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Abstract

My paper aims to explore how historical narratives shape Turkish nationalism in diaspora; more precisely within the *Islamische Gemeinschaft Millî Görüş* (“National Vision” Islamic Community) in Europe. Founded in Europe in the 1970s as a result of Turkish immigration experience and by the direct implication of Turkish political leaders promoting “National Vision” ideology, activities of the community are mainly based today on the transmission for youth’s Islamic education. I argue that the reinvention of Turkish nationalism can be analyzed through the use of the “Ottoman past” at *Millî Görüş* socialization process in Europe. After reminding the reader of the place granted to the “Ottoman past” in the “National Vision” ideology, we first outline how the “Ottoman” image emerges at community activities and is perceived by sympathizers. We then focus on the articulation of historical reinventions to issues of host countries; questioning the function of Turkish nationalism in the host countries.

Reframing Turkish Nationalism: Historical Narratives in Diaspora

Nationalism embraces history, as scholars underline it frequently, for different reasons, in various ways, by different actors. “History” serves as an important element to ensure a sense of belonging to a nation, to reinforce the idea of a common future among its members, to contribute to the development of nationalist ideas, to legitimize political actions. To meet nationalist objectives, historical elements can be selected or invented. Fred Halliday compares the selection process of historical elements between the primordialist and the modernist approaches. Accordingly, the primordialist would propose a three-choice fixed menu; while the modernist would come with 50 or 100 different choices, telling us all the same that one can ask for anything¹. The peculiarity of the ways to recall an appropriate past, though quite fictitious, makes an appearance in the mirror of what Eric Hobsbawm calls the “invented tradition”, defined as a set of “practices of a ritual and symbolic nature [...] which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior through repetition” and “to establish

¹ HALLIDAY, Fred, « Islam and the West », *METU Studies in Development*, vol. 27, n° 3-4, 2000, pp. 218-219.

continuity with an appropriate historical past”². The historical narratives may be far away from reality or may miss some distinguished points. Yet, they still have a force of representation in people’s minds³.

Nationalism with links to “History” can be read in the conflicts that arise between minority groups (whether they are sociologically or judicially considered as such) and political/institutional authorities. For example, the way history classes are taught at schools can crystallize tensions. Textbooks are considered as a way of conveying nationalism by the “state” actors on the one hand. They can constitute the very base of minority groups’ claims on the other hand. By criticizing the contents of textbooks, these groups may seek national recognition.

Migrants can mobilize history to foster dynamics of diaspora nationalism too. In the beginning of 80’s, Albanians in Switzerland had mobilized to form an opinion public on the situation of Albanians in Yugoslavia, and "Albanian nation and its history" had been an important tool to mobilize masses around a shared nationalist propaganda⁴. For Riva Kastoryano, the use of the past is, both, a characteristic of diaspora nationalism and transnational nationalism. Yet, its function is relatively different from one another. In the case of diaspora nationalism (understood in its classical definition), legendary tales of the past serve to unify the nation, etc. while in the case of transnational nationalism (mainly considered as migrant’s nationalism), the nation is understood in the actions entertained between the countries of origin and host countries. In other words, the reawakening of legends does not characterize the idea of “nation” in the case of transnational nationalism; as it does for diaspora nationalism⁵.

The Place Granted to the Ottoman Empire in *Millî Görüş* Ideology

The birth of the National Vision ideology in Turkey in the 1970s has paved the path for “Islamic nationalism”⁶ and the question of how the Ottoman past has been integrated into the political agenda is crucial to understanding it. The Ottoman past has served as an example

² HOBBSAWM, Eric, RANGER, Terence, *L'invention de la tradition*, Paris, Éditions Amsterdam, 2006, p. 12.

³ ANDERSON, Benedict, *L'imaginaire national. Réflexions sur l'origine et l'essor du nationalisme*, Paris, La Découverte, 2002, p. 21.

⁴ FARQUET, Romaine, « Demonstrating for a Kosovo Republic in Switzerland: Emotions, National Identity and Performance », *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 20, n° 2, 2014, p. 283.

⁵ KASTORYANO, Riva. “Le nationalisme transnational turc ou la redéfinition du nationalisme par les « Turcs de l'extérieur », in (edit.) Dieckhoff, Alain, et Riva Kastoryano, *Nationalismes en mutation en Méditerranée orientale*. Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2002, pp. 249-266. Web. <<http://books.openedition.org/editions-cnrs/2410>>

⁶ YAVUZ, Hakan, « Milli görüş hareketi : muhalif ve modernist bir gelenek » [Milli Görüş movement: tradition of modernist opposition], *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce : İslamcılık* [La pensée politique dans la Turquie contemporaine : islamisme], vol. 6, İstanbul, İletişim, 2004, p. 594.

in legitimizing the argument that makes Turkey the leading country in the Muslim world. All the same, it was an element in the formulation of the anti-Occidental speech. Leaders representing “National Vision” ideology were systematically blaming Occident and Israel for destroying the Ottoman Empire. One could hear Necmettin Erbakan affirming: “If today they are interested in the Kurdish question, it is only to destroy Turkey and to found Great Israel. It is never a matter of human rights that they want to grant to Muslims. As they destroyed the Ottoman Empire, they also wanted to destroy Turkey. [...] Basically, there are always foreign powers, imperialism, Zionism”⁷.

In the party charter of the National Order Party (*Millî Nizam Partisi*), nationalism is defined by reference not only to the unity in faith, common dawah (*dava* in Turkish), culture, and common goals but also to a “common historical conscience”⁸. In the political program of the National Salvation Party (*Millî Selamet Partisi*), Turkey is reconstructed on “the heritage of martyrs and veterans”. It is also noted that “attachment to the idea of nationalism” requires full respect to “the moral and spiritual values of our nation (*millet*) [...], the values being embodied in our honorable and respectful past”⁹. The Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) continued to attribute Turkey a leading role among Muslim countries, to charge Turkey with a particular role in ‘bringing together’ Muslim countries¹⁰. Nationalism (*milliyetçilik*) is thus officially defined as a political project and history has been a constructive element of the nationalist idea.

Under the AKP ruling, “neo-Ottomanism” has been explicitly promoted as a policy by Ahmet Davutoğlu. Despite certain comments which see in this political choice a reorientation of the AKP's policy to a religious radicalism, or even a desire to resuscitate the Ottoman Empire in the geographical sense of the term, “neo-Ottomanism” policy is mainly considered as the political ambition of the Turkish power to widen Turkey’s influence in countries that had previously belonged to the Ottoman Empire. The absence of hostile reactions from Arab

⁷ « Necmettin Erbakan - Kürt Meselesi (Meclis Konuşması) TRT » [Necmettin Erbakan - The Kurdish question (Speech to the National Assembly) TRT]. En ligne. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F7Hk08WpQ>

⁸ « MNP, Milli Nizam Partisi Tüzüğü ve Programı » [MNP, Political Program of the National Order Party], Ankara, TBMM Kütüphanesi As Matbaası, p. 7.

⁹ « MSP. Milli Selamet Partisi Tüzüğü » [MSP. Party Charter of the National Salvation Party], Ankara, Elif matbaacılık, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰ BORA, Tanıl, « Le lexique vaste et désordonné du discours nationaliste », *Confluences*, automne 1997, p. 12 ; ÖZKIRIMLI, Umut, « Türkiye’de milliyetçiliğin değişen haritası » [The ephemeral mapping of nationalism in Turkey], [www.t24.com.tr](http://t24.com.tr), 21 July 2013. En ligne. <http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/umut-ozkirimli/turkiyede-milliyetciligin-degis-en-haritasi,7088> [Consulté le 24 octobre 2015], BAYART, Jean François, « Turquie : un nationalisme est-européen et postimperial », HAL [archives ouvertes pluridisciplinaires], 2005, pp. 149-150. En ligne. <https://hal-sciencespo.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01065610> [Consulté le 7 mars 2014]., p. 150

countries or Christians in the Balkans is interpreted as the absence of concerns regarding an eventual territorial change¹¹. One can hear Recep Tayyip Erdoğan say in 2012: “Turkey will represent a model of democracy for the whole world [...]. We are a hope for all those who were victims and who will eventually triumph: from Sarajevo to Damascus, from Beirut to Istanbul, from the West Bank to Jerusalem and Gaza”. The call to the Muslim world to follow Turkey as a model is thus seen as a realization of the AKP government's "neo-Ottoman" policy¹². On the other hand, the integration of an "Ottoman Islamic ethos" into the AKP's policy serves to strengthen members' attachment on the national arena, to develop a sense of living together¹³.

The “neo-Ottomanism” agenda aims to establish a multidimensional and dynamic foreign policy and does not resonate, according to William Hale, in the same way as Erbakan's formula “the creation of a giant Turkey like did the Ottomans”¹⁴. So, scholars can also note a difference in the operationalization of the Ottoman past in politics. While Islamic values and the Ottoman heritage are advanced to oppose Western capitalism in the political discourse of the actors of the National Vision movement, in the political language of the AKP leaders these assertions tend to make Turkey a regional leader respected by the actors of the international system¹⁵.

The Emergence of the “Ottoman” Image in the Community Activities

“National Vision” does not function as a political party, does not aim to conquer the political power in the host countries. The main activity areas of the community are framed by religious education and/or different types of activities around religious socialization. The objectives of the community -as they are officially asserted- refer to the community's willingness to assist Muslims, to help Muslims ensure places of worship, to defend the moral and material interests of its members, etc. In other words, no reference is made to the country of origin, neither to Turk's old states, or that of contemporary Turkey.

Yet, the National Vision ideology is reinterpreted in the host countries through the historical lenses and the means of identification with the Turkish nation are established

¹¹ HALE, William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 254.

¹² BONZON, Ariane, « Erdogan, le nouvel Atatürk », *www.slate.fr*, 13 juin 2011. En ligne. <http://www.slate.fr/story/39375/erdogan-nouvel-aturk-turquie>

¹³ YAVUZ, Hakan, *Political...*, *op. cit.*, p. 261

¹⁴ HALE, William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 255.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

through Turk's imperial past. The perception of the Ottoman image has its roots in the 5National Vision ideology. We do not observe a deviation or a structural change in the sense that *Millî Görüş* sympathizers give to history in the host country. The particular interest affirmed to the Ottoman Empire in the history of Turkey is rooted in *Millî Görüş* legacy. In other words, the heightened sensitivity to this historical past stems from a political vision. The way of sharing knowledge of the Ottoman legacy, the sense of attachment as affirmed by community members sometimes take a form of sacralization, idealization, exemplarity. The reproduction of Turkey's past contributes to the construction of "Turkishness" through which attachment to the homeland is also reinforced. The interpretations of the Ottoman past generate signs of "transnational nationalism" with links to history.

Our interviewee, Deniz (44 years old, Germany) affirms to know well the Ottoman era, thanks to the seminars proposed by Osman Nuri Topbaş at the community: "Regarding the history education, we follow the school of Osman Nuri Topbaş hodja (*hoca*) in our community" he says. Asserting that all historians are not "real historians", he thanks the community responsible for offering them such possibilities. Our interviewee Demir (25 years old, France) says that he learned a lot about the history of the Ottoman Empire at community activities: "On Friday evenings, we have talks (*sohbet*) for young people. We are always given an example from the Ottoman Empire to understand today's world. Progressively, we acquire knowledge about our past. We learn how the Ottoman era represented a good lifestyle... There was no discrimination... Those who wanted to live according to their religion could have done so... Christians had practiced their religion at the churches. There were no banks, no interest rates. When our hodjas explain these things, we dream of such a world. How would it be great if it can be revived." The words of Mehmet (France, 50), too, can be read as the reproduction of *Millî Görüş* ideology: "We want to resuscitate the Ottoman Empire, we say. But how? In Turkey, we have an economy based on the interest rate. People are free to buy alcohol. The same is true of gambling. Nobody cares about the issue of adultery. How could one revitalize the Ottoman Empire under these conditions?" The representation of the Ottoman Empire refers, in Mehmet's words, to a Turkey where adultery, alcohol, interest rate, gambling are prohibited. My interviewee affirms vehemently he appropriates the National Vision ideology and criticizes the AKP for pursuing a liberal policy.

During a Quran recital (*Maide-i Kuran*) held in France, a well-known speaker of the community would say: “We, as a community, have never forgotten Çanakkale (Dardanelles). We now read letters that had been left to us from that time and they show the incredible loyalty of our ancestors to the Prophet Mohammed. Our ancestors said: Çanakkale is impassible. It’s true. We didn’t let our enemies cross beyond Çanakkale. But unfortunately, we could not prevent the installation of *Çanak* [satellite antenna], a source of misfortune for all of us”. Indeed, the connection he made between Çanakkale and *Çanak* consists of a play on words. *Çanak* means a satellite antenna in Turkish. The speaker refers in fact to a Turkish television series "The Magnificent Century" (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*) which is based on the life story of Ottoman Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent. The mentioned historical fiction television series had an unprecedented international reputation, namely due to its broadcasting in about forty countries. It is this television series, broadcasted through "satellite" (*çanak*) that the community responsible names "magnificent shame" cursing "our glorious history". The satellite, in his example, is an instrument to diffuse "misfortunes". "What they show there are not our ancestors", he said.

Sultan Abdülhamit II is another sultan of the Ottoman Empire that *Millî Görüş* followers will surely have heard about. On an occasion, Sultan Abdülhamit II would be the principal subject of a historical anecdote where he is represented as a statesman who “never signed a state document without having ablutions”. But also, “the caliphate of Ummah”, Sultan Abdülhamit II will be represented as a statesman creating employment opportunities for thousands of people. The promotion of the sultan concerns both spiritual /religious aspects and material achievements¹⁶. In another community program, the character of Sultan Abdülhamit II is called by Mustafa Mollaoğlu, a member of the religious education unit of the community. After having mentioned his role in the Supreme Council of Religious Affairs in Austria (*Avusturya Din İşleri Yüksek Kurulu*) as "president", he would consider his responsibility as a "legacy from his grandfather, from Sultan Abdülhamit II".

Mehter (Ottoman military band) programs tend to revitalize a particular aspect of the Ottomans and to introduce ancient traditions to younger generations. The rituals of the *Mehter* team are realized by a team dressed in traditional costumes. We can also observe that

¹⁶ YILMAZ, Tomris Ozlem, “Vision Nationale”. Religion, nationalisme et politique chez les Turcs de France et d’Allemagne, PhD thesis prepared at Paris IV Sorbonne University and defended the 26th January 2018, p. 374.

people are usually excited to hear *Mehter* melodies, take pictures, or record the show on their phones. Moreover, some mosques of the community in Europe (the Emir Sultan Mosque in Berlin or the Mevlana Mosque of Offenbach) have a “*Mehter team*”¹⁷. It is also possible that *Mehter* programs are realized by professional groups arriving from Turkey. As a result, they have effects on strengthening ties with the country of origin. For example, a *Mehter* team from Yenişehir municipality in Bursa arrives in Brunswick, Germany to participate in a community program. On the website of the municipality, are noted the participation of some community leaders (i.e. Secretary General Bekir Altaş and president at the regional level, Davut Toklu) as well as the presence of the Consul General of the Turkish Republic in Hanover¹⁸. One can underline that the participation of Turkish Republic’s officials in *Millî Görüş* activities has a juridical background: In Avril 2013, a year later the AKP ruling, Abdullah Gül, Foreign Minister, diffused the circulation (n. 3846) to Turkish embassies abroad, where it is underlined that the “National Vision” community in Europe is not a dangerous organism, that its activities must be supported by all Turkish embassies and that Vision national should be invited to the official programs of delegations.

On the other hand, one can take note of situations where *Millî Görüş* as a transnational community appears to be an actor in the spreading of *Mehter* programs. Hayrettin Akgöl, a man who presents himself as the first founder of a *Mehter* team outside Turkey underlines the encouragement of *Millî Görüş* in the creation of a *Mehter* team in Australia in late 1994. “It was through the initiative of Australia's National Vision community that we were able to create such a team. We're an independent team. But they ["National Vision" community] guided us, they allocated classrooms for us. We owe them our gratitude. We also play for their community festivals”¹⁹.

The reference to the Ottoman Empire can be made without evoking the political. For example, during a conference entitled "Methods for founding a peaceful family", a community responsible lays out an image of an "Ottoman mother". According to legend, an "Ottoman mother" buys a decorative painting and hangs it on a wall. When her husband sees

¹⁷ www.igmg.org/tr/haberler/yazi/berlindeki-bayram-soeleninde-guencocuklarindi.html?_html=.html

¹⁸ « Yenişehir Belediyesi Osmanlı Mehteri Almanya’da konserler verdi » [Mehter ottoman de la municipalité Yenisehir a donné des concerts en Allemagne], www.bursa-yenisehir.bel.tr. <http://www.bursa-yenisehir.bel.tr/main/haberdetay/yenisehir-belediyesi-osmanli-mehteri-almanya-da-konserler-verdi/1208>

¹⁹ YILDIZ, Candan, « Bir fantaziye olarak Yeni Osmanlılık ve Mehter Takımı » [Neo-Ottomanism and the Ottoman band as a fantasy], www.t24.com.tr, 20 mai 2012. En ligne. <http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/candanyildiz/bir-fantaziye-olarak-yeni-osmanlilik-ve-mehter-takimi,5143>

the decorative painting for the first time, he says he doesn't like its location. "It would be better to hang it on another wall," he says. This sentence makes the wife very moved. "You have been my husband for so many years. How I could not have felt that" she replies. The speaker turns to the audience and says: "Think about it. That's what being an Ottoman mother is." We can assume that the "Ottoman mother" is characterized here by her ability to sense the emotions of her husband. The community thus conveys the formation of the perception of the Ottoman Empire.

The signs of (trans) nationalism that can be also found in "symbolic historical-national reminders" can also be observed outside of the community life: a migrant can receive from Turkish Airlines reminding "[our] glory at the Battle of Dardanelles" for the 101st anniversary of the Battle of the Dardanelles; can receive a letter from Turkey in 2015 with stamps on which it is noted "the 100th anniversary of the battle of the Dardanelles". These stamps issued by the Turkish National Post Office (*Posta ve Telgraf Teşkilatı*) would remind a migrant of Turkish origin in Europe, a historical reference, even if it sometimes attracts little attention. All the same, community members can search for benefits from the government's diaspora politics. Oya (Germany, 35) plans to learn about the gastronomic culture of the Ottoman Empire and applies to a program implemented by "Presidency for Turks Abroad and Turkish Speaking Communities" (*Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akrabalar Birliği*) to obtain financial assistance for her project. Her ambition is to take courses on the Ottoman culinary culture with her colleagues in Istanbul and to transmit her knowledge to her students back home in Hamburg. In these types of examples, the "history" variable does not emerge initially/mainly in community activities.

Impacts in the host countries

The "history" plays a role in the representation of Turks in host countries too. The research carried out by Nilgün Tatal on the forms of representation of Turkey in the French press shows that Turks are often represented with links to the Ottoman past; that the ethnic roots and cultural identity of Turks are searched in the Ottoman Empire²⁰. Accordingly, Rome and Byzantium influences in the Ottoman Empire serve Turkey to stand by Europe and be distant from the Eastern world. The French press uses the Ottoman Empire to refer to the

²⁰ TATAL, Nilgün, *Söylemler ve Temsiller. Fransızlar Türkleri Nasıl Anımsıyor ya da Fransız İmgeleminde Türkiye* [Speeches and representations. How do Turks or Turkey imagine by French], Ankara, Phoenix Éditions, 2006, p. 266.

father of the National Vision ideology, too: “Erbakan has the ambition of a caliph. [...] He has the ambition to be the commander of the believers. Erbakan fulfills one of his old dreams, remakes Turkey on its Ottoman roots due to its militant Islamism”²¹. The analysis of the representation of Turkey in the French media at the time of the World Cup in 2002 refers, often erroneously, to the Ottoman Empire²². On the other hand, *Millî Görüş* Islamic Community is called by politicians in host countries with links to the Ottoman Empire, too. In autumn 2020, after the dissolution of the Grey Wolves Organisation in France, Marine Le Pen blamed *Millî Görüş* Islamic Community for being pro-caliphate and asked for its dissolution in France. Without any tangible proof-explained argumentation, politicians’ representation of *Millî Görüş* Islamic Community reinforces all the same political discourses of French nationalism.

Our interviewee Saniye (Germany, 45) considers the references excessively made to the Ottoman Empire are the affirmation of Turkish nationalism: “We are indeed nationalists. My daughter who was born here feels more Turk than me! This is related to the fact that our children feel like the grandsons and granddaughters of the Ottomans’. Especially the boys... They always carry a sign of *tuğra* (signature of the Ottoman sultans) on their back. Besides, I think that this obsession with the Ottoman Empire and speeches such as “they don't like us because we are Ottomans [*biz osmanlıyız*]”, etc. play a role in the failure of boys at school. [Do you think this attachment is being built in the community?] Yes. When I came here twenty years ago, I said to my audience: take a look around you. One day you will all become family members. And I was right, it did realize. The daughters and sons of the first-generation migrants got married to each other, and then the grandsons and granddaughters got married to each other. Imagine, in Spain, there was an Islamic civilization for 800 years; it lasted even longer than the Ottoman Empire. They were all of Arab origin, but they have been assimilated over time, you can't find them anymore. If our community does not exist, Turks may risk having a similar future. So I think yes, the fact that we're in our community, or the discussions [*sohbetler*] affect nationalism. But I also think that excessive nationalism is linked to ignorance and that is not good.” Aylin (Germany, 25) is not opposed to the idea of nationalism if it refers to history: “Mevlana says: 'to know yourself, look at the people around

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

²² VANER, Semih, « Le poids de l’imaginaire turco-ottoman : le cas de la Turquie lors du dernier mondial de football » (The weight of the Turkish-Ottoman imagination: the case of Turkey during the last World cup), *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, n° 4, 2002. En ligne. www.iemed.org/.../le-poids-de-l-imaginaire-turcoottoman---le-cas-de-la-turquie-lors-du-dernier-mondial-de-football

you'. Mine is very mixed: Hindu, Buddhist, Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Syrian... and I love all these people. You have to be human first, not nationalist [*milliyetçi*]. I am of Turkish origin, this is my past. There had been bad things in the past too, like Maraş and Sivas massacres. However, we need to see the good things: it was the Ottoman Empire that welcomed the Jews when they were burnt by the Christians. Certainly, I can be a nationalist when it comes to this past! But if God wanted it, I would have belonged to another nationality".

The Ottoman past is recalled in everyday life. Ceren (Germany, 18) develops ideas about the Ottoman Empire due to her education at *Millî Görüş* and reconstructs her "Turkishness" *vis-à-vis* "Germans" through her perception of the Ottoman Empire. She says, "The Germans don't have a history they can be proud of. They have no love for the homeland. We have the Ottoman Empire, which stood for 600 years. My friend's mother, Emine, is teaching classes on Ottoman Empire after the Friday talks. She drew maps for us, etc. It was good at first but then we got bored because it was a Friday, etc. It only lasted a few months. However, it prompted me to read a book about the sultans of the Empire. But I still don't know this story well, and it's a bit shameful". Aliye (Germany, 23 years old) claims to "have learned something about the Ottoman Empire" thanks to the community's Islamic college, opened in 1986 in Germany: "Apart from our Koran classes, they teach the history of the prophets, the era of the four caliphates, the Emevi, the Ottoman Empire. I find them useful because in German schools they teach history from their point of view. There are huge differences from the real story. They don't even teach us the Ottoman Empire." Zubeyde, listening to our interview with Aliye, would intervene in our conversation precisely at this moment, and say: "Especially when they talk about the Ottoman era, they represent us as Arabs. They don't even say Turks!".

The "Procession of Amen" (*Amin alayı*) is another community activity proposed to *Millî Görüş* sympathizers in the host countries. Different explanations exist, concerning the meaning of *Amin alayı*. In an encyclopedia of Islam, it is explained as a ceremony that had been held on the first day of a prince's school, where the Sheikh al-Islam, professors, the grand vizier, the military judges, and the captains of the navy had gathered. The ceremony had begun with the prince's march. The prince had a walk to the throne, had kissed the bottom of the sultan's robe and had sat down on a sofa placed between the throne and Sheikh

al-Islam". At the end of the prayers, Prince had joined his hodjas²³. In his book "Prince's Education in the Ottoman Empire", Cevdet Kırpık notes that the "Procession of Amen" precedes *Bed'i Besmele*. Amin Alayı is described as a march escorted by professors, a group of students and other participants to the location where the Bed-i Besmele ceremony will be performed. During that time, one hears prayers, religious songs (*ilahiler* in Turkish) that end with "Amen".

As a part of the socialization process at *Millî Görüş*, *Amin alayı* is claimed to be experienced in the same way as it had been held in the Ottoman Empire. The program called *Bed-i Besmele - Amin alayı* seeks to awaken a historical spirit throughout the Ottoman Empire. Yet, the impact of such programs is not only linked to the reproduction of Turkish nationalism. There is some impact regarding the appropriation of host countries, too. These kinds of programs have impacts on motivating children in their educational path. It has psychological effects too when it comes to the confidence of children. A community responsible would affirm: "Subconsciously, they think they are being valued. It's good for their studies. And they think they have to be a good man." The "Procession of Amen" was realized at Eyüp Sultan mosque of the community in Lyon, for the first time in 2014, for children who start school that year. One can hear the teacher say: "You have grown up; you have become first-class people. You are going to school and say it out loud! Tomorrow you go to school; when your teachers ask you your names, are you going to do that [the teacher makes a shy gesture]? No, you are going to introduce yourself with confidence and say "My name is Ensar; my name is Fatih, Bilal [...]! Have confidence in yourself. [...] You will be the astronauts, the teachers, the policemen, the nurses, the pilots, the doctors, the theologians of tomorrow!"²⁴

Reference to the Ottoman Empire can be advanced to emphasize that "Turks are tolerant", allowing us to underline another element of Turkish transnationalism. Regarding conflictual subjects implying host and/or home countries, one can often hear the sentence "we must think about the friendship that lasted for centuries in the Ottoman Empire and believe that any problem can be resolved through our faith and our love". The roots of tolerance are

²³ BOSWORTH, C. E. *et. all.*, *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*. Nouvelle édition établie avec le concours des principaux orientalistes par, E. van DONZEL, W. P. HEINRICHS et CH. PELLAT. Assistés de F. TH. DIJKEMA et Madame S. NURIT. Sous le patronage de l'Union académique internationale. Tome VI. Livraison 111-112, Paris, Éditions G. -P. Maisonneuve / Larose S. A, 1989, p. 853. It is noted that such a procession for school had been held for Abdülmecit (the eldest son of Sultan Mahmut II) in 1832, when he was 9 years old.

²⁴ YILMAZ, Tomris, "Vision...", *op. cit.*, p. 371.

searched in the history of the Ottoman Empire. Any other approach which tends to shatter tolerance, and by doing so, create problems on learning to live together would “make us forget our cultural codes”. Hasan (France, 33), born in France, feels proud of being a descendant of the Ottoman Empire. He takes pride in his so-called origins. When an Armenian senator addresses his criticism of the Ottoman Empire, he develops a defensive attitude and claims to be a better historian than his interlocutor: "He tells me that he grew up playing football with the Armenians, that he knows the bad experiences that had occurred during the Ottoman Empire. And I tell him that he can't know this story better than I do because I grew up with the Armenians for 700 years! And today two Armenian employees work under my direction at my job." “Ottoman” reference appears to attack the “Other”.

Cultural events with historical reference to the Ottoman Empire attract the attention of my interviewees in the host countries. In Paris, a young leader of the community takes the initiative to organize an outing to see the film "1453: La conquête" (1453: *Fetih*) in a movie theater located in the 10th arrondissement in Paris. On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the birth of the great Ottoman traveler, Evliya Çelebi, the youth branch of the Vision nationale community in Paris organized a visit to the *Institut du monde arabe* in Paris, organizer of the international conference. All the same, in a conference on the childrens' education sponsored by the community, we were given the example of the great Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan. Parents are encouraged to dwell on Mimar Sinan's historical works, especially the Süleymaniye Mosque and its acoustic system. The “Ottoman” call on a cultural basis can be noticed in the affirmations of Serap (Germany, 19), as well. Her future husband must be educated in an "Ottoman way". When we ask her what "the Ottoman way" means, she answers: "Be attached to our traditions, to our customs, I mean".

The way in which the Ottoman past is reconstructed cannot have room in the public sphere. As an element of a group's identity construction, it is not translatable to the political language of host countries; it cannot be politicized in a productive way. Even the religiously-based demands may have been put forward to be realized. When the community seeks for the construction of a mosque, for instance, dialogue and negotiation process may take place both within community members and vis-à-vis host countries' authorities. This can even be an opportunity for some community members to endorse a responsibility; a responsibility that they haven't (otherwise) endorsed if they were not a community member; a responsibility that makes them feel like a citizen in countries in which they live. Yet this is quite difficult to

imagine the integration of the “Ottoman” discourse in the political sphere. The challenge is, one may ask, how to integrate nationalism into citizenship claims.

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