnote{276 See Hogg and Abrams for subjective belief structures as social mobility and change.}

A Gypsy street flower seller in Istanbul similarly declared how she was changing her accent when she was talking with her customers as a business strategy. Again in Istanbul, a Kurdish taxi driver would suddenly shift to his Kurdish accent when he understood that he was in an environment that his accent would not be a cause for discrimination. Gypsies in Diyarbakir, on the other hand, also emphasized how they were discriminated by Kurds. A Kurdish interviewee told me that the way of walking, talking and dressing were used to discriminate. In the town, when one asks about Gypsies, people also mention physical appearances and behavior. Similarly, Fazil pointed at the way people treated him as being different from other Gypsies: “They [the majority] look at how one talks, sits, obeys the rules of good behavior. It is seen differently of course. Your way of dressing, way of talking…”\footnote{277 See Narrative 8 in Appendix D.}

He also indicated that the Turks distance themselves more from the muhacirs. In their old neighborhood, local Gypsies intermingled with “\textit{Goray},” but not so easily with muhacirs. Being discriminated against itself becomes a sign of inferiority and thus something to hide. After all, the very experience becomes something to be ashamed of. It is connected to the dominant ideology that blames the marginalized and discriminated instead of the other way around: If you are discriminated against, something must be wrong with you.\footnote{278 See the part on underclass discourse in Chapter Two and undeserving poor in this chapter.} According to Fazil, during the attacks “the wet wood was put into the
fire along with the dry”. He pointed at a discriminatory behavior that also included local Gypsies along with “the real outsiders,” as we will see in the next chapter.

The time of the attacks also serves as a reference point for today’s experience. In comparison to that time, society is considered free of discrimination against Gypsies: “The discrimination was significant before, but nowadays can say there is none left.” Mesiye in a similar way did not recognize everyday discrimination but visualized it through the physical violence that they experienced in 1970: “They racially discriminated [against Gypsies]. Allah does not allow racial discrimination. You should not do that. People were practicing their praying. Here, they say Dilavers, they had a fight with some people.”

For the present relations as well, Solmaz explained why a Gypsy cannot become a member of the municipality and went on referring to recent Gypsy movement in the country:

They [Turks] would not invite the Gypsies in their houses, as they do not like the Gypsies. There was hatred at that time [of the attacks]. Today, Gypsies are represented in various shapes and labeled as Roman. Some acted and said ‘I am Roman’. They started looking sweet a little bit. Turkish people would never visit their houses. They put a distance, I mean. They [the Gypsies] come to clean our houses and be friendly, like ‘Hello’ ‘Hello, How are you? Are you fine?’ But in daily social intercourse the distance starts. It exists since old times.

As these narratives show, the discrimination was not limited to the time of the attacks. The distance had been there before and still goes on in various ways. Compared to the period before the attacks, it seems to have increased. However, different groups that are seen as incompatible with the local customs and traditions in the town, such as some recent villagers (mostly mountain villagers who are called Yoruks) and Kurds, who are the legitimized other in the country, have changed the perceived difference with the

279 See Narrative 9 in Appendix D.
280 See Narrative 10 in Appendix D.
281 We will see parallels with Kurds in the following chapter on the attacks.
Gypsies. In this context, Gypsies are considered more as locals and accepted by some townspeople. Still, the ongoing social distance revealed itself in two significant ways; on the one hand, the limited relations with Gypsies and on the other hand the taboo on intermarriage.

**Limited Relationships**

Even the Turks who declared their close relationship with Gypsy people qualified the degree of their relationship to some extent. For many, relations could be quite close except for intermarriage. They could do business together, be very good friends, visit one another’s houses, but intermarriage was clearly a bridge too far. For some others who had more limited relations, visits and sharing private space would already be an issue. In sum, there was always a boundary with Gypsyness even in cases of intimate relations.

These intimate relations, on the other hand, generally were mentioned with reference to the time before the attacks. The Gypsies and Turks all asserted that after the attacks, the relationships have never been as they were before. Although they are relatively good now, the general atmosphere has made close relations more or less impossible. The Gypsy communities seem more inward looking now which has changed their erstwhile relations with the non-Gypsy townspeople. However, there are some close contacts between local Gypsies and villagers who migrated more recently.

In the past intimate relations and personal experiences could transcend negative perceptions of Gypsies. At least, Gypsies could be appreciated as neighbors and active members of the society. The attacks seemed not only to have put the Gypsies in their place, but they also made open relations between Gypsies and non-Gypsies very difficult. Still, also before the attacks, it should be noted that negative perceptions influenced the
Moreover, class differences mattered. For instance, the people from the low-middle class or low-class people would be more likely to have closer relations with the Gypsies as neighbors due to their local and economic proximities. Gypsies were not always from the lower classes, but could occupy the middle class as well. The wealthy people, on the other hand, still had some good relations, but their relations were more hierarchical (employer versus employee) in spite of the intimacy. Apart from personal contacts, the Gypsies had relations with many people through weddings and public acquaintances.

Some of the accounts of old neighbors of the Gypsies described the flexibility of the boundaries in their diverse relationships, while for many other Turks the boundary was fixed in spite of their relative acceptance as part of society, as we see in Solmaz’s narrative: “Before [the attacks], […]the Gypsies] were cheek by jowl. They were like Bayramic’s people, I mean. But what was happening let me tell you. For instance, your family and our family, go to one another, eat and drink together. That did not exist [with the Gypsies].”

When I asked why, the answer was direct and ironic again, “They are Gypsies, my dear!” However, the discrimination of Gypsies depended on the actors and the context. For most Gypsies, the best situation would be to have a job and restricted social relations in the non-Gypsy world. The boundaries would persist even in close relations. Hulya, who lived for 30 years from 1955 to 1985 in the Muradiye neighborhood where muhacirs made up the majority, asserted how she felt both close and distant to the Gypsies. The doorstep of one another’s house signaled an important boundary for them:

282 One should keep in mind that the stigmatization of Gypsies does not only affect Gypsies themselves, but the people who stood close to them. This was clear especially after the attacks in the treatments against the Turks who employed and/or protected the Gypsies. The closeness to the Gypsies is still not easy to express. Thus, it should be noted that people tend to stress their distance to Gypsies in order to avoid stigmatization.

283 See Narrative 11 in Appendix D.
“They [her husband and local Gypsy Fazil’s brother] were close; he was a barber. They were friends outside. We did not go to one another’s house with his wife. No, no. Never.”

Although she pointed at the closeness, she made very clear that they would never visit one another. If there is no discontent, almost everybody talks to each other, but visiting one another in their homes is a further level of closeness. Only a few people go to Gypsies’ houses occasionally and mostly with a purpose. When I asked Hulya why she would not visit Gypsies, she told about some to whom she felt very close and whom she visited. Thus, there would be still exceptions. With some people, the boundaries were flexible due to intimate relations as neighbors. However, many people like Hulya stressed the boundaries with their Gypsy neighbors in spite of relative closeness. Necla confessed that they did not know very well who had left after the attacks for a while, as they had kept their distance during the attacks, although they lived in the same neighborhood:

We are in the same neighborhood, but there is still a boundary, I mean. Our street is here. In the past, people would keep to themselves. You would sit in front of your door, but I do not remember, I mean. Since we did not see them that often. We would only go to Sister Seylan and Sister Ayla. You would not go [to their houses] like [you go to] our own neighbors’ [Turks]. They would have a birth, you would go for instance to fulfill your neighborhood obligation.

Similar to Hulya’s and Necla’s accounts, there were exceptions to the general trend. Although the Turks did not pay regular visits, they would visit their Gypsy neighbors on special days and celebrations; such as deaths, births and weddings. Still, there has been a naturalized distance towards the Gypsies in the town very similar to other places in Turkey. While personal ties transcend the dominant perception and blurs the boundary between Gypsies and non-Gypsies, the dominant perception still explains

284 See Narrative 12 in Appendix D.

285 See her narrative in this part on good relations.

286 See Narrative 13 in Appendix D.
why many people keep their distance. Solmaz’s narrative disclosed a similar perspective regarding the social distance when he was explaining their relations with the Gypsies in connection to the nation-wide negative discourse on Gypsies: “They live in their own neighborhood, among themselves. Would you go to visit someone in Sulukule? [Historical and famous Gypsy neighborhood in Istanbul] It is like that. You just go to have fun. You would not visit a Gypsy’s house. It still exists. […] We can neither go to a Roman’s house nor be a friend with them.”287

As such attitudes are widely accepted in Turkey, he expected that I agreed with him, because generally Gypsies live in segregated places where non-Gypsies would not dare or like to go. Moreover, as practiced extensively during the attacks, terrorization or deviation from the dominant ways of relating to the Gypsies could put Turkish people in a vulnerable position, close to Gypsyness. People fear that they will become victim themselves, very similar to the accusation of being ‘nigger lovers’ in the South of the United State during the Jim Crow era. As we will see, a similar reaction occurred due to the rumors about the attorney who stood up for the Gypsies during the attacks. Thus, staying close to Gypsies and appreciating Gypsyness can be itself derogatory for one’s own social status.

Moreover being a Gypsy reduced the chance to get a job in the town. Although they worked with non-Gypsies in some businesses, there was also discrimination before the attacks, which turned into a boycott against the Gypsies and violent threats to non-Gypsy employers who hired Gypsies during and just after the attacks. This period lasted for at least three months for some people while for some others it took years. In this period, some gave up and withdrew from certain sectors. Others did not even do any business in the town or left for good. For the period before the attacks, Solmaz told that

287 See Narrative 14 in Appendix D.
some in the business world welcomed the Gypsies, although social relations in the workplace often were very restricted:

[Before 1970] they would be drivers and drive in my car for instance. When it is pay time, he would get his salary and go. That is it. They were not going to their houses. Gypsy, dear; his name is Gypsy [Çingene canim, adi Çingene]. […] It is like this: not everybody would hire them. They were drivers but it did not mean that they could work in any truck. Some would not accept them. They would say ‘Forget about it, would I take a Gypsy as a driver!’

This situation among the drivers might have led to hierarchies and discrimination, as some employees did not hire Gypsy drivers. Some families with their prejudices against Gypsies would not allow them into their house either. Solmaz’s wife Ayten also pointed at discrimination and its effect to get a job. She described the disgust people felt about the Gypsies and their unwillingness to employ them: “There are many Gypsies that go to do housework for instance. But some [non-Gypsy] women would not take them into their house. They would say ‘will I touch the thing that is touched by a Gypsy!’ This kind of women exists.”

This type of discrimination clearly stigmatizes and restricts the Gypsies at work. As analyzed under the section on impurity, many people preserve their distance towards Gypsies, and avoid having physical contacts with them due to their beliefs about pollution and danger. Along with these discriminative practices and attitudes, marrying Gypsies is taboo among the non-Gypsies in the town.

Marriages with Gypsies

Interrmarriage between Gypsies and non-Gypsies is unthinkable for most non-Gypsies, especially among the older generation, due to superstitions regarding the

288 See Narrative 15 in Appendix D.
impurity of the Gypsies. Some consider it a nightmare or damnation to their family. They would feel sorry for the parents whose child runs away with a Gypsy spouse. Many even felt insulted by questions such as “why would you not like your children to marry a Gypsy?” and “why is intermarriage not approved?” The ambiguity of defining some Gypsies could be also a reason for people to marry a Gypsy. In such cases people would not realize that the spouse was a Gypsy.

The new generation refers to differences in the manners and life styles between the families, whereas the old generation seems to be stricter. Among the Gypsies who migrated to other towns and cities, some had more possibilities to integrate including through intermarriage. The intermarriages in Bayramic have increased compared to the 1960s and before; however it is still rare (less than 5%) and mostly with villagers who migrated to the town after the 1980s. After all, the latecomers themselves were looked down upon by some townspeople and therefore hierarchically they were regarded as close to the Gypsies in town. The differentiation between being a local in the town and being a non-Gypsy but from out of the town is interesting as Gypsies can be considered more “like one of us” by some old townspeople as we saw in the narratives in the previous section.

During my visit, a Gypsy hairdresser girl and a non-Gypsy boy who worked in a bookstore married. The boy’s family from old Bayramic families did not want the girl because she was a Gypsy and the case was debated by the Turkish townspeople. Hulya’s daughter Melis was one of them:

There is a prejudice and the families oppose one another even though the couple gets along with one another. If both sides are Gypsies, they understand each other’s language but the other way [one Gypsy one non-Gypsy] does not work. I mean there is difference. I cannot talk about the customs but at least their being that relax would disturb. 290

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289 See the parts on purity and religion in defining Gypsyness.

290 See Narrative 16 in Appendix D.
As indicated above, someone from the old generation are much more reluctant when it comes to intermarriage. After pointing at the superstition that is connected to the impurity of Gypsies, Mukhtar Kemal illustrates the strength of the prejudice regarding marriage with a Gypsy. Even a non-Muslim foreigner was preferable to a Gypsy:

It [marrying to a Gypsy] seems wrong to some Turks like us. [...] It is difficult to explain. If they marry a foreigner, it may not be regarded odd, but it is when they marry these [Gypsies]. It comes from our culture, it seems wrong to us. How would you take it in the same position? We cannot take it as it is. If you ask why, it is difficult to explain. ²⁹¹

Marrying a Gypsy was a taboo that Turkish people from different generations in the town stressed along with their different perspectives ranging from superstitions to rationalized explanations such as the incompatibility of the behaviors and manners. As a result, intermarriage is not common with local Turkish townspeople, but only with some latecomer villagers and some other communities that are not seen equal to local ethnic Turks themselves.

Interestingly, for most Gypsies (from all groups) on the other hand intermarriage is considered a success story. ²⁹² It is important for them to be chosen as a spouse. It also displays how well they are integrated into society and the Turks’ norms as well as their full acknowledgement by Turks. Another wedding between a local musician Gypsy boy and a non-Gypsy teacher girl from Kusadasi, Izmir was seen as the proof of their compatibility with Turks. The local Gypsies were very proud of this marriage.

Among the muhacirs in the town, intermarriage with local Gypsies increased in the younger generation, but not with the Turks as most muhacirs would look down on

²⁹¹ See Narrative 17 in Appendix D.

²⁹² This was so, except my local Gypsy narrator Fazil who recognized the boundaries between Turks and Gypsies as intransitive. According to him for cultural reasons a Gypsy and a non-Gypsy were not supposed to marry, although some would defy this taboo.
villagers along with some local Gypsies for being incompatible with their more open-minded and modern worldview. Especially their strict control of women and the gendered division of labor are seen as backward by the muhacirs. They pointed at considerable discrimination regarding intermarriage although in response to a more general question they would claim that they do not suffer from discrimination in the town. Cevza’s daughter Sukufe, for example, claimed her marriage to a non-Gypsy (a Bosnian immigrant from the same neighborhood) as a victory: “Nobody succeeded, I said that I was going to do. And I did. I do not accept Romanness. I would not, why would I?”

In sum, we see that hierarchies do not only rely on Turkishness in the town although it constitutes the pivotal component in the power structure, which was activated during the attacks. However, locality, knowledge of local values, appropriateness and acting accordingly are also salient, as we will also see in the reactions of local Gypsies in this chapter. In the following part, we will look more closely at the criteria used to detect Gypsies and their function to maintain the hierarchical relations and control in society. They will show that defining and labeling people as Gypsies often created confusion, because people were not automatically fixed in their respective categories.

The Problem of Defining Gypsies

Turks use several features to define and detect Gypsies in the town. In this part, I will explore the main ones: physical, residential and occupational, manners and morals. Each feature could lead to confusion, although the Gypsy category itself remained intact.

293 See the part on Population Exchange and Legitimate Ground in Gypsies’ Reactions.
This reveals the will to sustain hierarchies and social order as well as the effects of the changing dynamics in the town.

**Physical Features**

“I do not like a dark-skinned bride. Why would I not like a dark-skinned? Because they always call dark-skinned Roman, that is why I do not like.”

In Bayramic, many townspeople claimed that they could tell who was a Gypsy by their physical appearance, with ‘darkness’ as an important identifier. In addition to this, dress codes, way of talking and walking are among the physical traces that are used to tell who is a Gypsy. However, some townspeople also indicated that it is not always possible to tell who is a Gypsy, especially when Gypsies hide their identity. Indeed, people look for general features in spite of the fact that several physical differences can be observed among Gypsies. The differences instead are interpreted as deviations from the rule and some use terms as “white Gypsies.”

Gypsies are usually associated with dark skin, complexion and hair. Ironically, in Diyarbakir, where the majority are Kurds who are themselves stigmatized for having darker skin than Turks, a Kurdish interviewee told me that they could detect Gypsies by their darkness. Moreover, a Dom-Gypsy interviewee in Diyarbakir rejected the idea of darkness. Although he himself had dark eyes and skin, his son with blonde hair, blue eyes and white skin, did not fit the stereotype at all. He asserted that the ones who had a whiter skin could avoid discrimination better, at least in their daily encounters in the street.

Beyond dark skin, there are slight differences that can be detected by locals in the town but not by an outsider easily. Hulya and her daughter indicated that the Gypsies in

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294 A Roman woman from the documentary “Bucuk [Tha Half]” directed by Elmas Arus from the Association of Zero Discrimination. See Narrative 18 in Appendix D.
the town had different facial attributes with respect to their noses (oblate) and eyes (saddle). They confessed however that they could not tell who was a Gypsy in other places. In Antalya, for instance, while the local people cite differences between different ethnicities, they could not. Similarly, when I was in the bus terminal of the town with my mother who is a local from the town, my mother detected the Gypsyness of a man by just looking at him.

Another Turkish narrator, Neela, who lived in Tepecik neighborhood with Gypsy neighbors and taught Gypsy students in the secondary school also touched upon detectable differences. She explained that their eyes were different; especially the whiteness of their eyes. Such nuances, even if we assume that they reflected real differences, were lost on me, however. There are many people among Gypsies in the town with different physical features. Besides, there are quite a few who are whiter than me while others are darker.

Thus, the issue of darkness is not a clear signifier of Gypsyness, but it nevertheless plays a central role in hierarchization, otherization and stigmatization. Gypsies mostly are described as people with darker skin and in some cases skin color is used to identify them. During the attacks, some even referred to Turks as “whites” and Gypsies as “darks.” The idea of dark skin can be so powerful that it easily is internalized by Gypsies as well. My conversation with a local Gypsy in the town revealed such a perception. Ezgi thought that having a white skin was beautiful and she referred to dark skin several times to describe some Gypsies. Furthermore, when she showed a photo of her husband who had died and I said he was handsome, she corrected me:

\[\text{295} \text{ Lucassen also reports the regular usage of dark skin as a marker to be labelled as a Gypsy in nineteenth century German police journals. See Leo Lucassen, ““Harmful Tramps”: Police Professionalization and Gypsies in Germany, 1700-1945,” in Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups, edited by Leo Lucassen, Wim Willems and Annemarie Cottaar (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1998), pp. 74-93, p. 82.}\]
“No, he was dark.” Here we see how negative associations attached to skin color are a crucial part of the dominant discourse and also influences Gypsies’ own perceptions.

The beauty of the Gypsies, on the other hand, is seen as an exception by Turks. “You could not tell that she was a Gypsy if you had seen her” was the expression of Hulya in her reference to the beauty of a Gypsy girl who had managed to marry a respectable Turk (the son of Foreign Minister from the Justice Party between 1975 and 1977). She recalled her as being very beautiful, like the movie star Fatma Girik who is famous for her white skin and light blue eyes.

Thus, the association with dark skin itself can be discriminatory with negative connotations such as ugliness. Gypsies with whiter skin are perceived as closer to Turkishness. Ismail revealed his confusion about muhacirs: “The mother may be a Gypsy and the father may be a Turk. They might have married 60-70 years ago. You cannot tell that their children are Gypsies. They are not like “dark eyes and dark hair”. [They are] white, with colored eyes like us. I will show you a Gypsy girl, you cannot even tell. One side [of her descent] is Turk.”

Apart from physical attributes, some Turks refer to ways of looking, acting and walking as detectable differences. Dress codes are very important for this type of differentiation as well, although many people do not use dress codes to detect ethnic differences in the town anymore. This instead would be a very significant difference for the Turkmens (the name for Alevi Muslims in the region), who are seen as different from the Sunni majority. In the town, they are perceived as the ultimate separate and segregated community in the region. The Gypsies, on the other hand, have always been more open to adopt the majority’s norms.

296 See Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest (New York: Routledge, 1995).
Hulya’s daughter Melis explained how Gypsies could be recognized by their appearance, their way of acting, walking and talking in the streets while again acknowledging exceptions:

In the street, they walk very relaxed, when they talk they shout. They cannot pronounce the letter ‘h’ and their dressing style is little bit different. They dye their hair in exaggerated ways. Of course, not everybody. Their walking and dressing is relaxed. That is how you can tell. Their talking tells a lot anyway. But some cannot be detected. [...] Some make it clear through their behaviors and talking but some never reveal it.297

Necla connected their physical differences to their way of living, acting and perceiving the social norms: “Their walking, look, is carefree.” The crucial characteristic for Gypsies to her was their extrovertness and disregarding unwritten rules and codes:

It is perceptible, I mean. Their being open to the outside world, not recognizing the rules makes them visible. By saying not recognizing the rules, [I mean] not the laws, but good manners. For example, in the street, one should not talk loudly, should s/he? Or respect for elders…the respectful ones are very respectful but… it is said ‘you should not swear’ but when you touch them little bit, they do not know their word [they use dirty words].298

On the other hand, both Gypsies and Turks in the town indicated that it was not easy to identify who was a Gypsy. Turkish townspeople asserted that some Gypsies looked like Turks as they would not look, dress, talk or behave like Gypsies: “but they are still Gypsies inside.” Among recent cases, some referred to a Turkish girl getting married to a Gypsy boy who did not look like a Gypsy at all. However, they pitied the girl’s family.

In sum, the general perception is that it is better “to look like a Turk” among Gypsies if one wants to be accepted as such and thus to be able to cross ethnic boundaries. However, looking like a Turk is insufficient in non-Gypsies’ perceptions. The perceptions are not necessarily connected to physical looks, but various other

297 See Narrative 19 in Appendix D
298 See Narrative 20 in Appendix D
features are used to recognize Gypsies in the town and thereby to maintain social order. Residential and occupational boundaries is the next feature to be examined.

**Residential and Occupational Boundaries**

In the town, there are two main neighborhoods where Gypsies live, Muradiye and Tepecik. Muradiye is known as the neighborhood of the muhacirs. It consists basically of two streets leading to Tepecik. The neighborhood has been more mixed since the attacks, but there had always been Turks and Gypsies living close to one another. Still, there is a more or less a segregated part of the Tepecik neighborhood where only Gypsies live. It consists of 20-30 households where musician families are the majority.

Besides, these neighborhoods are very central, close to the town’s center. They are basically the branches of the main avenue in the town that connects the main city road to the town center. The road connects the Muradiye neighborhood with the first secondary school and the high school of the town, crossing the Tepecik neighborhood. The upper side of Tepecik moreover was the historical center of the town where many local Gypsies and Turks have lived together. In the periphery of these neighborhoods, the town has extended with new settlements for villagers whose migration intensified after the 1980s. Thus, we cannot say that the Gypsies’ neighborhoods are isolated although some Gypsies live in socially segregated parts of these neighborhoods.
Gypsies rarely live in other neighborhoods. There are some sepetsis living in Camlik, which is still close to these neighborhoods, some of whom live in tents, but they are not considered to be from the town. They started to settle in recent decades and some travel when the spring arrives. Everyone in the town including the local Gypsies and muhacirs despise them. These Gypsies are stigmatized and discriminated, as is reflected in the perception of Meliha who once lived close to the Muradiye.
neighborhood where many muhacirs lived. She described the basket weavers as follows: “They say ‘March in Gypsy out’ themselves [When spring comes, Gypsies do not stay indoors]. Then they take their children, go by the river and build their tents there. They live like this. […] They weave basket and sell them. […] They beg, my dear. They ask everything from villages. […] Whatever they earn belongs to them.”

In Bayramic, local Gypsies, muhacirs and Turks, however, lived as neighbors for many years. Considering the small scale of the town center, many Gypsies and Turks have interacted in several ways. In the past, due to the small population and higher geographical proximity, close contact was unavoidable. Many people knew one another. The children went to school together where they had more or less close relationships as classmates.

Additionally, locality is an aspect of the hierarchization among Gypsies. Those who are the real locals are provided more or less a legitimate status. The sepetsis are not even considered a part of the locality. Only the local Gypsies have the most positive reputation, much better than the muhacirs who are not recognized as local. The local Gypsies also differentiate themselves from muhacirs by emphasizing their local roots. The muhacirs, on the other hand, define themselves as more modern, civilized and having good social manners and therefore look down on the local Gypsies. We will now focus on how these strategies are used by Gypsies in reaction to discrimination. The former mayor Solmaz’s narrative helps us to imagine the significance of locality between the local Gypsies and the muhacirs from the perspective of the Turks:

The Muhacirs were here too, but the locals are older. The date of the arrival of the muhacirs is known. […] The locals were here all the time. Among the locals, some are real locals and the others are latecomers. The Adalilar… The family of Adali, I think, came later. But I do not know when. But there are real locals. If you ask who they are; little Izzet [clarinet player], big Izzet, their children, clarinet player Alaaddin. This family and then pack-saddler Musa. He is from the Adalis, 299 See Narrative 21 in Appendix D.
too but his family is white. He would not tell you the truth, as he does not see himself as a Gypsy, either.  

There are many more narratives on old ties and common bonds with the local Gypsies especially the blacksmith families. The neighbor, Ayfer, asserted how they saw the local Gypsies staying close to them: “We were neighbors, like you and me. They are very nice [Muslims—her daughter Necla would add] …with ritual ablution and namaz. They would not get involved in something like that [referring to the alleged misbehaving Gypsies in the attacks]. They still live in their houses, look. […] They would not be separated from Turks like a Gypsy.”  

While talking about particular people, on the other hand, many Turkish town dwellers, including Ayfer, become confused whether some were local or muhacirs. Gypsies also differentiate between one another through references to locality and date of settlement in the town. For the Turks, the terms instead correspond to their adaptability to society, their closeness to the Turks, and their adaptation to Turkish behavioral codes and life styles. That is why some Turks become confused about the difference, as there are also people among the muhacirs who used to accept the hierarchy between Gypsyness and Turkishness and did not violate it through competing for social or economic power and who therefore are recognized as locals too. When we consider some other muhacirs becoming locals compared to villagers who settled later we see the concept of locality in its multilayered and contextual usages that are connected to social hierarchies.

Fatima referred to the differences among Gypsies mixing the context of locality, date of arrival to the town, occupation and level of exclusion:

We call them local Gypsies. They are Muslim [abdestli, namazlı]. For instance, there was one below your old house. The blacksmith shop. They made horseshoes in our childhood. They were Gypsies, too, but they are called local

300 See Narrative 22 in Appendix D.

301 See Narrative 23 in Appendix D.
Gypsies. These ones came later. They call them muhacirs. They would not even do business with them. [...] People welcomed them by saying ‘migrants coming, migrants coming!’ but once they looked, my aunt would tell, all were Gypsies. Citakoglu had brought them. [For Citakoglu, mayor of the time, another narrator Fitnat said that he was a Gypsy. Muhacirs from Doyuran]. Because they were dark, they looked exactly like Gypsies. [...] My father would call them ‘population exchange muhacir’. They had taken the people from here and they came from there [Greece]. [...] When people went to welcome them at the entrance of the town, he said, ‘once we looked, oh my God! They were all Gypsies with black legs.’ When those others [not locals but muhacirs] came… When they saw them like that, they were surprised by what kind of muhacirs they were. They are called Selanik [Thessaloniki] Gypsies.\textsuperscript{302}

Apart from locality, occupational specialization also determined the position of Gypsies in society. The local Gypsies were the ones who preserved traditionally recognized Gypsy professions. Karaahmet differentiated Gypsies according to their occupations; basketweavers [sepetçi] and blacksmith/musician [demirci/davulcu] Gypsies:

The basketweaver Gypsy stays in a tent, these [musicians] stay in houses. They are called sanatkar [artist]. They call themselves musicians. The others [basketweavers] beg, they come here; to the houses etc. They are tenters [cadirciler]. They weave and sell baskets. In addition to these, there were blacksmith Gypsies [demirci Çingenesi]. They are Gypsies, too, but they are blacksmith Gypsies.\textsuperscript{303}

Among the local Gypsies, the blacksmiths are the most integrated and acknowledged community. They are known for their closeness to the local Turkish culture due to their long history and good relations with the Turkish townspeople. The blacksmiths had a functional economic role until the 1970s, as it was a time when iron was used by many people. The women sold vegetables in the street markets and in addition to this, some local Gypsies went for temporary works on the farms. There were also a few people in other professions such as tailors, barbers and bakers.

Many local Gypsies worked as musicians at weddings. Before 1970, a wedding was inconceivable without Gypsy musicians. This profession brought them into contact

\textsuperscript{302} See Narrative 24 in Appendix D.

\textsuperscript{303} See Narrative 25 in Appendix D.
with many people as they played in the town and also went to the villages. \(^{304}\) Before 1970, muhacir women also entertained women on henna nights (celebration night for women before weddings). Therefore, the musicians knew most of the people in the town and surrounding villages.

Among the local Gypsies, the musicians are nowadays considered “more Gypsy.” They react to these stereotypes by saying “being a musician does not mean being a Gypsy!” While referring to Gypsies, Ismail, a neighbor in Muradiye neighborhood, mainly talked about the musician Gypsies. He emphasized making easy money from weddings. Compared to the musicians, he referred to the muhacirs as being more Turkish:

They [muhacirs] would buy horsebean, almond, fleece, sacrificial wool, bee wax, and would take those to the retailer. [Intermediating]. And some would work as porters. Now they also take the musicians to the weddings in their car. They would take calls and transport people. [...] Muhacirs are the ones who took on Turkishness. I mean those who do not play instruments and earn their money in another way.\(^{305}\)

As the muhacir community does not perform traditional Gypsy professions, some muhacirs emphasize their difference with the local Gypsies by underlining that they are “normal citizens,” following a mainstream life style and professions. Following the narrators’ reactions, one can also see that the issue is a debatable one within these groups. The muhacirs, as mentioned before, on the other hand, related to the economy through portering, driving and petty jobs in the trade market. There were a few people working in the production of *helva* [a type of sweet made of honey and sesame seeds] for *helva* families and some men worked in gas station, restaurants and bakeries. Among the

\(^{304}\) A Turkish narrator could not forget the exact dates of the attacks; as it was the year when he got married and the Gypsies were not allowed to make the wedding music. So, they had an unpleasant wedding party.

\(^{305}\) See Narrative 26 in Appendix D.
muhacir women, many worked as nannies and house servants. These women had intimate relationships with these families and some were considered as parts of the family. However, as we will see in the next chapter on the attacks, the Turks interpreted the muhacirs’ social and economic power that increased along with the growing importance of the transportation sector as a violation of the boundaries. In the process of the attacks, driver muhacirs therefore became more Gypsy than ever. The power that they acquired was considered a threat to the boundaries that kept the social order as it was. In analyzing the attacks, we will revisit and explore these occupational hierarchies and boundaries.

Morals and Religion

The Gypsies are represented as cherishing different values, a perception that is directly related to ideas about religion. The prejudice regarding religion and the godliness of Gypsies plays a central role, since religion historically is constructed as the reference point for determining minorities in Turkey. Their ties with religion arouses suspicion, as already was pointed out in a survey conducted by the government of 1945 indicating that there was a lack of religion among the Gypsy people in Turkey. It leads to many superstitions about the traditions and practices of the Gypsies. There is also a general saying that “namaz (praying) that is led by a Gypsy will not be accepted [by Allah].”

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306 As there was no running water in the houses, they would carry water from fountains, clean the house, and look after the children for the wealthy people including merchants, state officials and small businessmen.

307 This perception is not only limited to the Turkish case. See Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems, “The Church of Knowledge: Representation of Gypsies in Encyclopedias,” in Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups: A Socio-Historical Approach, edited by Leo Lucassen, Wim Willems and Annemarie Cottaar (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), pp. 35-52, p. 45.

308 Marsh and Marsh, p. 2.

309 “Çingenenin kıldırday namaz Allah kabul etmez.”
There are many other superstitions that reproduce stereotypes. An example is that Gypsies are the product of an incestuous relationship between the siblings Cin and Gane in the period of Prophet Ibrahim and therefore incest would be common among Gypsies.\(^\text{310}\) This idea contributes to the social exclusion of the Gypsy people and explains why people perceive their sexuality as immoral and perverted. Along with this, other superstitions on religious knowledge, their selfishness without even caring about God, and implying that getting married with Gypsies is a kind of sin are also widespread.

In Bayramic, the suspicion regarding the Gypsies’ attitude towards Islam is shared by many and accepted as a fact. Pejorative usages appeared often in this context, while some people just make fun of the Gypsies’ inability to perform religious practices. For some, the Gypsies’ religious inappropriateness was beyond doubt and they use it to claim that the Gypsies are different and to support their arguments why they suffer from discrimination. The suspicion is supported by superstitions as well. Fitnat’s account is exemplary:

Could they be Muslim, my girl? He is a Gypsy. Now, there is a woman, she comes from time to time. A peddler [Boheca]. I was praying. She said, ‘we have not learnt that way. If only we knew’… they are Gypsies. Do you know how? They were going to build something there, a bridge or something but the ground could not be fixed, it would always collapse. Then they said that if a sister and a brother would be wife and husband, it would get fixed. This time, they said that no one from the Turks would do that. When they did not, the Gypsies did it. That is why the Gypsies do not have a hometown. Among them, siblings would be wife and husband and the ground was fixed. They do not have any tradition. I mean, they do not know.\(^\text{311}\)

This stereotype is significant, as it posits the Gypsies not only as immoral and different from the Turks, but also as a part of the society. It is a part that would keep the society functioning, but which at the same time is damned because of the roles that they take for the continuation of the social order. They would work for the society, but this

\(^{310}\) Kolukırık, “Türk Toplumunda”, p. 11.

\(^{311}\) See Narrative 27 in Appendix D.
makes them different and immoral at the same time. However, it still recognizes their place and function for society as a whole. Later in our conversation, Fitnat revealed her perceptions of Gypsies as a part of society that should serve it and accept their subordinate place as such. According to her, they were accepted in the town, but they had transgressed the social borders by taking up new professions instead of sticking to their traditional occupations.\footnote{312 See the part on Drivers’ Fight in Chapter Five.}

Gypsies have always been suspected of not being true Muslims. Although they followed Islamic religious traditions, some Turks did not accept them as sincere. Still, some Turks appreciate the religious effort of the local Gypsies and tend to be tolerant about their diverging religious practices: “They do not have \textit{abdest or namaz} [practice religion], my girl. But local Gypsies feast and pray \textit{oruc and namaz}. Even the latecomers do now. Some get interested in doing it. They pray.”\footnote{313 See Narrative 28 in Appendix D.}

Religion correlates positively with the acceptance level of the Gypsy community. For the sceptics, Meliha said that they did not pray at all. Moreover, the suspicion persists even about the genuineness of their practices. After her description above when I asserted that local Gypsies are Muslims, she corrected me, saying, “they are allegedly \textit{guya} Muslims.”

Another narrative pointed out their essential inappropriateness and therefore they could not be accepted as Muslims. Moreover, the suspicions about their religiosity bear many parallels with the ones on Alevis who are discriminated for their religious inappropriateness to Sunni Muslim sect. Salih: “First of all, Gypsies do not even have a book [means holy book, religion]. Don’t you know? Gypsies’ praying is not accepted either. In the past, there were some who ran away to the Alevis.”\footnote{314 See Narrative 29 in Appendix D.}
The suspicion is attached to their traditions and the essence of their characters. For the Hidrellez celebrations, Meliha questioned the sincerity of their religious activity and was quite negative about the Gypsies’ tradition:

Their tradition is in accordance with their nature. When it is morning, they go by the river. In the past, they would go with fire and wish for commodities over there. They collect flowers. I do not know, they say they prayed, but how on the earth they do [namaz]. They would draw houses to have a house in the morning of Hidrellez. I would tease them ‘why do not you go every morning?’ and they would say that it is their custom. Like this, their tradition is various.315

Meliha here indicated the variety of their tradition and warned that Gypsies’ traditions should not be seen as close to that of Turks who were the core holders of the legitimate tradition, social norms, behaviors and religious appropriateness in comparison with the Gypsies.316 She went on about how the Gypsies diverge from the Turks in terms of their life styles, behavior, religious activities and how this divergence had disturbed the Turks, especially in the period just before the attacks:

They would wear clothes like us [clothes are especially important as Turkmens in the town are known by their representation of cultural clothes and showing their difference] but at that time, they got very spoiled. I mean they would drink a lot, too. They played the drums; they disturbed people in the neighborhood. And we are Turks I mean, we pray [namaz kilariz], we read the Kur’an. We did not have comfort because of them.317

By accusing Gypsies of breaking moral codes she seemed to blame them for the attacks, as if they had challenged and provoked the Turks. She tried to prove how incompatible the Gypsies were, especially by emphasizing their attitude versus religion, which legitimized the attacks in her representation. When I asked whether the Gypsies

315 See Narrative 30 in Appendix D.

316 For the power of stigma as an explanatory tool for this way of perception. Bauman asserted: “Stigma draws the limit of the transforming capacity of culture. The outward signs may be masked, but cannot be eradicated. The bond between signs and inner truth may be denied, but cannot be broken.” Zygmunt Bauman, Modernity and Ambivalence, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 68. As our example shows, although on the basis of their own image and practice, some people would not fall into the category of Gypsyness, they still cannot get rid of the stigma.

317 See Narrative 31 in Appendix D.
prayed, she answered “no,” but then corrected herself: “Later, they started praying by seeing it from us.”

However, as Meliha herself asserted, especially among the old generation of local Gypsies, there are devout Muslims. There is even one preacher (hafız) local Gypsy woman who was a childhood friend of Meliha. Aunt Mesiye, who went to preach in Turks’ houses, as she did for my grandmother’s death, emphasized the religious unity between Turks and Gypsies instead. Similarly, many Gypsies stressed that they were Muslims just like Turks, but that the Turks had not treated them accordingly.

These beliefs are so strong that instead of explaining them, townspeople do not understand why one would question them. Religion was therefore used as legitimization to discrimination “His religion is different. Would you give your daughter to a Gypsy?” or “you yourself would not do that either, as it is socially accepted like this.”

It reveals how negative beliefs on Gypsyness are accepted socially without further ado. Instead of giving a concrete answer, they refer to its acceptance in the society. People did not even like to be considered close to the Gypsies for fear of being associated with Gypsyness. The references to religion go hand in hand with another aspect of the stigmatization of the Gypsies that is widespread in the society. It is the idea of pollution or impurity, which can have religious connotations, but it is not restricted to it. Morality, ways of behaving and talking, physical hygiene, closeness to diseases are among the issues that are associated with Gypsies’ impurity.

**Impurity of the Gypsies**

People and behaviors are associated with purity or impurity. On the one hand, people have different concepts and practices pertaining purity, whereas others share essentialist values. Labeling people impure reinforces hierarchies, and thereby adds to
discriminative criteria based on essentialist notions, instead of a temporary state that is subject to change.

The idea that Gypsies are impure is widely shared and contributes to their stigmatization not only in Turkey but also elsewhere. A personal experience serves to understand the perception of the Gypsies' connection to impurity. While I was working on my dissertation, a discussion started with my parents’ neighboring family who had taken an interest in my work.\footnote{It concerned a Turkish woman, her Kurdish husband and their 26-year-old daughter.} The mother is from Bergama, which is known for a remarkable number of Gypsies on the Aegean side. She was very prejudiced about Gypsies. It is not something extraordinary as most people in Turkey from right to left and from well educated to illiterate hold negative opinions about this group. However, her attitude revealed how it was subconsciously constituted. First, she said that she would feel disgusted when she would have to have a meal in a Gypsy house. Then she told how lucky she was when a neighbor invited her over and she was not able to accept. Only later she found out that the neighbor was a Gypsy, she thanked God, because otherwise she would have felt like vomiting.\footnote{Her daughter warned her mother though: “Some may have similar prejudices against us because my father is a Kurd.” However, she explained it was not under her control, but added that she would not care if all Gypsies would disappear and she did not understand why I was interested in Gypsies.} A similar example comes from Diyarbakir. Many Dom Gypsy people reported that the Kurdish people avoided the coffeehouses which they frequented. In one coffeehouse, some Kurds even complained to the owner about the Dom’s presence and demanded that their drinking glasses were separated.\footnote{My research in May 2007 for the co-project “Promoting Romani Rights in Turkey” by EDROM, ERRC and Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly.}

My experience in Bayramic was tragic in the way that it showed how strong the stigma of the impurity of the Gypsies is. Gypsies are well aware of these ideas. Thus, whether you eat their food, use the same plate or accept their tea is very important for Gypsies, because it makes clear whether you look down on them. It also eases your
communication and acceptance in the community. Similarly, in Bayramic, the Gypsies paid attention to my attitudes and behavior and very much appreciated the fact that I ate their food and was nice to them.

Closely connected was a tragic experience that took place in a local Gypsy woman’s house. Ezgi is known as the ‘newspaper’ of the community for her rapid access to rumors, changes in people’s and community’s life. After a few visits, we became close to one another and she trusted me to tell her own experiences and people’s secrets. During a regular visit, Ezgi was busy cooking when I went to her place, which was a small house with two tiny rooms and a kitchen in the entrance. Ezgi sometimes had difficulty finding enough money to buy vegetables and that day she was cooking horse beans. She offered me her meal and we ate from the same plate with two different spoons. When we finished, she thanked me for not being disgusted by her. I felt embarrassed even about the idea. I told her that it was not right to thank one another like that and I should be thankful to her for sharing her food. Instead of expecting an appreciation for hospitality, she felt relieved that I accepted her as she was. This feeling was highly constituted by the socioeconomic and historical positions, relations and probable personal experiences. This story made me understand much better the stigmatization that a Gypsy can experience in situations that Gypsies usually have to face. The narratives of some Turkish townspeople in the town will furthermore explain why Ezgi thanked me and how the Gypsies are stigmatized through the concept of purity.

To understand the concept of purity in the town, Douglas’ work on purity and danger is helpful, because she analyzes how pollution is used to control individuals in a society and to attain social order. Especially the margins of society are vulnerable from where danger is expected. Marginal groups are therefore constructed as dangerous and polluted, as Douglas explains:
A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone. Bringing pollution, unlike sorcery and witchcraft, is a capacity which men share with animals, for pollution is not always set off by humans. Pollution can be committed intentionally. But intention is irrelevant to its effect—it is more likely to happen inadvertently.\footnote{Mary Douglas, \textit{Purity and Danger: an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo} (London : Routledge and K. Paul, 1966), p. 140.}

Stallybrass and White also point at the [re]construction of an individual in bourgeoisie society in reference to pollution. One’s position to pollution is hierarchically constituted. Thus, people occupying the lower segments of society are posited closer to pollution and impurity: “The bourgeois subject continuously defined and re-defined itself through the exclusion of what it marked out as ‘low’—as dirty, repulsive, noisy, contaminating. Yet the very act of exclusion was constitutive of its identity. The low was internalized under the sign of negation and disgust.”\footnote{Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, \textit{The Politics and Poetics of Transgression} (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 191. Stallbrass and White point at the interconnectivity of the feelings of disgust and desire in this relationship. This could be understood better in two different ways of otherizing Gypsies by both romanticization and negative images (also see Mayall, pp. 14-18).}

Similarly, Gypsyness in the town is associated very much with impurity and danger. Although some Turkish townspeople share their food with Gypsies, there is a strong belief about impurity attached to Gypsies. Solmaz’s story of a Gypsy who worked for the local pharmacist illustrates this.

There is the father of mad Arif: Arab. He was a huge guy. He had hands double the size of my hands. His hands moved in the air. A real Arab, a hellhound.\footnote{See previous part on ‘Physical Appearances’ for derogatory usages around dark skin.} Nobody among the porters could lift the load that he lifted. He was like this when he was young, too. My father would tell. We would admire his strength when we were boys. His cheeks were red. He was black; I mean dark-skinned. He would be in a mixed color with that red and black. At that time, the pharmacist of Bayramic had taken him not as an adopted child but as a helper in the store. He would run errands. There was only one pharmacy in Bayramic at that time. When he saw him that strong, he had taken him. He [Arab] would eat whatever he [the pharmacist] ate. He [the pharmacist] would let him into his house. He [Arab] would eat in his house. I mean he would offer Arab how his [the pharmacist] life was, what he ate. But do you know Arab was a huge, strong guy,
his life was poor as he was a porter. He would get stale bread from the
coffeehouses or bakeries, and ate it like that. When he was thirsty, there was no
pipe [koseptik borular] or something else, but the water would flow outside
directly coming from the houses. I mean not from the sewage, but the water
which could be for laundry or dishes. He drank from that water instead of going
to a fountain. But my father would say ‘what health!’ Then the pharmacist
adopted him, the Arab as the days passed. That grandeur had disappeared; he
started to be shaky. He was going to die. ‘Let him go, do not make him eat
anything’. Then the man [pharmacist] set him free. He went back to his old state
again. He drank his water in those places collected bread from garbage. Then, he
became like a hellhound again.324

The demonization of the Arab is remarkable in Solmaz’s story and the binary way
the story is constructed legitimizes their treatment in society. In their analysis, how pigs
were demonized by associating them with unclean spirits and offences against good
manners, Stallybrass and White draw attention to its situated close to “scapegoated
groups and demonized Others.”325 Through this kind of representation, the classification
of those groups as inferior is reinforced. Wacquant similarly discusses the symbolic role
of demonization accompanied by the decivilization of the African Americans in the
legimization of the social positions, discriminatory and derogatory discourses, and state
policies applied to them.326 Demonizing the other is used as a legitimate ground to
employ extraordinary treatments, policies and discourses.327

This representation is like a legend that displays an image of Gypsies as sub-
human, but – unlike other people, as satisfied with this position. That improper life sends
at least two important messages. To start with, Gypsies are satisfied with their subaltern
position, confined in their own world. Although they may suffer from poverty, that is
not only what they deserve, but also what suits them best. Thus, it naturalizes the poverty
of Gypsies. It does not leave a space even to feel pity for their poor conditions, but tells

324 See Narrative 32 in Appendix D.
325 Stallybrass and White, p. 53.
326 Wacquant, pp. 95-121.
327 Also see the dehumanization of Gypsies and Jews in the Nazi discourse pointed out by
Bauman, p. 46.
us they are better off like this as they are not like ‘us’. It is therefore pointless to change a Gypsy. Thus, the conscience of Turks is also comforted. The second message of this legend reinforces the boundary between Gypsies and Turks with its focus on impurity attached to Gypsies. Thus, the legend constructs an essential opposition between Gypsyness and non-Gypsyness. These two categories also exclude one another.

This binarization between Gypsyness and Turkishness is emphasized in the discriminative attitudes against Gypsies such as avoiding eating with them and the idea that their food is impure. Meliha’s dilemma of eating in Gypsy houses is exemplary, as she herself lived close to Gypsy people and had Gypsy friends. Although sometimes she crossed the ethnic boundary and social distance was greatly reduced, at other times she reproduced local negative beliefs about Gypsyness. She told that Mesiye was her friend before the attacks; “they were very nice before, but they got spoiled later.”\textsuperscript{328} She said they had very close relationships with some Gypsies “they were my next neighbor, my child.”\textsuperscript{329} She gave excuses for their closeness while at the same time explaining that close contacts were inevitable. Then, she told how people would react to her when she was going to their place:

\begin{quote}
Once people told me that when I ate in her [Gypsy next neighbor] place, I should have vomited. I told her, ‘look, they are human too, she is my very close neighbor’. And they may be not nicer than you but they like to treat people a lot. She said that ‘you should vomit what you eat’. She said ‘there is no religion [\textit{abdest-namaz}] in them’. But it is food, Allah’s food [\textit{nimet}].\textsuperscript{330}
\end{quote}

The association with pollution is crucial for the isolation of that very person as it damns not only that particular person or the community but also the ones who get in touch with them. The impurity is transmitted and it lies at the heart of the stigmatization. For our context, it can make someone Gypsy-like, for instance, if one gets very close to

\textsuperscript{328} “Daha evvel çok iyilerdi, sonradan simardilar.”

\textsuperscript{329} “Yan komsumdu, dadam.”

\textsuperscript{330} See Narrative 33 in Appendix D.
Gypsies, one becomes like a Gypsy in terms of moral and physical impurity. In the town, many Turkish people like Meliha were reluctant to reveal their closeness to Gypsy people. However, before the attacks, many were very good friends with some local Gypsies. The closeness to some degree was inevitable. They had worked for non-Gypsies, lived next to one another, went to school together and some had become good neighbors and friends. When some Gypsies were considered close though, they would lose their Gypsyness to some extent. She would be “not-like-a-Gypsy.” Otherwise, there also was the danger of “being-like-a-Gypsy” for the very person and family that were close to Gypsies. Some people in the town therefore hesitated to reveal their closeness to the Gypsies. The fear to be stigmatized because of getting too close to Gypsies is underlined by superstitions in the town. The well-known superstition goes as follows: “When a person gets married a Gypsy, excuse me, this person becomes *cunip* [foul], when a woman and a man have intercourse. You put a brick under their feet in the bathroom. Until that brick melts, they would be foul, they say.”

This saying is very common among the old townspeople in the town and was considered as the proof of the Gypsies’ impurity. Moreover, it was believed that this impurity was transmitted to non-Gypsies who had had any kind of sexual connection with Gypsies. This superstition is used to explain why people avoid marriages with the Gypsies. It must be noted that these seem more influential among older people. The younger people would rather mention material differences and cultural boundaries that would prevent marrying a Gypsy.

On the other hand, the rumors on the Gypsies who were accused of making passes at Turkish girls had triggered the attacks and were considered as the main reason for the attacks by many Turks and some of the local Gypsies. When we consider impurity in relation to the boundary protection and female control, we can understand

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331 See Narrative 34 in Appendix D.
the effects of the rumors better. Douglas articulated how ideas on pollution and danger are gendered as they are linked to sexuality. In her study of the Indian caste system, she indicated that the female body, sexuality and purity are considered crucial.332 In many patriarchal societies, the female body and sexuality are controlled by men for the sake of social order and honor. Yuval Davis and Anthias show how women and their bodies were caught in nationalist discourses.333 As Nagel states: “[…] Their [women’s] purity must be impeccable and so nationalists often have a special interest in the sexuality and sexual behavior of their women.”334 Nagel points that controlling women and their bodies originates from the traditionalist idea on women that they “[…] embody family

332 Grosz also points out that there is a gendered hierarchy between body fluids and their connection to impurity. Elizabeth Grosz, Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana Univ. Press., 1994), p. 203.


334 Nagel, p. 244.
and national honour [sic]; women’s shame is the family’s shame, the nation’s shame, the man’s shame.”

In addition, seeing Gypsies as polluting others was very effectively mobilized in the attacks. The idea of maintaining the boundary against Gypsies and protecting the space of Turkishness accompanied the expulsion of the Gypsies from economic and social competition. Gypsies’ advancement in the transport business was portrayed as a dangerous invasion of the Turkish economic and social territory and triggered the socio-historically conditioned fear of Gypsy’s impurity. The fear of losing control over the socio-economic areas and the females of the community was used in reaction to the upward social mobility of some Gypsies. The Gypsyness of these individuals was emphasized and posited in this context as polluting others.

This is also why some people did not feel any guilt for the sufferings of the Gypsies. Moore, who studied various persecutions and pogroms in the Middle Ages, explains this lack of guilt as the result of stigmatizing others as morally impure and religious deviants. The way he correlates this lack of conscience with the polluting of the other helps to understand the feelings of some attackers: “[.T]he polluting enemy has to be defined as the certain individuals demonic threaten the existing social order. Dehumanization and demonization serve to diminish or, in many cases, completely eliminate remorse or guilt at the most barbarous and sickening cruelties.”

The urge to free oneself from pollution or the fear to be polluted therefore often plays an important role in violent riots. It reinforced the fear of a threat that potentially could harm society.

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335 Nagel, p. 244.


Gypsy Manners

The proof of Gypsies’ different values is represented by pointing at their behavioral differences and incompatibility with good manners. This difference is crucial to understand their marginalization and the public/private dichotomy, which serves to stress their inappropriate behavior.

Many people in Turkey consider Gypsies’ inadaptability to proper public behavior as the ultimate signs of Gypsyness. It is used as the excuse for their exclusion in public life. The proper ways of performing in the public life also intimately linked to ideas about being modern.

The contrast between the “personal,” emotionally intense, and intimate domain of family, friendship, and the primary group and the impersonal, severely instrumental domain of the market and formal institutions is in fact widely experienced---one need only think about the evidence of popular culture—as one of the great divides of modern life. But historically, these two poles emerge together, to a great extent in dialectical tension with each other; and the sharpness of the split between them is one of the defining characteristics of modernity. 338

In a similar articulation Gypsies are portrayed as being unable to respect and maintain the boundary between private and public. 339 This boundary, however, represents power relations in society as Sullivan asserts: “The demarcation of public and private life within society is an inherently political process that both reflects and reinforces power relations, especially the power relations of gender, race and class.” 340


Moreover, when the public is connected to perceptions of active citizenship, people who are regarded as violating norms in public can thereby be seen as not being fit for citizenship. This means that certain types of public behavior by Gypsies in fact exclude them from citizenship in the eyes of the majority. I argue that underlying the inability of Gypsies to adapt to maintain the private/public dichotomy reinforces their exclusion from the political, social, and economic as well as the public sphere.

Many Turks mentioned the blurred boundary between private and public space for the Gypsies. The behavior of some Gypsies in public is indeed different from that of some Turks, e.g. fighting in public and swearing in front of other people. Some non-Gypsies see it as a lack of good manners if not mockery or subversion. The unpredictability of these acts is considered especially threatening. As we will see in the reconstruction of the attacks, the representation of Gypsies not following social conventions, exemplified by fighting among each other in public, contributed to the construction of Gypsy threat. Melis described Gypsies’ disorderly behavior as follows:

They never close their doors or windows. Let God save us. Excuse me, but you could even see them making love with their wives and husbands. They are relaxed people; they are not easily embarrassed about anything. They do not get distressed, neither do they mind their words, they do not care whether it would be shameful or not. I mean they would swear. They are very relaxed about those things.

She went on stressing: “They do not have curtains, only glass. Especially in summer, they do not close windows at all. They shout at their children and swear. They start fights very easily and then make peace again as if nothing happened.”

She added that among Gypsies, visiting each other’s houses is not common. They prefer sitting in front of their houses or they are at work. Sitting in the streets also is


342 See Narrative 35 in Appendix D.
related to their class position and in Bayramic it is not common in most neighborhoods. More wealthy people consider it as an improper act, but in some other neighborhoods (like my grandparents’), it can be common. There during the summer, Turkish women sit in front of their houses or neighbors’ houses and watch people passing and chat. This also creates a certain type of public space for women close to their households. They talk about their personal issues; the news in the neighborhood and in the town and it provides a place to exchange gossip and news. It reveals another understanding of private and public spaces and their usages.

Through the public private dichotomy, Gypsies are regarded as shameless. Certain ways of acting, exaggerating, using slang and showing off oneself are among improper behaviors that would be perceived as connected to Gypsyness and not to the wider society.

Our society does not approve of their lifestyles. […] Whenever they [Gypsies] find [money], they hang out a lot. They like enjoying life a lot. For instance, from here, they go to the market by car [he is talking about 100 meters]. If one buys a motorcycle, the rest will also buy one, if one buys a bicycle all the others buy one, too. If one buys a chicken for his place, the entire neighborhood buys chicken for their place. Moreover, they show off to one another while passing by. They are ignorant people. That kind of a society is the Roman society.343

Ismail, a resident in the muhacirs’ neighborhood realized the Gypsies’ commitment to the Turkish state, which many Gypsies are never tired of emphasizing. He recognized them as Turks, but criticizes their ways of behaving: “They are nationalist like us. Turks who love their flag, their farewell to the soldiers, etc. But by exaggerating, they spoil it a little bit. For instance, they make Hidrellez more cheerful. They celebrate it like ‘I want to celebrate Hidrellez like this’. They try to make people to like them and their customs.”344

343 See Narrative 36 in Appendix D.

344 He said that the municipality supports their celebrations and Turks also would come to watch, as if it were a festival. The head of the municipality also would also visit the celebrations along with other
Necla, the teacher in the secondary school and resident in the neighborhood where local Gypsies and Turks live together, also commented upon the way Gypsies celebrate. In the following, she expresses how she felt about this difference.

For instance, when there is a Hidrellez celebration, we go. Mothers, grandmothers, we all go. There are swings in the panayir (fair) place, meals are served, people are amazed etc. But they [the Gypsies] go with instruments, lambs… everybody cooks cookies, borek [a kind of pastry], Hidrellez rice, but their sultanate would be very different on that day. They were drinking and we were going home. A [Gypsy] man stood up, he also was drunk ‘ha ha [laughing], the thing that is called Hidrellez happens like this!’ I never forget that. They are people who are very open and display their feelings in public. We, in general, are not like that. We do not show off our sorrow or happiness. Indeed, they are nicer, but…

All Gypsies consider Hidrellez as an important celebration and make elaborate preparations. That is why they are happy when they celebrate it in their own way. The Turks in the town also celebrate it, but not as enthusiastic as the Gypsies. While Necla was telling that they express their feelings very openly, she realized that she herself had difficulty to express her feelings. What Gypsies really did not care about, according to her, was social pressure and openly violating norms about how to behave properly in public and thus to be a respected member of society. That many Gypsies’ seem to care less about these norms may be related to their already degraded position in society, although there are many differences among Gypsies and there are also many of them who try to act according to the majority.

Necla and her mother also emphasized the Gypsies’ attempts to adapt to Turks, but they still betrayed themselves by their deviant behavior:

When they are together [with Turks], they normally do behave, but still it seems that the inclination to breach the norm is greater among the Gypsies. They exaggerate a lot; make things bigger than they are in reality. They live everything in the open. I see it like that. Psychologically, they always try to take themselves to the fore. For instance, in the past, you could buy certain vegetables in the respectable people in town as Solmaz indicated: “All of the people from Bayramic would come by saying that there is entertainment in the Roman neighborhood. They would entertain people very well, I mean.”

345 See Narrative 37 in Appendix D.
proper season. In May, at the time of Hidrellez, tomatoes and peppers would only be available in small numbers. There were no plastic bags in our childhood either, they would make paper bags and put them in it. To have something out of season, tomatoes, cucumbers at the top, would be a great honor. Nobody could buy them, but they would. ‘I bought some tomatoes’ [imitating a Gypsy]. With them, like this, open to the outside, how can I say? How can that feeling be defined? I call it showing off.346

This show-off attitude by Gypsies is mentioned very often. In Bayramic, many Gypsies have motorbikes, for instance, that they even use for short distances. This type of conspicuous consumption is not specific for Bayramic. The Bojas Gypsies who live in Romania, for instance, are famous for their houses that look like palaces with great ostentatious details. In the Netherlands, the experts of the Roma and Sinti Association indicate a similar attitude when it comes to buying cars. Gypsies are also known for their spectacular weddings in some cultures. Is there something specific in showing off the Gypsies’ position in society then?

The concept of ‘grotesque’ is helpful to realize what showing off stands for. Stallybrass and White in their exploration of the domains of transgression use Bakhtin’s terminology of the classical and grotesque for their comparisons between high and low culture: “The ‘grotesque’ here designates the marginal, the low and the outside from the perspective of a classical body situated as high, inside and central by virtue of its very exclusions.”347

They assert that, “Grotesque tends to operate as a critique of a dominant ideology which has already set the terms, designating what is high and low.”348 The grotesque stands for a performance that manipulates boundaries between categories and mimics accepted ways of acting. It critiques the fixity of binaries: “In the second

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346 See Narrative 38 in Appendix D.
347 Stallybrass and White, p. 23.
348 Stallybrass and White, p. 43.
model, the grotesque is formed through a process of hybridization or in mixing of binary opposites, particularly of high and low, such that there is a heterodox merging of elements usually perceived as incompatible, and this later version of the grotesque unsettles any fixed binaryism.

Exaggerating is typical for Gypsies. Being members of a marginalized group, exaggeration appears as a reaction to their outcast position and thus neglecting the social manners with respect to being proper and moderate. Most Gypsies refuse to be moderate, which can be explained by the lack of a social position that can be put at risk. For some, improper action and exaggeration turns to invert the power relations as they are used to ridicule non-Gypsies by teasing them for their avoidances.

Along with showing off behavior, there is the issue of extravagance and recklessness connected to Gypsyness: “They live by the day, whenever they find anything they like, they immediately buy it.” Spending money freely is a characteristic of wealthy people and in their case it is seen as normal. According to classical logic of the modern capitalist understanding, the premise to live a comfortable life though would be to work and to save money for investment and/or bad times. The living from day to day, however, is related to the Gypsies’ marginal position. Many Gypsies do not save money, although we should note that many do not have much money to save, but enough just to survive. “They buy meat, fish and liver altogether, when they have [money]. When they do not, then they would worry like this [laughing].”

The Gypsies’ lack of responsibility when it comes to consumption and planning could easily be interpreted as a (symbolic) rejection of the capitalist system and the low

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349 See two models of ‘grotesque’ of Bakhtin in Stallybrass and White. In the first model, it basically stands for the Other. Here I use the second model of grotesque that questions and criticizes the construction of the Other in the dominant culture as elaborated above.

350 Ibid., p. 44.

351 Stallybrass and White discuss the manipulation of cultural classifications such as demonizing, inversion and hybridization.
class position within it. However, their conspicuous consumption and showing off behavior can also be interpreted as an internalization of the capitalist (class) hierarchy. Their exaggerated behavior may be seen ironic; in fact they reproduce instead of opposing the core values of the capitalist consumer society they are part of.

The symbolic negation of social and economic boundaries finds its expression in the idea that Gypsies “live from day to day.” According to the capitalist work ethic, being lazy and enjoying leisure times is reserved for those who own the means of production. Some Gypsies’ consumption patterns resemble those of the upper class, but they are not rich enough to afford such a lifestyle. As these Gypsies violate the boundaries, their attitude is used to situate them as undeserving poor. They are seen as poor and irresponsible people who instead of spending their money in a sensible way purchase luxurious goods. My aunt, who worked as a midwife, told me about a Gypsy who had sold her stove to buy a concert ticket. She would get another stove later, but the experience of the concert would be only that day. This logic violated the norm of frugal lifestyle.

In the town, the stigmatization of the Gypsies and the strategies to counter it have changed over time. As explained in the previous parts, the ideas about who is more Turk or more Gypsy also changed. The muhacir who were most Gypsy-like during the attacks nowadays are much less perceived as Gypsy. Furthermore, for some people, they even are praised for living alike and adapting to Turks more in comparison to other people. The musicians, on the other hand, who are the most socially and economically


353 For hierarchizing the poor with a focus on idleness along with moral condemnations, see Sarah Jordan, “From Grotesque Bodies to Useful Hands. Idleness, Industry and the Laboring Class,” *Eighteenth Century Life* 25 (Fall 2001), pp. 62-79.
active group now are considered “more Gypsy.” Their economic function in society has diminished due to technology and changes in the traditional wedding ceremonies.

The most striking shift in the negative discourse on Gypsyness in the town has been from being represented as marginal members of the society to undeserving people. The accusations of Gypsies being impure and immoral by nature, for instance were much stronger. Although they are still influential and the current stigmatization contains similar perceptions, the emphasis is different. What is new about the current stigmatization is the focus on Gypsies’ abuse of the state social system. In this discourse, they are depicted as free riders and exploiters of state support for the poor. The discourse fits well in the neoliberal ideology that emerged from the 1980s onwards.

Ismail, a teacher who was born in 1959 and has always lived in Muradiye neighborhood, portrayed the Gypsies as follows:

They are good people, but due to their lifestyle and poverty, they are somewhat untidy people, I mean, filthy. For instance, the number of their children is higher than ours [Turks]. Whether that is a good idea, I do not know. If you can look after them, let them be 10, if they live under healthy conditions. Moreover, the people do not like Gypsies because these people are not used to work under hard conditions. The jobs they prefer are always easy, instruments, you know, they live on musicianship. Here their morals are good, but go to Ezine, you cannot go in the street. […] They would pickpocket you. Here, I have never seen one of them stealing; they would not do those kinds of things. What is striking is that they always prefer the work without much effort. Since the Justice and Development Party is in parliament, state support as food is given to these citizens. Some people are very critical about that, because that normal people work, on the farm for example, until evening and maybe could get one bag of coal to his house, whereas Gypsies have their coal brought to them in a tractor paid by the fund of poverty [fakir fukara fonu]. Indeed, those households’ situation is good; there are 3 people between the age of 20-25. If other men go to the farms with their wives, they think that those people should also work. That is why they are reactive. The state gave green cards to all of these [Gypsies]. They could go and take whatever they want from the hospital. They are also ignorant, they lie, ‘I do not have any property’. That may be the case, but they use it as an easy excuse and take advantage of it. That is why the people resent them.354

This representation consists of many different aspects ranging from impurity and immorality to irresponsibility, laziness and idleness. The main stress however is on the

354 See Narrative 39 in Appendix D.
abuse of the state social support system. Mukhtar Kemal, who is in charge of distributing the aid packages, subscribes to this when he complained about “the Gypsies’ acting Gypsyness” in benefiting from state support through the social security fund. He said that the Gypsies ask money although they are healthy enough to work. A few minutes later, he remarked that it had become much more difficult for Gypsies to make money at weddings, but he insisted that they were “not that poor.”

Ismail furthermore explained how the Gypsies abuse the green card system, which guarantees state support in providing health insurance to the poor who are not entitled within any other social security system and whose monthly income is less than one-third of net minimum wage, and acquire undeserving support from the system through fraud:

They [The state officials] investigate a lot. But even though they [the Gypsies] had something [a property]; they would have it recorded under someone else’s name. I witnessed how a musician bought a car here. He had it registered with his brother in Ezine. He said ‘they would not give me a green card otherwise’. […] I mean this provokes negative reactions. There still are good weddings, for instance. The poorest one would put 200-300 YTL [100-150 Euros] into his pocket. The Gypsy people here would buy meat, chicken, minced meat, fish on the same day. Like this… These people spend whatever they had made today. They like enjoying life a lot. 356

The attitude of some Gypsies towards consumption can be interpreted as dismissing the value of private property, and with that the prevailing social and economic hierarchies. For some Gypsies, it can be a way to dissociate Gypsyness from poverty. Meral’s son for instance was proud of being different from the others in the neighborhood, in his flashy clothes. He wears expensive outfits with labels that many Gypsies cannot afford. He emphasizes it a lot to underline being different from the

355 For detailed information on the green card system, see Asena Gunal, “Health and Citizenship in Republican Turkey: An Analysis of the Socialization of Health Services in Republican Historical Context” (PhD Dissertation, Bogazici University, 2008).

356 See Narrative 40 in Appendix D.
others. He considered it as a way to get closer to Turkish society as these symbols are significant in the system.  

Along with all these representations, this still leaves open the question whether Gypsies in the town have a different value system or that they are just people who are poor. To many, their behavior clearly reflects a resistance against the norms of the dominant society, as expressed by Necla: “They are still extraordinary, different people. I mean, [making a pause and thinking]… It would be truer if we say people not recognizing the rule.” While talking about a particular family, Necla’s mother said: “none of them is different, all are like locals.” They laughed at Necla’s comment: “but on the other hand they have drums and horns in their houses.” Thus, if not manners and morals, physical appearance or occupations make one into a Gypsy. However, confusions and exceptions remain.

The accusation of immoral values and misbehavior are rejected by some of my Gypsy narrators. They referred to the hypocrisy and immorality of the Turks by giving examples of marriage programs on television. Muhacir Rana’s account illustrates this by discussing the issue of criminality:

Believe me my girl, please do not get offended, but here the thievery belongs to the Turks, there is none among the poor [Here the poor refers to Gypsies]. Prostitution also… What we heard lately… The women were finding [customers] for their own daughters. The police station knows us. We do not have either thievery or prostitution. We would sit starving, but we would not make any noise. Otherwise, if our children did something, we could not stay here, my dear. We stay here with our goodness. I tell Husmen [her son], to come home when it is midnight.

Furthermore, there are some strict rules among Gypsies regarding morality, especially regarding the women of the community. Among the muhacirs, a widow woman cannot remarry even though she may be very young. In contrast to the

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357 For the usage of fashion in compensation to obstacles and the incapability that an individual experiences see Georg Simmel, “Modanın Felsefesi” (The Philosophy of Fashion). In Modern Kültürde Catisma (The Conflict in Modern Culture) (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), pp. 103-34, especially pp. 120-21.

358 See Narrative 41 in Appendix D.
representation of Gypsy girls unaffected by the patriarchal norms in Turkey, some local Gypsy girls complained about their limited mobility and the pressure on them in contrast to their brothers. Moreover, as far as I observed, the girls in the muhacir families also behave according to the gender division of labor that is dominant for most women in the country. A woman who came to the town as a bride to a local Gypsy family, on the other hand, described the strict gender inequalities that a bride faces among the local Gypsies in the town, which is not like that in Lapseki, from where she had come. Moreover, among the muhacirs, the gender inequalities are less pronounced according to her.

In sum, most values and manners of the Gypsies are not that different from the Turks’ in the town. Although some of their behavior, ways of doing, acting and living can be distinct, some townspeople perceive them as essential differences. As I have explained in this chapter, some of these perceptions are connected to the degree of adaptation of Gypsies to the values of the socioeconomic system, which contributes to the marginal positions of the Gypsies. In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore the reactions of Gypsies to these various forms of stigmatization, which will help to understand the interplay between Gypsyness and Turkishness.

“Gypsies” Representations of Gypsyness

Devecioglu in her novel describes a Gypsy woman’s conflicting relationship with her Gypsy identity. She starts the story as follows: “This is a story of a Gypsy; of a Gypsy who tried to escape from her identity.”359 This is not only specific for the character in this novel. Many Gypsies wish to escape their Gypsy label in Turkey. This is related strongly to the dominant negative associations attached to their Gypsyness. It resembles

Burakumin community’s strategy in Japan whose members are strongly discriminated against and who choose to conceal their identity.\textsuperscript{360}

This attitude is quite common among the muhacirs in the town. They do not perceive themselves as Gypsies as this is constructed in the dominant discourse on Gypsyness. Moreover, most of them do not identify with the local Gypsies or sepetci Gypsies either. The attacks might have influenced the perception of their Gypsyness as well. Also among the youngest generation, Gypsyness is more likely to be avoided, most probably because the attacks showed that Gypsyness could form a legitimate ground for attacking them. Ironically, this led to conflicting situations and narratives even in the same family. While the grandmother says, “we are Romans,” the granddaughter strongly negates it and refuses to be considered as such. More interestingly, the conflicting relation with the Gypsy identity can be observed even in how self-representations change over time or in different phases of a conversation. For instance, some muhacirs denied their Gypsyness all the time, until I was going to leave the town. Some others deny it when they are asked directly, but in a daily conversation, they refer to their Gypsyness.

My muhacir narrator Seyyal, who introduced me in the community, told me that for some Gypsies, the attack itself stood for the people’s perception of them in the degraded position that was linked to Gypsyness. Thus, their silence on the attacks was explained by their shame about their marginal position. On the other hand, Seyyal also displayed the conflicting relation with their Gypsyness. First, she told me about the heterogeneity of the Gypsy people; some were “noble” while others were outright poor. She mentioned her husband as an example; he was so noble that no one would believe that he was a Gypsy. This way of differentiating Gypsies first of all relies on strong essentialist hierarchies. Moreover, this differentiation does not negate the dominantly constituted negative discourses on Gypsyness. Instead, it reproduces the idea of Gypsies

as degraded as ‘noble’ implies closeness to the dominant Turkish ethnic identity. Furthermore, it opens a space for a counter argument, which would be “if you look like a Gypsy than you are not respected.”

In her work on Greekness in a Greek Macedonian town, Karakasidou reflects on her experience with similar conflicting narratives: “The legends that Assiros villagers presented to me sometimes offered conflicting versions of particular aspects of their ancestral origins, but all shared a consistent theme in their strong insistence on a Greek heritage and ancestry stretching as far back as the Great Alexander.” 361

Karakasidou’s account is similar to our case where muhacirs try to associate themselves with Turkishness. The muhacirs insisted on their Turkishness by referring to similar criteria that are constituted according to dominant perceptions parallel to Turkishness in which Ataturk, the past experience of population exchange, and being modern citizens take an important place. In the following phases of our conversation, Seyyal shows the inflexibility and contextuality of identities: “Indeed, we came from Selanik. At that time, Ataturk had said that ‘you [the Greeks] can not touch my Turks.’ That is why my grannies came by ship. That is why indeed we were Turks, but when we came here, our name became this [‘Gypsy’].” 362 This past connected to population exchange is crucial for muhacirs as the proof of their Turkishness and it gives them a strong argument to be accepted as Turks, as the founder of the Turkish Republic had invited them under that category. 363

While we were continuing this conversation in a group of muhacir women during Hidrellez celebrations in Camlik, a local Gypsy woman dancing in another group started


362 See Narrative 42 in Appendix D. Another narrator, who is a Bosnak, told that they got this name here in the town, while his relatives in Tekirdag were not called Bosnaks, but accepted as Turks.

363 See the part on population exchange stories for the narratives on Turkishness of the muhacirs.
shouting, “Long live the Gypsies! These people will not die, Gypsies will not die!” A muhacir woman from our group informed me with derision, “See, these are the locals.” Then Seyyal explained the differences of behavioral codes between them: “For instance, I would not dance like this in my entire life.” However, she also sounded happy to be among them and be part of Gypsyness with respect to the liveliness and sincerity between people: “Look for instance, you cannot find this kind of joy even if you paid for it”.

Identifications and representations change widely especially in the case of the muhacirs. I will now explore some other dynamics used for relation between Gypsyness and Turkishness. This will reveal how and when one stands close to Gypsyness, in which ways one identifies with it and how and why these two categories are interchangeable in people’s perceptions.

Negativity of Gypsyness

The very first self-representation of a Gypsy in the town was motivated by the wish to prove that they were not like those Gypsies as referred to by the dominant Gypsy stereotypes. They did not openly oppose those stereotypes for instance by denying their marginal position. Instead they emphasized how they themselves were different from what was normally understood as a Gypsy even if they would assert their own Gypsyness. Yet, this shows how strong the pejorative nature of the Gypsyness category is and how hard it is to get away from it. Instead many Gypsies attempt to protect themselves from falling into that position. This influences their different definitions of Gypsyness.

364 “Cingeneler çok yasasin! Bu insanlar olmez, Cingeneler olmez!”
Differentiating One’s Community from the Dominant Perceptions on Gypsyness

The stigmatizing effects of Gypsyness become apparent in the representations of differences. Muhacir Gypsies do not perform professions that are traditionally associated with Gypsies while among the locals, there is a considerable group of musicians, which is recognized by their Gypsy profession. Thus, some of the muhacirs emphasize their distance to Gypsyness by not practicing these occupations and instead following life styles and professions similar to those of the Turks. On the other hand, some local Gypsies emphasize their rootedness in the town as a proof for being close to the Turks in town. Within these groups the issue had been debated for quite a while. The stigma of the label, the lack of a nomadic life style and a different language, life styles and traditions are referred to along with the different identification and representations of Gypsyness.

As indicated above, the local Gypsies talk about their Gypsyness more easily than the muhacirs, whereas for the muhacirs, it is a taboo and they instead emphasize their Turkishness. My muhacir narrator, Mahir, emphasized the pejorative usage of the term “Roman.” He complained about the term’s connection with discrimination. He was disturbed by the low status that is allocated to the Gypsies in society. Thus, he found it insulting that people used the word Roman or Gypcy for them: “They said ‘Roman.’ What does it mean? I cannot understand. They use it in the meaning of Gypsy. This is what happens. When you say ‘Roman’, a group of people is pushed out of society. When they say ‘Roman’, it is the most devalued thing in the world. There are indecent men in every race.”

Sukufe perceived the term similarly, although they used it in the family. She dismissed the term outright: “I would not accept Romanness, why would I? […] My mother and father came from Selanik. The people from here inscribed it upon us […]”

365 See Narrative 43 in Appendix D.
you use this word, you should be ashamed; not me. I would not either be ashamed or accept Romanness. I do not know the Gypsy language, I speak Turkish. That is it!  

Sukufe avoided talking about Romanness with her children, who were three and seven. When her 82-year-old grandmother Kismet got into this discussion, peculiarities in their narratives, perceptions and attitudes towards Gypsyness become apparent. Although Sukufe spoke very concretely, her grandmother said “Why? I am Roman, why would I hide it?” Thus, within the same family, there could be different approaches to being a Gypsy. Moreover, the reaction of Sukufe also seemed to be related to her being married to a non-Gypsy family and the wish to distance herself from Gypsyness due to the derogatory usages of the term. She especially emphasized the difference between them and other people that are labeled with the same term.

The lack of a different language, on the other hand, stands as the proof of Turkishness. Neither the local Gypsies nor the muhacirs speak Romanes. They are even offended when asked whether they speak it. They indicated that some sepetcis speak the language though. Sukufe emphasized the language part: “I do not have a language, I would not accept that. My husband cannot tell me that you are Roman. He does not have that right. They also know us as Roman. At the end, I can call him Bosnak, [as he is] Bosnak. He can call me muhacir if he wants, but he cannot say Roman.”

As it transpired from Sukufe’s narrative, speaking the Roma language is an inferior criterion, because it is assumed that usually itinerant Gypsies stick to their language. Moreover, hanging on to the Gypsy language can be used as a reason for

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366 See Narrative 44 in Appendix D.

367 “Neden ki? Ben Roman’ım. Nıye saklayayım?”

368 The Gypsy language that is spoken by some Gypsies in the western Anatolia as a dialect of the one spoken in Europe.

369 See Narrative 45 in Appendix D.
exclusion from Turkishness. This echoes the case among Slovekian Gypsies, as my colleague Jan Grill observed. Some Gypsies also refer to themselves as less Gypsy when they do not speak the language. Muhacir Rana had a similar reaction that revealed her view of the Romani language and the people speaking it: “They [Sepetcis] know the language/ they talk gula gula gula gula [imitation of a savage language]. They know, but we don’t know.”370

Speaking the language, thus makes one more Gypsy. The local Gypsy Sister Ezgi, like the muhacirs, referred to speaking a different language as a feature of inferior Gypsies:

We do not know the language. We do not ever have our own language, not in this life. They [Sepetcis] would say pani for water and other things for others, I would not know. I do not understand their patara kutere when they come to sell something. [The Muhacirs] would not know either.371

The mixed family of a local Gypsy father and a muhacir mother, with whom I had a close relationship, even became offended when I asked them whether they spoke Romani. Avoidance of having a separate language and anxiety around it are understandable in the nationalist Turkish context and the repression of the Kurdish language. Moreover, campaigns such as “Citizen, Speak Turkish”372 also send the message that reliable citizens only speak Turkish.

Another important criterion of Gypsyness is itinerancy.373 Being sedentary is proof of not being like a Gypsy to many Gypsies. It is also an important criterion for many Turks, as they would warn not to mix Gypsies in the town with itinerant ones: “Our Gypsies are local.” Settlement is an important condition for the inclusion of

370 See Narrative 46 in Appendix D.
371 See Narrative 47 in Appendix D.
372 “Vatandas, Turkce Konus.” The campaigns targeted mainly non-Muslims in the 1950s.
373 See Chapter II.
Gypsies, as the 1934 Settlement Law illustrates. Sukufe emphasized the link between Gypsyness and itinerancy. Her narrative also refers to other discourses and conditions to be Turkish. We even see traces of recent debates in religion and secularity in her narrative:

Do they [Gypsies] have a permanent home? They travel. But my home is certain. I have a house, too. I do not accept […] I am a Turkish girl of a Turk. I live under the same flag. I go to the same mosque; I am buried in the same cemetery. [For instance] the Turkmens have a separate cemetery. They discriminate racially, but I do not. My prophet is the same, Muhammed. They [Turkmens] regard Ali as divine [instead]. You cannot discriminate against them either. There would not be any discrimination in religion. You should not mix politics with religion. That is it.\textsuperscript{374}

Along with a settled life, mainstream life styles, socio-economic position and traditions compatible with the Turks appear crucial not to be considered a Gypsy. Among the Muhacirs, Mahir’s son Alper subscribed to this interpretation and he therefore rejected the term Gypsy for his own family. His father was a state official who worked in the State Post Office in Bursa, while there were some others working as state officials in his family. Discourses on normality and marginality employed in anti-Gypsy discourse are also active in his narrative:

You can see here. In the sense of the life style… For instance, the people [local Gypsies who perform as musicians] across the street, their life style is totally different. The ones in Istanbul are the same as these. The Romanness comes from here [life style]. Now, we are normal citizens, our life style is totally different. For instance, when you are a state official, you do not behave like them, and then nobody can call you Roman.\textsuperscript{375}

Alper’s narrative displays how he considered the term “Roman” as an insult. To prove his own distance, he posits his family within the scope of normality and appropriate life style. In similar articulations, the Sepetcis are put in the lowest rank of Gypsyness. Many local Gypsies and muhacirs use the dominant discriminatory discourse to demonstrate their own distinctiveness, as Alper’s narrative shows:

\textsuperscript{374} See Narrative 48 in Appendix D.

\textsuperscript{375} See Narrative 49 in Appendix D.
Look, for instance, there are Sepetcis in front of us [our house]. They call them "cilinçir" [stands for 'thief'], you know. We are people living on our own. Are we the same as them? Humans are the same, but there are differences in life styles and culture. I cannot see myself as being the same as them. Their lifestyle is different. I mean, how they talk, live, that is not like we do. Look, could you figure yourself as same as them? Humans are humans, but if they ask you, you live with them [in the same district], are you from them? No, I am not. But, I would value them as humans, [though] I would not adopt their life styles. That is it. [...] Their lifestyles are like bobacıs [peddlers]. They come together, they make a fire, and they prepare their meals. They gather together, they fight. They turn their tape player on and start dancing. I do not do these things. This is what I mean.\footnote{376 See Narrative 50 in Appendix D.}

They get offended when one brings them under the same label as the Sepetcis, who are mostly nomad Gypsies and are viewed as being as uncivilized as their culture, manners and economic situation. The local Gypsies also look down upon them. It is a reoccurring issue with many Gypsies. As seen in Alper’s narratives, he is basically repeating the dominant prejudices about Gypsies through the stereotypes on sepetcis and he separates himself from these features as well as from Gypsyness. Some local Gypsies and muhacirs thus reproduce stereotypes that some non-Gypsies use for them.

The Significance of Locality for the Local Gypsies

Locality was a crucial concept to refer to Gypsies in Canakkale. It stressed their settled life and their long history in the region. In Canakkale, they have legitimized their past in the city in reference to their ancestors’ who were involved in the conquest of Istanbul at the time of Sultan Mehmet II the Conqueror (1453). In Bayramic, locality also points at one’s legitimate place. When the latecomers from other countries, cities and villages to the town are considered, a discourse on locality functions to declare one’s rights to be in the town and to be a member of the town’s community. Among the Gypsies, the locality is mainly used to differentiate themselves from itinerant sepetcis and muhacirs who came with the population exchange.
During the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in the 1920s, Karakasidou reports that the term *dopyi* [local] started to be used throughout Greek Macedonia. She writes that the settlement contributed to redefinitions in perceptions of identity and to new social categories such as “local” or “indigenous”, while refugees were not welcome. In the context of Bayramic, defining some Gypsies as locals in comparison to the muhacirs signals similar redefinitions of identities and categorizations.

“[L]ocal origin accounts often contained particular elements that suggested diversity, or more specifically the purity of some and the difference of others.”

Locality has other connotations in the Turkish context, as Yael Navaro-Yasin points out with reference to the historical place of Islam. She asserts that the westernization and modernity project from the foundation of the republic onwards was perceived in opposition to standing against the local culture. Navaro-Yasin’s remark reflects the contrast between modern Turkishness that is emphasized by the muhacirs and locality that is linked to traditions and Islam among most local Gypsies. As will be explained in the next part, the muhacirs always stress their ties to Atatürk and being modern citizens (for some, because of their European origin even more modern than the Turks in Anatolia). They are proud of their Kemalism, their modern view on women, and of their level of education and jobs in state institutions. Among most local Gypsies, on the other hand, religion and rootedness in the town signify their closeness to the

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377 Karakasidou, p. 152.

378 Ibid., p. 36.

Turkish townspeople. They underline their religious activities, in contrast to the muhacirs’ focus on citizenship rights and duties.

The local Gypsy Ezgi emphasized the commonality of traditions with the Turks. They share ways of cooking, as well as the way they perform weddings. Of course, Gypsies have more elaborate celebrations, spend more money, engage more musicians, but these are seen as ‘small’ differences. They are indeed very proud of their weddings as they illustrate the richness of the community and a particular family. Thus, for their celebrations, some bring musicians from other cities (i.e. Ankara in the case of one family), although there are plenty of musicians in the community. They like to show off their wealth and power and how well they take care of their children through the richness of the wedding ceremony. For Hidrellez celebrations, the practices of local Gypsies and Turks are similar. In comparison to the muhacirs, on the other hand, the religious character of the locals is emphasized: “Our local Gypsies wake up in the mornings. They perform abdest, go to the river, they take water, you tell whatever you ask from Hizir Ali Husselam, and come back. But they [muhacirs] put flowers [in front of your doors], they laugh and dance, they make a fire.”

Additionally, the local Gypsies mention traditions more than the muhacirs. They refer to commonalities with the Turks and their closeness to them. However, they do not hesitate to stress their differences as well. Some draw attention to the boundaries between Turkishness and Gypsyness. They even use the word goray for Turks, which is not used by the muhacirs. Compared to the muhacirs, the local Gypsies do not deny the differences with the Turks. Historically, they were also the ones who hold on to Gypsy

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380 See the part on religion for the (local and Turkish) narratives on local Gypsies, who are seen as better behaving according to Turkish norms and better Muslims than muhacirs.

381 They assert that they would live under the same flag, speak the same language and send their children to the army.

382 See Narrative 51 in Appendix D.
professions and relate to the Turks within determined boundaries. They recognize hierarchies, very similar to what Van Arkel’s called “labeled interaction”: acting within prescribed roles and the prevailing power hierarchy between Gypsyness and Turkishness. Still, the local Gypsies historically have been quite successful in crafting a legitimate place in the town. They claim their rights based on their deep historical roots in the territory, in contrast to the immigrants after them. Their affiliation with Bayramic as their hometown earned them recognition as a part of that particular society and territory. During the attacks, as local Gypsy Mesiye pointed at, their recognition as such prevented people’s further assaults while some families were left in peace, like hers. She recalled the attackers discussing in front of their windows: “Do not ever touch these people. They have eight hundred years of history here. No one from the Adalis will be touched.”

In addition, while the migration from the villages especially intensified after the 1980s along with increasing Kurdish immigration, the muhacirs to some extent also could claim rights on the basis of having lived in the town much longer than the recent newcomers. Moreover, these newcomers adapted to the behavioral codes and norms of the town less than them. Thus, they also liked to emphasize their difference from the villagers by stressing their local roots. In the following part, we will explore how the muhacirs tried to legitimize their place in the town.

The Population Exchange and Legitimacy Ground

For the local Gypsies, being in the town for a long period of time was enough for a legitimate claim. However, as the muhacirs came from Thessaloniki in Greece at the time of population exchange in 1925-26, emphasis on their acceptance to the country by

383 Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American mainstream.*

384 "Bu insanlara dokunmayın. Onların burda sekiz yüz yıllık tarihi var. Adalilardan kimseye dokunulmayacak."
the order of Atatürk and recognition of their Turkishness stands as their own legitimate
ground for their existence in the town and closeness to Turkishness. In this discourse,
the state authority and recognition is key, but the figure of Atatürk reveals a great
symbolic power in these narratives as he and everything associated with him gain
unquestioned legitimacy in traditional Turkish political and social discourse. This implies
that those who oppose the presence of muhacirs in the town, in a way, criticize Atatürk.
Thus, the narratives on the population exchange and references to Atatürk are important
weapons against stigmatization. As a result, in their narratives, all remarked on how
Atatürk had brought them to Turkey, whereas some even accentuated that they once
were neighbors of Atatürk, stressing personal relations and a common homeland. In her
narratives on ancestors, Cevza started telling how Atatürk rescued them:

Gavurs [infidels to Islam] showed them [her ancestors] the world over there [in
Greece]. They made [terrorized] them, too. I had an uncle; the gavurs beat him in
the square. Atatürk said… my mother was telling that they were peeing out of
fear. They [the Greeks] said ‘you are ‘tak tak’ in bayram’ [sound for a gun fire in
reference to killing]. An order came from Atatürk. He said, “if any harm is done
to my Turks, do not make me put my boots on, I will make you clean them. A
ship will come tonight and all of my Turks will get on it.”

Cevza’s mother referred to Atatürk as “our,” denoting their closeness to him and
his values: “My father was saying that ‘Our Atatürk saved us’. […] They had only one
night until they would be killed, and then Atatürk said ‘do not touch my Turks […]’”

Berrin, on the other hand, highlighted the muhacirs as Atatürk’s neighbors and
acquaintances: “Atatürk was also living in that neighborhood, on the upper side. There
was an old man here and he was a child, too. [He had told that] Atatürk never went on
his knees even when he was a child. But, of course, they were living on the lower side.”

Immigrant Gypsies from Selanik (Thessaloniki) extensively refer to Atatürk, as
Kolukırık came across in his work on Gypsies’ migration experiences and memories that

385 See Narrative 52 in Appendix D.
386 See Narrative 53 in Appendix D.
came from Selanik to Bornova, Izmir. In the interviews with muhacir Gypsies in Izmir, themes that arose were gratefulness to Atatürk [“We lived because of him”]; his decision to bring them to Turkey [“Atatürk brought us here”]; his recognition of them [“Atatürk called us here”]. Kolukırık explains these references to Atatürk psychologically as “situating oneself through a powerful figure.”

Nevertheless, we need to examine the historical and sociopolitical constructions and discourses around Atatürk as well, to understand these references. He was not portrayed as an ordinary powerful figure in history, but lots of people with different perspectives, from secularists to fundamentalist, from left to right, have assured their positions and arguments through references to him. It is not only supporting oneself through a powerful figure, but also recognizing his historically constructed unquestioned position. For the muhacirs, it accommodates a legitimate ground for Turkishness.

For many muhacirs, being more modern with their open-minded family relations and relative gender equality differentiates them from the local Gypsies. This underlines their adherence to the modernization project and makes them into good and modern citizens following the Kemalist idea. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the new state and Kemalist ideology in the spheres of women and religion associated modernization with Turkishness. Thus, the image of “modern women” served as a pivotal symbol for the founding era and its legacy. Cevza highlighted their difference from the local Gypsies with her remark on gender roles, their European origin and thus

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387 Kolukırık, “Dunden Bugune”.

the harmony with the idea of westernization and modernization: “Our culture is
different. We are more open-minded. We are more cultured and well groomed. They [the
local Gypsies] would like the bride to make and bring coffee in the morning. Even the
way they talk is different. After all, they are locals of here. We are muhacirs, of course we
are Europeans. We have seen Europe.”

Moreover, the fact that muhacir women who work outside of the house shows
their socioeconomic power and modern gender roles in comparison to the local Gypsy
women among whom working outside the home is considered as inappropriate. Still,
although some local Gypsy women especially from the younger generations like to work
in similar jobs like nannies and house servants, they usually cannot get into the network.
Apart from the gender dynamic, this profession stands for the Turks’ recognition of
muhacirs’ morals and manners along with their trustworthiness by accepting them into
their households. Thus, the muhacir women mention their jobs as an entrance to the
wider society and their acceptance as members in socioeconomic life in the town.

However, this socioeconomic harmony and the legitimacy of the muhacirs as
Turks, modern citizens and workers, were violated by the attacks. This denial of their
legitimate place in society was traumatic for them, and the shock that apparently they
were not Turkish enough had a big impact. Rana voiced this violation: “We said ‘we are
muhacirs; Atatürk’s children’. Rifki [one of the perpetrators] said, ‘No, you are not’. We
said ‘we are Atatürk’s neighbors; why do you treat us like this? We are Atatürk’s
children.’ My girl, do you know how they behaved? Like soldiers. Those stones smashed
all my doors and windows.”

The references to Atatürk by the muhacirs are also connected to the lack of
people’s secure status in the country except within the nationalist discourse. It displays

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389 See Narrative 54 in Appendix D.
390 See Narrative 55 in Appendix D.
the lack of alternative arguments to fight racism and discrimination against Gypsies in its own right. Tragically, the muhacirs by employing these Kemalist arguments reinforced their victimhood.

The Liminality of the Gypsies

On the eve of the attacks in the town, what was significant and threatening to some townspeople was the disappearance of the boundaries between them and certain people whom they had called Gypsies. It was the time that many villagers and townspeople felt the effects of social and economic transformation in their lives, the fear of losing their status in society and the anxiety to fit into the new criteria of doing business. In other words modernization which intensified relations with the big city, the spread of transportation and the emerging positions in the economy that were linked to new technologies, created a feeling of social insecurity among many families, who had to adapt to new ways of life.

Then what was the position of the Gypsies in relation to the boundaries that Turks were attempting to protect and uphold? As we have seen, the category of Gypsyness by itself in its wider understanding is ambiguous in Turkey. Many are confused about who the Gypsies are. For some people, Gypsyness is another race, for others only a different life style and part of the population, whereas there are also Turks who think Gypsies are just poor people who struggle for a living. This explains why some are confused whether they can call them Turks or not. After all, many migrants were recognized as Turks depending on religious uniformity after the foundation of the Turkish Republic.\textsuperscript{391} Many Gypsies also consider themselves Turks.\textsuperscript{392} Surely, they are

\textsuperscript{391} For the changing criteria pertaining to the acceptance as Turks within the prevailing economic and political context, also see Danis and Parla.
Turks to some degree in the eyes of many people, whereas for others they are the ultimate other.

The ambiguity is clearly visible in some of the Gypsies’ narratives on their self-representations. While they would call themselves Turks, within few minutes they could start referring to some townspeople as “those Turks…” It is obvious that the Turkishness that they see themselves part of, is different from that of the townspeople. They develop a certain degree of commonality with the wider dominant culture and they recognize themselves as parts of it. However, they also realize that they are only partly included and seen as different through derogatory adjectives related to impurity, ugliness, immorality, and criminality. 393 Many people suffer from being excluded in this way. However, for many, Gypsyness serves as a way to identify with other Gypsies, with whom they share the segregation and with whom many can feel free in contrast to the prejudices that they have to deal with in the outer world. Thus, they are Gypsies to some extent and Turks to another.

This ambiguity is displayed in various ways. One is the construction of the national identity of Turkishness at three levels. 394 These levels include people in different dimensions. It may blur the boundary of the category of Turkishness, but at the same time, it provides the flexibility that can be used for different inclusion and exclusion strategies. Moreover, it reveals the hierarchy between people within the same category. Gypsies could be easily accepted as Turks on the basis of language, religion and territorial ties. Moreover, in contrast to other communities that are referred to as minorities, 395 many Gypsies do not claim a different language, religion or culture. However, as

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392 In Diyarbakir, it was also a debatable issue for the Gypsies-Dom people who would argue that they belong to a tribe of Kurdish people. Thus, they are both Gypsies and Kurds.

393 Gypsyness is also used as a keyword that embodies those other derogatory usages.

394 See the part on Turkishness and its three levels in Chapter Two.

395 Both to the ones called religious and ethnic such as Greeks, Jews, Armenians and Kurds.
indicated in the 1934 Settlement Law, itinerant Gypsies are seen as people who cannot be accepted as Turks. Furthermore, Gypsies are seen as marginal. Their religious appropriateness is always questioned, as we saw in Bayramic. Thus, they have acquired an ambiguous state between Turkishness and non-Turkishness. This ambiguity demonstrates their liminality which means that their position is hard to define.396

In Bayramic, local Gypsies as a community stood close to, but at the same time were different from the Turks. Most of them did not deny the boundaries with Turks, who have more opportunities in the economic life and more statuses in the social life. They stayed “Turkish-like” and with low socioeconomic status compared to the “real Turks.” However, among them as well, some were better off in businesses like owning a barbershop or as well-known musicians. In a way they accepted their liminal position as “most of them knew their place that was inferior to a Turk’s” in terms of social and class positions.

The muhacirs, on the other hand, became the problematic ones, because they did not accept their subordinate position. They would rather emphasize their rights to be treated as Turks as their ancestors had been recognized as such by the Turkish state and Atatürk as the respectable founder. Their place between the local Gypsies and the Turks, however, demonstrated their in-between space. Along with the socioeconomic power that they gathered in the 1960s, thus, the muhacirs were trying hard to blur and even shift the boundaries and thus escape from their liminal position.

Among other things this meant that Gypsies would profit from the socioeconomic opportunities that originally belonged to Turks. The rumors on the muhacirs’ inappropriate behavior versus Turkish women, threatening their honor,

396 See Chapter One for the liminality of Gypsies. For the relation between pollution and liminality, see Douglas.
metaphorically stood for invading the Turkish territory. In the following chapter, we will see how the Gypsy threat was constructed around the muhacirs in this process.