

Of Conspiracies and Men: The Politics of Evil in Turkey

A Dissertation

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of İlyas Karagöz and Şakir Albayrak.

Abstract

This project is an ethnographic study of the belief in conspiracy theories in Turkey; a growing conviction that an insider evil agent is stirring the harmony and unity of society. Based on fieldwork in Northeastern Turkey, where belief in conspiracy theories are prevalent and a folk festival of evil power expulsion is celebrated, this project asks: what are the cultural and historical roots of believing in conspiracy theories?

Once religiously dominated by Christian Orthodox, Northeastern Turkey, in particular the Trabzon province, became the hotbed of suspicion of Christian and non-Muslim “others” in the mid-1990s—a suspicion that continues today. Portrayed as the propagators of deeds disrupting the community, these agents of conspiracies are inquired as to where they could be hidden (inside or outside the society) and how their actions could simultaneously be visible and secretive—creating a parallelism vis-à-vis the legitimate authority. I view this conspiratorial perspective on par with Trabzon’s costumed celebration of the New Year, called Kalandar—a theatrical reenactment of the expulsion of a monstrous evil being. Kalandar’s ambiguous origin, Greek or Turkish, animates the tensions within Trabzon’s ethnic and religious identity and provides the folkloric ground for the appeal of conspiracy theories.

The resulting ethnography sheds light on the increasing references to conspiratorial powers in Turkish politics by drawing attention to the conspiratorial thinking in Trabzon, one of the strong voter bases of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP). Kalandar, from its costumes and reenactments to its relation to historical religious conversions and state violence, provides a lens for its participants to

interpret the concept of a nation that they imagine to be in constant defense of “insider conspiratorial” threats.

This project contributes to the field of political anthropology through an ethnographic analysis of the belief in conspiracy theories, tracing its roots to folkloric expressions of the memory of past violence. This project further contributes to a novel understanding of xenophobia, not as the fear of an outsider imagined as a threat to the “nation”, but rather as a suspicion about a community’s imagination of itself that is reflected on others as evil conspirators.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

“Are you visiting on an ethnic or separatist matter,” asked the secretary at *Kuzey Ekspres* (Northern Express), the liberal local daily of the surprisingly large Trabzon newspaper family. To my dismay, she was waiting for my answer with a sincere grin on her face, shuffling papers in her hands. Why did she immediately want to know whether my reason for visiting related to an ethnic and separatist matter? “Ethnic,” referred to the Greekness of certain Muslim communities in the province and “separatist” signified the Kurds, the purported enemy of national unity and indivisible state.¹ What could be the motivation behind such questioning? Why did was this possible threat referenced not through direct suspicious questioning, but so casually, tucked between the routine of daily chores and sincere greetings.

I told the secretary that my reason for visiting *Kuzey Ekspres* was to interview the daily’s editor, Hasan Kurt. I sought his opinions, as Trabzon had become the hotbed of conspiracy theories, especially those narrating the evil agendas of non-Muslims. In Kurt’s office, I inundated him with questions: Why did conspiracy theories surface almost in every conversation in Trabzon? Why do Greeks and Armenians, the former inhabitants of Trabzon, frequently partake in these theories? My questions barely caused Kurt to flinch; he stopped me with a hand gesture. Apparently I was asking “parochial questions” (*yetersiz sorular*), as Kurt corrected me. “Let me tell you the truth about what has been

¹ “Existence and the independence of the state, indivisible unity of the country, and the unconditional sovereignty of the nation...” is the defining motto of the republic in the Turkish constitution, according to which the Armed Kurdish struggle therefore becomes a direct attack to its foundation. Separatist, or *bölücü* in Turkish, thus refers to the utmost dangerous political character.

happening in Trabzon, so you can convey it to your professors,” said Kurt conceitedly, leaning on his desk—a precursor to a monologue ending our conversation. He started with a burning question that he believed was lacking among my own: *Who* is inciting these theories in Trabzon? In Turkish he asked *Trabzon ’u kaşıyanlar kim* which literally means, “who scratches Trabzon,” a metaphor implying an irritating and burdensome thing that resides underneath the itchy surface.

Not the content of the truth which Kurt claims to reveal, but his conviction in his ability to reveal conspirators’ true agendas has animated this research. This conviction of revealing the full truth, as seen in Kurt’s reaction to my question, is activated with the presupposition that knowledge about the other is inherently parochial—parochial because of the other’s evil and power-ridden intentions. What activates this paradox of the belief in one’s ability to reveal the wholesome truth, while suspecting that the other could obstruct one’s access to full veracity? Who could be those that incite Trabzon as to make it attend to conspiracies and even sometimes to commit violent crimes? Greeks and Kurds, as Kurt’s secretary implied? If so how did these two sources of threat, one outsider and one insider, coalesce? In seeking answers to these questions, I ethnographically map what Kurt hinted at the outset of his revelation: the epistemology regarding evil others that are believed to incite a province and, beyond that, the whole Turkish nation. How could a community (a village, a town, a province, a nation, etc.) sustain its sense of unity and sociality while conditioned by the bad intentions of an evil other?

This project is thus a study of the communal incorporation of the evil other. Yet this ambitious topic comes with its own challenges: How does this evil other rise? Where does it reside? What enables it to stay at bay in the community and yet remain in enough proximity that its evil intentions diffuse profusely? Needless to say, these are questions contemplated by any community, collectively and, as I will discuss, on an everyday basis, even sometimes with elements of communal fun and entertainment.

1) Contemplating the Communal Thing

Ilyas Karagöz, an amateur historian who lives in the village of Yazlık, in Trabzon's mountainous district of Maçka, has been the major actor in contemplating his province's past and folklore—a seemingly innocent endeavor that has changed Karagöz's relationship with his fellow villagers and his province. When I visited the village of Yazlık to meet Karagöz in the summer of 2009, I was first told that I should refer to the village as the Maçkalı do, *Livera*, not Yazlık. Was it unique for the same village to have two distinct names? Not, exactly... Virtually all village names in northeastern Turkey were changed to more Turkish-sounding substitutes during the years of Turkification in the 1930s. Local inhabitants had been using the original names for centuries and preserved these names of various unknown etymological origins. *Livera* historian Ilyas Karagöz was most interested in this topic.

Karagöz wrote two books, *Etymological Origin of the Trabzon Townships and Villages*, (2006) and *Black Sea in Mythology and Folklore* (2007). He had lived in *Livera* since childhood—similar to all but seven families in the village, who migrated to *Livera*

after the Greeks' deportation in 1924. During his time in Germany as an immigrant worker a burdensome feeling of homesickness brought him to a public library in hopes of finding a picture book on northeastern Turkey since he could not read in German. He was given Jacob Fallmerayer's renowned books on Trabzon history (2014 [1923]), in which he saw the name of his village, Livera, but could not decipher a German word. Pictures in the book rekindled images from his past, but these were not memories that he could easily articulate; they unexpectedly "appeared before his eyes" (*gözümün önünden geçtiler*, as he told me in Turkish). Thus he decided to learn German, which would dramatically help his research when he was deported due to a serious lung disease and sent back to Turkey with a generous retirement pension. He spent almost all of his pension money on books in various languages and converted the second story of his house into a library and study. A "burning passion to learn about his village, province, and its peoples" (*içimi yakan öğrenme aşkı*) made him contemplate a personal and communal history simultaneously—of Livera, Maçka, and Trabzon. Since childhood, he knew that his family was not from Livera, nor were all but seven families, who all Liverans called "the natives" (*yerliler*).² How did Liverans become Liverans against the background of this history, Karagöz inquired. Livera was not an "imagined community" in Benedict Anderson's term (2006) for it became a Turkish village almost overnight, nor had its folkloric traditions, which I will describe in detail, been invented under the regime of the modern nation-state, as Ranger and Hobsbawn wrote about nationalism and folklore (2012).

² I later learned who the Liverans call natives are not "true" natives. Since Livera was a village of migrants from neighboring districts, settlers from other Maçka villages to Livera are called natives.

The etymological origins of village and family names,³ the history of crumbling chapels and churches, the houses that once belonged to Greeks, and the cobble-stone paths that were later dismantled for construction purposes... all of these could provide answers to Karagöz's questions about Livera's past. Yet the more Karagöz revealed about his village's genealogy, the more Liverans distanced themselves from him; in return, Karagöz's resentment against his fellow villagers grew, and he confined himself to his study with his books. When I visited him for the first time—the beginning of our collaboration—Karagöz had already stopped visiting the village teahouse, where all village men went everyday. Liverans thought of Karagöz as a respectable man of knowledge, yet warned all outsiders, including me, to beware of the knowledge which he proliferated. Karagöz, according to the Liverans, was Greek-crazy (*yunan hayrani*). What dangers could an allegedly philhellenic knowledge cause? A particular folkloric celebration of the New Year called *Kalandar* was the primary content of Karagöz's knowledge and work.

Kalandar: The Coldest Night

The night of January 13 in the local folkloric calendar marks New Year's Eve in Trabzon, and also the end of the coldest time of the year known as Kalandar. Kalandar, however, is not only the name of a frigid climatic period (roughly between mid-December and mid-January), but also the name of the last (and the first) month of the

³ Inspired by Michel Meeker's ethnography which highlights the ubiquity of family names ending with *-oglu* (similar to suffix *-son* in English family names) as a marker of clan identity in Trabzon, Karagöz worked on family name genealogy to narrate the multi-ethnic and multi-religious past of his province.

year, or the month of the Old Woman (*Kocakarı Ayı*) as used in the local parlance. This month is considered a temporal void between two times, which cannot pass on its own—human intervention is required to put time back on its course; otherwise malevolent intentions may affect the new year to come. The name given to this human intervention is also Kalandar, which consists of theatrically performed folk skits. But how are these malevolent intentions embodied materially and why do villagers fight them with a theatrical ritual?

Karagöz never asked the questions above. He had rather a straightforward conclusion about Kalandar, which became the reason of our major disagreement. Since the beginning of our collaboration (mostly on etymology and translations), he viewed my research on Kalandar as an “easy task” (*kolay iş*). For Karagöz, everything was clear about this Livera-unique New Year’s celebration: It was a Greek tradition passed to Turks. Although I was on the same page with Karagöz in terms of the need to recognize Greek heritage in Livera, I remained dissatisfied with his conclusion about Kalandar—and so did the majority of Liverans. They therefore repeatedly asked me about the accuracy of Karagöz’s studies, particularly about those related to the origin of Kalandar, which was a gateway for me to introduce my presence in the village. After my second winter trip back to the village in January 2011, I was already named the “Kalandar researcher,” which happened unintentionally thanks to my collaboration with Karagöz. Thus, I was placed as a liaison between Liverans and Karagöz, who held different views of what Kalandar could be, and hence, what it meant to be a Liveran. For a long time Liverans had remained indifferent towards the ethnic origin of Kalandar. Yet with recent

studies, including Karagöz's own, they seemed to lean in favor of the ostensible Turkish origin stories. Despite my impartiality to any origin story, I was pulled into this tension-ridden debate on the root of Kalandar and the significance of being a Liveran and Trabzonlu more broadly. Why was it pressing to claim a (ethno-religious) communal origin for a folk celebration? If Kalandar indeed passed to Turks from Greeks, why was it the only Greek folkloric tradition that the Turks adopted? How did it survive in Livera, while it died in virtually all other villages of Maçka? Invariably, the Liverans' answers to these questions diverged from both Karagöz's and mine.

Karagöz's homesickness in Germany has stimulated what he calls "the passion to learn", which forced him to contemplate the past of his family, hometown, and being a Liveran. Liverans, I believe, have been doing the same, as we will see in detail, and share Karagöz's perspective. The major difference between the two sides is the embodiment of Livera proper. Karagöz interprets "Livera," and Trabzon through his creation of historical and etymological knowledge, but for Liverans, such as the editor of *Kuzey Express*, this extent of historical clarity on communal identity can only coexist with "a large dose of bad intentions" (Viveiros de Castro 2014: 74). Liverans, as we will see with the Trabzonlu as well, contend that bad intentions erupt when too much intentionality is at stake. Why do Liverans act cautious about historical revelations pertaining to the communal locale and the past? Why do they see bad intentions in these memory narratives, most of which they relate to an evil agency? The evil figure in the Kalandar folk skits will help connect the narration of the past and bad intentions of the present.

Enter Karakoncoloz, the monstrous hybrid creature that is believed to wander the world during the month of Kalandar. Some accounts describe it as a creature between man and animal (wolf, bear, ox, sheep, etc.) arriving by boat from the other side of the Black Sea⁴; others argue that it hails from the underground (Emiroglu 1989, Asan 1994, Ozturk 2009). Yet all of these stories agree on Karakoncoloz's reason to walk the earth during winter: to terrorize humans and cast fear on them in a time when all guarantees of nature and culture are frozen. A time that entails a human intervention, that is, the expulsion of Karakoncoloz from human premises in order to reestablish order.

Liverans have mastered the re-enactment of Karakoncoloz during Kalandar; disguised in various costumes, they call themselves Karakoncoloz, and Kalandar is sometimes referred as the "Karakoncoloz play". Why is it necessary to re-enact an evil creature in order to expel it from the community? Karagöz, the Liverans, and I have had various, and at times, conflicting answers to this question. Yet we all agreed that Kalandar expulsion skits stand out as the focal point of this celebration. Thus both the tension surrounding the origin of Kalandar, whether it is Greek or Turkish, and its skits (a folk theatre of the expulsion of a chaos-culminating hybrid monster who attempts to kidnap a bride) shaped the structure of this project's narrative. Kalandar is thematically organized around conspiratorial thinking (about the evil other), state power and sovereignty (decision over who is to be expelled), and kinship and masculinity (men, brides, and kidnapping); all of which, I argue, have constituted the Trabzonlu's sense of sociality.

⁴ I have never been told where exactly Karakoncoloz sails from. Neither a geographical name such as Russia, Ukraine, nor a folkloric realm has been given.

As seen in Karagöz's and other Liverans' ways of contemplating and embodying their community, what constitutes this sociality varies. How can this variation be studied, particularly when there is disagreement on the essence of communal identity? I suggest, following Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, that priority should be given not only to an anthropological description of the Trabzonlu's form of sociality, but also to their concepts, such as "Kalandar," "Livera," "Karakoncoloz" and "conspiracy" as anthropological forms (2014: 192). While engaging with the formation of "us" (the Liveran, the Trabzonlu, Turk, etc.) and the other (Karakoncoloz, the Greek, the Christian, and so on), I rely on ethnographic and oral-historical narratives that I have coproduced with the Trabzonlu, including the folklorists and amateur historians who have long thought and written about the province. My contribution to our sometimes purposeful and sometimes inadvertent conversations would not have been possible without my placement of the Trabzonlu's ways of social formation in dialogue with philosophical and anthropological writings. In order to demonstrate the variation of perspectives on sociality, this project, following again Viveiros de Castro, "focalizes at the conditions on the ontological self-determination of the collectives" (2014: 43)—a focalization that builds its foundation on the perspectives of Liverans and the Trabzonlu—along with my own and those of local folklorists—particularly on the topic of Kalandar.

The discussion of a folkloric celebration that stands central to the constitution of communal identity has contributed, as might be expected, to the incorporation of the ethnic and religious, particularly the Greek and/or Christian, other.⁵ Considering the past

⁵ Historically located as a port city at the Silk Road's opening to the Black Sea, Trabzon has always been the home of various religions and ethnicities, hence always under the gaze of political power. This city with

ethnic and religious violence in Trabzon (clashes among various groups, mass killings, and religious conversions),⁶ this has never been a startling social phenomenon—especially when Turkish nationalism’s equation of ethnic Turkishness with Sunni Islam is taken into account. Beginning in the late 1990s, this incorporation of the other, however, has taken a new turn: a Christian other has now become the agent of bad intentions, or plans (*planlar*)⁷, as commonly used in the northeastern provinces. How did this view of the other, as evil and constantly conspiring, come into being?

its access through the Pontic Alps, which passes through Maçka, witnessed the rule of three different outsider political powers since the medieval times. The first recorded sovereign rule reached Trabzon after the Fourth Crusade pillaged Constantinople in 1204, the eastern capital of the Roman Empire. A branch of the dynastic family, the Komnesos, fled to the province (*theme*, in Roman) of Chaldia’s capital, Trapezus and then established a branch of the Byzantine Empire, known as the Greek Empire of Trebizond today. Even then the region was under the incursion of the nomadic Turkic tribes, yet the Komnenoi ruled until the expansion of a Turkic tribe evolved into an empire, the Ottomans. When the city fell to the Ottomans in 1461, the rural Greek Orthodox populace had already migrated to the highlands in order to survive the insidious invasion of the Turkic tribes, particularly the Cephni, who infiltrated the Greek state from the western coastal plains. The epic of Turkic tribes, by the poet Dede Korkut (Sumer and Uysal 1991), narrated circa 1200s, had warned these tribes against the wild mountain people of Trabzon.

⁶ Despite the forced exile of the ruling Byzantine dynasty, the Ottoman rule in the province recognized the extant rural territorial reign of local Greek lordships (*bandas*) and granted the rights of the three major monasteries, all of which located in Maçka (Perestroika, or Kustul in Turkish, of which only ruins remain; Vazelon which still stands but not available for tourism; and Panagia Soumela, or Sumela in Turkish, functioning as a museum and also hosting symbolic Christian Orthodox mass since 2010). Yet, as the historical scholarship demonstrate, the Ottomans applied their central ruling method of replacing local lords with new outsider (from as far as Albania) rulers by assigning them existing fiefs (*timars*, in Turkish) (Lowry and Bryer, 1996). This sovereign replacement was executed with permission granted to Muslim migration to the province and mass conversion to Islam. As the meticulous Ottoman taxation books showed, Trabzon was nonetheless dominantly Christian until 1924—the year that marked the third and final political power change in the province after a long period of warfare, WWI and what the newborn Turkish Republic named the *War of Independence*. The War of Independence ended with the declaration of the Turkish republic in 1923, following the withdrawal of the occupation forces, which fused elimination of the Greek Orthodox—a history that is still remembered in Greece today as the Asia Minor Catastrophe. One side’s catastrophe was another’s foundational national pride and independence, which resulted in a tragic final episode. The Lausanne Peace Treaty mandated one of the largest population exchanges in modern history. Turkey and Greece agreed to swap Christian Orthodox and Muslim populace in certain regions in their territories—excluding Istanbul and the two islands in the north Aegean in Turkey. It was 1924 when the Greek Orthodox of Trabzon were given 24 hours to leave their property—a deportation that left behind ghost towns, empty hamlets and churches, and abandoned fields and cattle. This violent vacuum of populace thus enabled the young Turkish nation-state to mold a new society, often despite the will of local communities.

⁷ When Trabzon was under the scrutiny of national media due to the increase of violent crimes in the province against the non-Muslims and non-Turkish ethnic groups, the famous folk singer Ismail Turut

Nationalistic thinking, one might argue, is a principal reason for this mental transformation; and Trabzon has long been known as a hotbed of Turkish nationalism. As historical studies show, however, the province has never had a purely supportive relationship with the central authority; quite the contrary, it has always been a region of clashes against political power (Bryer 1975, Yerasimos n/d, Hur 2010).⁸ How and to what extent has the nationalistic ideology of the state overlapped with its citizens' view of "us" and the other? Despite their commonalities, my goal in this project is to point out the radical differentiation between state and civilian perspectives of communal identity, hence sociality. I argue that this difference manifests in two variants of conspiracy theory, the paranoiac verions of the state, and everyday version of the Trabzonlu..

Social meaning, created by communal identification via the shortcut of the evil other, interests the "inherent essence" of the community (Zizek 2008: 27), inasmuch as the threatening outsider. Rendering this communal essence tangible, however, is not an easy task. According to Slavoj Zizek, the evil is glimpsed when it is socially transformed into a mythic threat and kept at a secure distance—yet only when a "permanent state of emergency" is maintained within the community (ibid). This permanent state of

released a single titled "Don't Dare to make Plans" (Plan Yapmayin), which immediately became a hit not only in Trabzon but the entire country. The bridge of the song goes as follows: Don't dare/to make plans/ None of them would work in the Black Sea [Region]/Your days will never come/[Muslim] Prayers will never go silent/ in the Black Sea.

⁸ The Ottoman reign in Trabzon ended during the Great War of 1918, before which the success of constitutional movements in 1876 and 1908 granted universal citizenship to every imperial subject regardless of their religious and ethnic background. Reaching this period, however, was not seamless, and the conflicts, not only between local landlords, but the landlords against the central Ottoman rule, had stirred even the rural areas of the province. When the last local ruler's, the *agha*, revolt was brutally suppressed in 1832, a wave of nationalist movements had already hit the shores of Trabzon. The imperial rule against local lords was then consolidated due to the ethnic and religious conflict of nineteenth century Trabzon: a rising Greek orthodox urban elite, an intellectual cadre of Armenians and Turkish constitutionalists, rural Muslim communities petitioning to be re-registered as Christians—who claimed to be crypto Christians for centuries—and the lynching of Armenians in 1894 marked the century in Trabzon.

emergency against the evil other, as the logic of conspiracy theories in Trabzon will show, thus grants the evasive inherent essence of communal being its most material form. Yet again, I see a differentiation between the realization and experience of the “permanent state of emergency” from the civilian’s point of view and from the supposedly non-evil power locus, namely, the modern state.

We have already seen how any cultural and historical revelation aiming to materialize this communal “thing” may permanently raise suspicion, and is thus considered as an attack at the very foundation of the community. My relations with Liverans and Karagöz, and with experts such as the *Kuzey Ekspres* editor Hasan Kurt, have stood at the center of this multi-layered game of suspicion. Despite their conflicting thoughts, Liverans, Karagöz, and even Hasan Kurt seem to have sensed that this materialization of communal essence, especially with claims of historical and political revelations, cannot be an innocent effort as such—or “without bad intention,” to use Viveiros de Castro’s term. Their reasoning, despite the core differences, shares a logic: historical revelations of controversial topics are political actions, not only because they vocalize the possibility of reaching the full truth (about folklore, local past, and so on), but also because they signal that the capturing of a communal essence entails an exercise of power, specifically a permanent state of emergency (or “exception” as I will use in Chapter One and Three, referring to Giorgio Agamben’s theories on sovereignty), over which the modern state claims absolute decision-making and control. The Trabzonlu’s conspiratorial thinking, however, along with Karakoncoloz folklore—a materialization of power that can operate only with bad intentions—will demonstrate how the modern

state's paranoia, and thus its version of capturing the communal essence, functions vis-à-vis the civilian understanding of sociality.

2) The Pontic Threat

The persecution of writer Omer Asan, and the banning of his folkloric collection, *Pontic Culture* (1994), was an incident that publicized not only the relevance of the evil other in northeastern Turkey, but also the state's paranoia related to the matter. *Pontic Culture's* publication coincided with the National Security Council's (NSC) declaration of the "Pontic Threat," a name for the increasing risk cast by external and internal groups and individuals propagating the so-called Pontic Greek state.⁹ This odd coincidence led to a public stigmatization of Asan's book, which in a purely descriptive fashion covered the tales and songs from Asan's Pontic Greek (Romeyka or Rumca, both meaning Roman, in local parlance) speaking village, and the linguistic structure of this language—a process resulted in his book's banning and his persecution. In the summer of 2009 when I met Asan in the office of the publishing house he later started, his 1996 persecution naturally

⁹ Certain scholarship has related NSC's paranoid thinking to the then domination of military personnel in the council, who had been major actors in Turkish politics since the dictatorial rule of the late Ottoman party of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). The CUP was the leading party of the 1908 constitutional revolution, but its lack of control in the parliament incited military cadres to lead a coup d'état in 1913. The same cadre organized and implemented the Armenian Genocide in 1915. The constitutional revolution of 1908 brought a spirit of liberty and universal citizenry to the furthest corners of the empire. Yet, this era ended with the 1913 coup that forced the Ottoman Empire to partake in WWI as an ally of the Central Powers—an era of warfare that yielded the Russian occupation of Trabzon in 1916 and the Ottoman defeat in 1919. The collapse of political power brought nothing but violence: in response to the irregular Turkish forces fighting against the French, the British and the Greek occupation, in southern and western Anatolia respectively, the militia in northeastern Anatolia, particularly in Trabzon, targeted the Christian population, who were believed to be supporters of the Greek occupation and planners of the Pontic Greek state revival that was once established by the Byzantine Greeks.

directed our conversation. Asan remarked on something substantial: he was undecided as to whether the stigmatization of his book was initiated by spontaneous popular fear or by the systematic paranoia of the state. This remark provoked the major questions of Chapter two and three: What activates the contemplation of the other as evil agent? Who or what has the license to embody this conspiracy theorist agency?

In addition to these foundational questions, Asan has provided me with invaluable knowledge related to the relevance of the malicious other in Trabzon. Two sections in his book have struck me in particular: one covering witches (Cadi, or cazu in the local dialect), and the other about a man-animal hybrid creature called Karakoncoloz. Both are listed under the title of folk belief (*halk inanislari*), and described as evil beings that could terrorize humans. When I conveyed my curiosity to Asan, he found my interest rather amusing, and even irrelevant. What *is* the relevance of this nearly vanished folklore if one's goal is to understand conspiracy theories? Although Asan has called his work a naïve folkloric and linguistic collection (*folklorik bir derleme*, his words in verbatim), I view it as a substantial attack on the foundation of the state's ideology that has long been reiterating the pure Turkishness of the Northeastern peoples. Pontic culture is alive, and Asan has documented its vitality.

Why has Asan been publicly targeted as someone at the service of a Greek conspiracy? *Pontic Culture*, in my perspective, implicated a correlation between the folk beliefs in evil beings and conspiracy theories, but never addressed this bond clearly. Both its introduction of Trabzon folklore and its banning by the state has rendered *Pontic Culture* a gateway for this project to examine how the search for the evil other takes place

on a fluid ground—with multiple actors and their overlapping and divergent perspectives on the nature of this evil. The escalating number of violent crimes perpetrated by the Trabzonlu, in the meantime, has further complicated this fluidity.

Evil in Flesh and Blood

The killing of a priest by a teenager at the Latin Catholic church¹⁰ in 2005 positioned Trabzon at the center of media attention. Crimes against Christians took a new turn after the murder of Armenian-Turkish journalist, Hrant Dink—the editor of the Istanbul-based bilingual weekly *Agos*. Dink’s murder turned the attention to Trabzon again as the murderer was a 19-year old youth from the province, who traveled to Istanbul in order to commit his crime in broad daylight on a busy street. He later testified that he murdered Dink because the latter’s activist journalism aimed at the public recognition of the Armenian Genocide, which has long been denied as a crime against humanity in Turkey. For Dink’s killer, this was an unpardonable plot against Turks. Ahmet Kulekci, a columnist writing for various Trabzon-based daily and weeklies, told me that the killer’s motivation was not unfathomable. “He is from the poorest neighborhood of rural migrants’—an easy pawn to deceive and use,” Kulekci declared during a conversation. “But Dink’s murder and the killing of the Catholic priest are not the first cases,” he reminded me. Kulekci was right; during the mid-1990s, local dailies reported on protests against the presence of visiting Christians and the vandalism of

¹⁰ The Latin Catholic Church of Santa Maria, built in 1874, virtually functions only as a historical site, not a religious temple, hence there is no congregation and only one clergy at service.

preserved Christian sites not only in Trabzon, but also in neighboring provinces. In 1997, for instance, a large group of protestors in Trabzon barred a cruise carrying the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Istanbul Church from docking (Kuyas 1997). The protestors firmly believed that this trip was aimed at more than a simple visit to the ruins of the churches and monasteries. In 2005, a group of men searched the highland woods in Trabzon's neighboring province, Rize, in the east. Carrying torches in the middle of the night, they were searching for Orthodox priests hiding in the woods (Dundar 2006). Both groups were suspicious of secret religious conversions to Christianity. In the 2000s, national news outlets reported on cases of discoveries by local Karadenizli ("black sea people" in Turkish) of Christian conspiracies: for instance, the dormitory of a Quran recital school had a pattern of a giant cross on its façade (Kacar 2010). The ornamental, lighthouse-like watchtower with a large vertical balcony, built adjacent to the Trabzon's first shopping mall, evoked, for some, a colossal cross plunged in the heart of the city (n/a 2008). The balcony was removed.

Unlike Karakoncoloz, this ubiquitous, yet evasive conspiring power does not confine its visibility to a specific time; but in a similar fashion as happens with Karakoncoloz, the latter too has to be detected while executing its plan (for Karakoncoloz, it is bride abduction) and dislodged immediately by means of a communal intervention. Notwithstanding the xenophobic tone of these conspiracy theories, their engagement with an evil agency signals the saliency that forms of power (folkloric, modern political, and so on) take in the constitution and the sustenance of communal life.

The unity of folk-ritualistic and legal-political engagement with the agent of malicious power, along with conspiratorial thinking, was perceptible in the lives of two Liveran public workers. In his late 20s, Kalandar organizer Okan worked at the small welfare program office in the government building in Maçka City. Okan's office, shared with another Liveran *petit*-bureaucrat called Şakir, became a central station during my excursions to surrounding villages. Okan's father was the imam of Livera's central mosque, therefore he was a reputable and respectable man in Maçka.¹¹ Moreover, both Okan and Şakir welcomed any conversation to break up their dull work shifts—our conversations consisted of the obvious Kalandar, local history, and the ancient, arguably Greek, past of Maçka, which had long intrigued Şakir.

Despite being a *petit*-bureaucrat, Şakir had an entrepreneurial spirit that was strangely inspired by ancient texts, such as Hesiod's "Works and Days" and Xenophon's "Anabasis: The March of the Ten Thousands." Backed by Karagöz's theories, Şakir firmly believed that the highland spot from which Xenophon and his mercenaries had seen the Black Sea—a sign of their survival—was just above Livera. Why not use this historical narrative to start a hiking/camping route that would follow the footsteps of the ancient mercenaries? Okan and Şakir took this idea to nation's capital, Ankara, but then received a letter of disapproval from the National Military General Commandership, stating that a project of this sort, whether for recreational or tourism purposes, could not be implemented due to the Greek origin of the story. The letter also explained that one of

¹¹ Okan's father seemed to be a controversial figure, as I heard from other village imams in Maçka, for he accepted Kalandar as "folk entertainment" (*halk eğlencesi*). Other Maçka Imams I talked to, on the other hand, considered Kalandar as non-Islamic (*İslam'da yeri olmayan*) heresy and a Greek tradition (*Rum adeti*).

the ancient peoples the Greek mercenaries met on their way from Mesopotamia to the Pontic Alps could have been Kurds, which thus could help support the Kurdish Movement's thesis of their millennia-old presence in Asia Minor. Şakir, Okan and many others in Maçka asked why and how an ancient narrative evoking the presence of the non-Turkish peoples of Asia Minor could be perceived as a threat by the state forces. This obstacle set by the state against a local entrepreneurial effort further intrigued the Liverans, and the Maçkalı in general, about their local past. The letter ensured them that the tourism potential related to ancient past in the region had to be reconsidered. Once the gates of contemplating the ancient past are opened, however, the recent past too will flood out in a motion reminiscent of Benjamin's angel of history, who flies backward to the future while looking back to the past.

A local tourism funding office was located at the center of this flood of memories. Ruins of monasteries and churches in Maçka should attract people, according to the office clerk, Isak Karagöz. Isak was a key figure who wore many hats: he organized Kalandar with Okan, he was the nephew of Ilyas Karagöz, and more importantly, he was an active member of the local branch of the right-wing extremist Nationalist Action Party, MHP. Isak stood at the intersection of a variety of men: The Kalandar players of Livera, public service clerks and officers, unemployed youth that he approached to enlist for the youth brigades (*Ulku Ocaklari*) of his party. Hence, I found myself in three locations of Maçka men almost everyday: Şakir and Okan's office on one side of the main street in Maçka City, Isak's on the other side, and the central tea lodge where I gathered with Isak and his friends. While the topic of Kalandar dominated our

conversations, I deliberately understated the matter of the Greek past though we frequently dissected the topic during our conversations. My presence as “Kalandar researcher” became relevant as I was expected to contribute in the endeavor to make it a “touristic festival”—as Isak kindly and sheepishly asked one day. Despite its alleged Greekness, Kalandar seemed to shine as an unrefined gem for the vague term “tourism potential” and a “pure Turkish tradition,” as I would later frequently hear from Isak’s entourage. The purity of Kalandar, however, would be put in question, as we will see in detail, when a band of Greeks from Greece first visited Livera in 2009 to participate in the festival. The tourism potential anchored in the region’s past had brought back ghosts, but how did the Greeks know about the Liveran Kalandar?

Locating a seasonal ritual theatricality on its main axis, this project focalizes on how the powers of the other are perceived and managed—with aspects enabled by Trabzon’s local past and present politics: Kalandar, the widespread suspicion of Greeks, the changing nature of political power and sovereignty, and kinship and masculinity. Two politico-philosophical analyses of sovereignty via theatrical expression have animated this project’s take on a folk play: Giorgio Agamben’s brief discussion of European folk rituals of werewolf expulsions (1998), and Soumyabrata Choudhury’s study on the bond between theatre and the triad of sovereignty, power, and truth (2013). Simply put, as Chapter one will further examine, Agamben defines sovereignty, via Carl Schmitt, as the sovereign’s decision of the state of exception, namely, who to exclude from the law (and so from society and culture) and who to include in it. He sees the proto-carnavalesque

European festivals as ritualistic and playful banishment of a figure (stuck between the domains of human and animal, that is, culture and nature) from the livelihood of humans. Agamben therefore asks: where does this sovereign gesture of banishment get its license? And more importantly, what place does the sovereign occupy in this socio-political play? Agamben's answer for the first question takes its subject matter to the genealogy of the Roman legal category, *homo sacer*, the sacred man who can be slain with impunity. His answer for the second, namely that the sovereign resides both inside and outside the law and society, interests this project most because of Trabzon's geographically peripheral but politically central position rendering this province salient in the eyes of the central political power.

Choudhury, on the other hand, asks the crucial question that seems to be lacking in Agamben's theorizing of the link between sovereignty and the theatrical re-enactment of sovereign decisions of expulsion: How and why has theatricality been so central for sovereignty? Choudhury draws on an archaeology of liturgy. Following Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies*, Choudhury repeats the former's question (2013: 4): What would be the historical and structural material remains of the King's *body politic* centuries after the body of the sovereign is rarely a single corpus? Choudhury suggests delving more into the political and theological success of Christianity in the West—a success that springs from the unity of “the Christian basis of earthly power or sovereign basis of political Christianity... declared as homogenous, indivisible, perpetual, imprescriptible, absolute” (ibid).... This concept of the absolute, Choudhury writes, becomes politically possible thanks to early Christianity's borrowing of, and yet staying different from, the

Roman legal theory and Greek theatre that is essential for the political and social life of the polis.¹² The latter, as Choudhury explains, becomes the basis of liturgical traditions, which embodies “the life of a *res publica*, of the public ‘thing’ or ‘substance’” (2).

Ancient Greek theatre provides the form that enables the embodiment of this public thing, for theatrical expression of sovereign rule of the public liturgy, in Choudhury’s terms, involves “a *search for truth* in and through the medium of bodies and congregations.”

I interpret Kalandar -- to a certain degree in agreement with Karagöz and other folklorists (Ozturk and Asan in particular), who underscore this event’s roots in Orthodox Christianity and Greek folklore -- as a ritualistic play creating a sense of community “in and through the medium of bodies and congregations.” Embarking on the socio-political roots of this communal theatricality has required this project to investigate conspiracy theories, engagement with state sovereignty, and the relevance of kinship—elements of the Trabzonlu’s “search for truth” enabling them to touch the communal thing that helps them contemplate who and what they are and are not.

3) Overview

Chapter one seeks answers to a large question: how is a community sustained by their dependence on the existence of evil others, especially a community that identifies with their livelihood though a history which constantly reminds them that they were once

¹² According to Choudhury, Christianity succeeds at its mission of becoming an absolute religion “without any explicit imperial legal intentions (as with Romans) and without civic forms of political organization (as with Greeks).

outsiders, and that they are the reason for their livelihood's original inhabitants' dispossessions and deportations.

The first chapter extensively deals with Kalandar as ritual; first, by tackling the initial faulty presumption that Kalandar is a celebration. As its masked and costumed players put it, Kalandar is not celebrated, but simply *done*—with all aspects of a ritual performance. It is done at a specific date, with a predetermined content and roles, in a seasonally repetitive fashion, and more importantly, as a “liminal” stage: that is, it is done between temporal domains, namely between the end of the year, and the inception of the next.¹³

Despite its clear, ritual-like qualities, the acting phase of Kalandar seems to diverge from these ritual qualities. One of these divergences, as mentioned above, is the inherently playful element. Kalandar's players' namesake, *Karakoncoloz oynayanlar* (those who play Karakoncoloz), clearly hints that what is *done* is also a play (*oyun*). This playfulness is perceptible over two stages: first, during the bride kidnapping skit and, second, the during the finale when the Karakoncoloz players and the rest of the Livera residents converge in order for the latter to laugh at the costumes and guess the identities of the disguised. I discuss this ritual-cum-play character of Kalandar in reference to Victor Turner's theory of celebration; for he locates it at an impossible distinction between play and ritual, and debates whether it reinstalls the social structure or suspends it temporarily.

¹³ Done on the night of January 13, Kalandar marks the end of the 12-day period during which evil in the form of Karakoncoloz terrorizes the earth. This time in the local folklore is called “The time of Karakoncoloz.” Folklorists such as Ozturk suggest that the term Kalandar is derived from the Roman/Byzantine *Calendae*, the beginning of the year, hence calendar in English.

Another divergence from the ritual frame is the utmost irregularity of the costumes. They are all prepared not more than a day in advance. The most crucial character, Karakoncoloz, who used to be enacted only in animal skins, now rarely appears with physical features of animals. Karakoncoloz players have explained this crucial lack by reminding me of the task attributed to Karakoncoloz. As long as it inspires fear and terror, any costume arrangement can easily turn a player into Karakoncoloz. Indeed a player enacting a drunkard can become the evil hybrid creature. This flexibility with costume choice, I believe, has affected the name of the players. They are all now called Karakoncoloz regardless of their roles in the skit. How has the name of the evil and fearsome being in this folk play become the generic name of all players? How do Kalandar players and the entire Liveran community so easily embody the dualities in Kalandar—a folkloric event strict with timing, but absolutely indifferent to costumes; strictly ritually done, but also playfully elastic; fearsome by the re-enactment of expulsion and animality, but also entertaining to a degree that it stands alone, as I will discuss, in its ability to unite the entire community?

The appearance of unexpected guests at Kalandar first in 2009 and then again in 2011 changed the significance of the event, not only for Livera, Maçka and Trabzon, but also for this project. Descendants of the Greek deportees of 1924 showed up on January 6, 2009 to celebrate what Liverans used to call their own tradition. Some villagers welcomed the Greeks who appeared in elaborately prepared costumes accompanied by a band of dancers who were in charge of the banishment of the evil hybrid being, Karakoncoloz. The Greek variant of Karakoncoloz, however, was not one but three: one

player dressed as the devil with a black cone-shaped hat, the second, the alms-sack carrier disguised himself under a sheep skin, and finally, a wolfman dressed in a monstrous looking costume. While these three created chaos and attacked the bride-costumed player, the dancers surrounded them before their expulsion. In a surreal fashion, three Turkish youth from Livera performed the expulsion by circling a rope around the mischievous three. The participants of the scene all seemed to enjoy the moment. Imagine the scene: descendants of Turks who settled in an abandoned Greek village were ritually expelling the descendants of deported Greeks, who were disguised in costumes symbolizing monstrous beings. Not every Liveran reacted to the Greeks' style of Kalandar in the way of the aforementioned youth. Some refused to participate alongside Greeks, others did not participate in the Greek Kalandar but celebrated "their own Kalandar" (kendi Kalandarimiz, as they later told me) on the night of January 13, the night Kalandar is traditionally celebrated. When I visited Maçka for the first time in the summer of 2010, the district abounded with conversations discussing the origin of Kalandar and whether Greeks would come back again.

Thus, chapter one not only explores these conversations, but also local folkloric writings, particularly that of Karagöz, on the nature of Karakoncoloz and similar beings that are depicted as animal-like characters to be banished from the community. By asking who and what constitute Livera, the Kalandar-doing community, and by drawing on scholarship to examine the historicity (Ginzburg 2004) and ethnological bonds (Duerr 1987) of Kalandar-like rituals/plays, I shed light on how fighting the evil other is reenacted. In so doing, I argue that miming what is believed to be evil in a bodily

performance allows us to rethink our understanding of collective memory, mourning and community.

Chapter two examines the overlapping of the Greeks' timely reappearance with already extant conspiracy theories that speak of the powerful agency of Christians and Christian sites—particularly Greeks (and Armenians to a certain degree when the controversial Armenian Genocide becomes an international hot debate.) It appears clear that the region's past helps the Trabzonlu contemplate Christians and Christians' presence (mostly for touristic or clerical reasons) as conspiring evil powers, but then how does one explain the conspiratorial logic that encompasses political (left-wing) groups and other ethnicities (Kurds) that had no historical connection with Trabzon? Answers to this question, as Chapter Two argues, require questioning the position of the other when belief in conspiring evil powers is at stake. Does the other always show us its full representation as empirical other (such as Greeks, Christians, Kurds, etc.)? Engaging with this theoretical question, chapter two draws on the anthropological scholarship that has tackled non-Western forms of knowing and explanation that invoke evil powers: witchcraft. In revisiting the canonical studies such as that of Evans-Pritchard (1976) and Max Gluckman (2006) and bridging them with scholarship on contemporary cases of witchcraft (Siegel 2005), Chapter Two aims to demonstrate why conspiratorial suspicion of the other should be examined along with the other's binary position of being both external and internal to the self. Recent history of violence and conspiracy theories in Trabzon enables this bridging by considering the proximity of the other: sometimes as the

past embodied in abandoned churches and monasteries, sometimes as a political threat (leftists, Kurds, etc.), and sometimes as the return of the Greeks.

Cases of conspiracy theories in Trabzon and increasing suspicion of Greeks' presence in Maçka animates Chapter Three's main question: how does conspiratorial thinking perceive of the major powerful agent, namely, the modern state? Trabzon historians have written its history as a discrepancy between its peripheral location and its centrality in politics. In this chapter, I therefore ask to what extent this geo-political continuity is sustained in the province today. This question is presupposed by the Trabzonlu's proclamation of being the Turkish city that is the most nationalist and the most loyal to the state, and hence a protector of the nation against any threat within or without. How could such a peripheral province proclaim this political role? My ethnographic encounters have radically contradicted this presupposition and thus reformulated this chapter. It is true that the present-day Trabzonlu are openly nationalist to a degree that can easily be categorized as xenophobic, but the claim of "being loyal to the state," has required me to delve further into the Trabzonlu's everyday engagements with the modern nation-state.

Two perspectives have enabled this ethnographic excursion: a historical ethnography of Turkish modernization focusing on *Of*, another district in Trabzon, (Meeker 2002) and literature on the concept of sovereignty. The former's title, *A Nation of Empire*, hints at the nature of political modernity in Turkey in general and the particular forms it took in Trabzon, that is, the state sovereignty's interweaving with the local populace's sovereignty based on kin and alliance. This interweaving, however, is

uneven and coarse, as the history of Trabzon shows us with the narratives of the local rulers' wars among themselves and their rebellions against the central government. Despite the Trabzonlu's present day claim to be a showcase of loyalty to the state, their violent everyday encounters with the state's security forces, I argue, is a popular way of forging a local sovereignty vis-à-vis that of the state. How do the Trabzonlu pursue this local sovereignty?

Chapter Three answers this question by revisiting the prevalence of conspiricist suspicion and the Trabzonlu's way of disrupting the state's monopoly on violence. Systematic suspicion is a signature of the modern state, writes Talal Asad (2004), which has to pursue its legitimacy in the face of uncertainty that is inherent to its sense of the judiciary and bureaucracy. Following Asad, Chapter Three thus focuses on the positioning of the conspiricist, mostly spontaneous, suspicion on the part of the people vis-à-vis the systematic paranoia of the state. How do these overlap with and diverge from one another? Ethnographic cases of daily conflict with security forces and censure of them as "incompetent" will show us how the Trabzonlu's sense of sovereignty and their historical ability to survive state violence has shaped their perception of the state's power.

After centuries of power struggle between the central power of the state and local groups of kinsmen, serving the imperial and later the national state has rendered the Trabzonlu, as they call themselves, exemplary citizens (*örnek vatandaşlar*). How has a peripheral province, once the victim of state violence and ethnic conflict, transformed itself into the home of the pronounced Black Sea people (Karadenizliler)? Drawing on

the binary Giorgio Agamben discusses (2005) of the dynamic between example and exception, Chapter Three traces the interaction between Trabzon's local past with political violence (in the form of state violence, rivalry and battles among kin groups, and rebellion against the state forces) and its present day relationship with the sovereign qua nation.

Understanding this interaction requires revisiting Kalandar, which solidifies the quintessential components of the sovereign gesture: banishment (Agamben 1998) and bestiality (Derrida 2009), as exemplified in the expulsion skit of Karakoncoloz. After demonstrating how elements of fear and fun can intermingle, Chapter Three will close with snapshots of how the Trabzonlu's forging of a local sovereignty can become a form of entertainment in opposition to the solemnity of the stately sovereignty.

Chapter Four focuses on another element of the Kalandar skit, the bride-kidnapping, which is used as a vantage point to examine a major limitation during the ethnographic research of this project—the inability to access the accounts of marriageable age women—as a focal point to understand the bond between masculinity and sovereignty in Trabzon (Meeker 2002). Following Marilyn Strathern's critique of the anthropological perspective that views the ritual domain and the socio-political domain in strict distinction (1990, 2011), particularly pertaining to gender roles, I argue that the dominance of men in Kalandar and female seclusion in Trabzon should be analyzed together.

As for bride-kidnapping, once a common tradition in northeastern Turkey, Michael Meeker provides the historical relevance of this practice by emphasizing the

local power relations' dependence on it. Decades after the publication of his work, this practice of establishing kin networks is now a crime, but how do Trabzonlu men and women today experience and sustain the patriarchal sociality that inheres in gender and age-based seclusion for women and the value placed on female chastity? What social practices have replaced the bride kidnapping that was once a vital aspect of family building and alliances with other kin groups? How has the sense of sociality been sustained after its vital elements are now under the control of the judiciary and state security? Readdressing the bride-kidnapping skit in Kalandar with the lens provided by the Deleuzean perspective of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2004, 2010, 2014), which suggests a rethinking of the anthropological understanding of kinship and marriage, Chapter Four thus seeks answers to these questions.

CHAPTER TWO: A Celebration of the Evil

After drinking cup after cup of tea together, I found myself staring in disbelief at Okan's description of what was to come in the following days. A *petit*-bureaucrat and my primary contact in the Trabzon town of Maçka, Okan explained that he had spent most of the morning on the phone scrambling to organize a costumed event that would take place in three days. On the night of the event this man, sitting at a desk cluttered with welfare applications, dressed in a mundane suit and tie, would soon be clad in a wolf skin, howling on his neighbors' doorsteps. This was not Okan's first time organizing Kalandar—a celebration of the New Year on January 13th. Three generations ago this peculiar celebration was widespread in the northeastern Black Sea region, but it has since disappeared in most of the surrounding villages (Samuilidis). However, in the inland mountainous Maçka district, one village continues to passionately celebrate Kalandar.

As I was listening to Okan's multiple phone calls, I realized that I had been making a crucial mistake during our conversations: not once did Okan refer to the Kalandar as a celebration. He emphatically repeated in each phone call that Kalandar was something “to do,” (*yapmak*) not “to celebrate” (*kutlamak*).¹⁴ Not only was the verb “to celebrate” never used, but neither was the term “festival” (*şenlik*) while Okan and his villagers invited friends and families to organize the event. If not a festival nor a celebration, then what could this costumed and masked play of the New Year's be?

¹⁴ “To celebrate” means *kutlamak* in Turkish. The verbal stem, *kutla-*, originates from the etym *kut*, and is also the etym of sacred, *kutsal*, a term invented after the language reform of 1920s. The etym *kut* refers to reproduction and livelihood according to Nisanyan Etymological Dictionary. See <http://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?k=kut&x=0&y=0>

When I asked Okan and his fellow Livera villagers about Kalandar, their initial response was that it was “an adult play” (*yetişkin oyunu*) and a “tradition” (*gelenek*)—implying that it is an annual event that is both *played* and *done*. Yet through my participation in three years of Kalandar preparations, I could not extract a strict set of costumes and preparations that could be collected and categorized under the heading of “folklore”. In each of these three different Kalandar plays, the costumes were arbitrarily chosen, the players rarely performed the same role twice and the preparations never started until 1 or 2 days before the Kalandar night. Despite the sloppy preparation of the event’s essential elements, Kalandar was still an annual occasion for entertainment that brought the entire village together; the event was ‘for fun’ (*eğlencelik*), as villagers repeatedly told me. It was also a tradition—not a local one, but a *Turkish* one. In contrast with other nationalistic rituals performed in exuberant detail, rigor, and symbolism, Kalandar was playful and spontaneous; yet, paradoxically, strict with its timing and the content of the skit. Moreover, it was an event of fear and chaos, most notably re-enacted with a mock-fight when the harbinger figure (disguised in animal skins or acting a drunkard) attempts to kidnap the player acting as the bride.

Thus Kalandar is an event oscillating between an improvisational play and a strictly scheduled traditional ritual re-enacting the expulsion of whom, or what, is in charge of bringing chaos and causing fear in the community. How and why do these dual elements, such as fear and fun, order (restored by the re-enactment of a man-animal, bride-kidnapping creature) and chaos (caused by a community’s festive tradition) become crystallized within a folk play? What are the political implications of these dualities? This

chapter will seek to answer these questions by exploring various territories—one of which is Livera's local past and its relations to other Maçka villages. This oral-historical archaeology aims to excavate Liverans' rigorous communal attachment to Kalandar, albeit their improvisational ways of doing it. What are the relations between communal identification and the banishment of an evil man-animal creature?

In addition to the local past and Kalandar, another territory this chapter ventures into is the essence of communal identification. What constitutes it? How is it manifested? A theoretical language benefiting from the historical and social context that Livera, and in the larger extent Trabzon, provides, I believe, could help us explore this communal essence. Turkish folklore literature (And 1962, 2007; Asan 1995, Duman 1969, Elcin 1961, 1962; Gedikoglu 2008; Karagöz 2009; Ozturk 2005; Samuilidis 1991), ethnological (Duerr 1987) and historical documentation of winter folk rituals engaging with evil-beings (Ginzberg 1991), philosophical writings focusing on temporality and bodily rituals (Deleuze 1995, Eliade 1971) and memory (Freud 1990b, Zizek 2003b) form the body of this theoretical language—with the help of which I aim to illustrate not only the Liveran's formation of their community, but also to map their perspective on the creation and sustenance of their communal being.

Livera is a Sunni Muslim community, yet, it celebrates the New Year with folk plays that are unknown to any other Muslim community in Turkey. Over the course of my three participations in Kalandar, I have observed that the event has the power to bring the whole village together—a village that was once strictly divided over religious difference, war, land disputes and vendettas. What is the significance of a folk play like

Kalandar considering the past political and communal violence that resides in the background? The Kalandar night and Karakoncoloz skit could provide answers to this question and further complicate the presence of supposedly conflicting dualities.

1) Messy (Karışık) Things

Kalandar Night

On the night of January 13, 2012, Okan drove us to the village where everything was almost set for Kalandar. While the skit players were putting on their costumes, I waited in the old tea-lodge opened years after its abandonment, where I finally found the opportunity to ask why the event was not called a festival. The players responded with gestures of disapproval and told me that such a title was never considered. A retired police officer, Salih, explained in a joking manner, “Once again we are doing our Kalandar, fulfilling our tradition (“*Gelenegimizi yerine getiriyoruz*”). The Greeks should be proud of us!” When we were all about to start laughing, one young Kalandar player man who had just entered the tea-lodge scolded Salih: “[Elder Brother] Salih, don’t make my mouth spit curses!” Salih retreated as if nothing unpleasant happened; he smiled and seemed to enjoy his tea. When I asked him about “his thoughts” he said I caught him *unprepared*, but nonetheless he responded in his ever-joyous manner, “I think the mission (“*misyon*”) of bringing younger and older generations together has been accomplished.” I did not press on further to learn what exactly he meant by *misyon*, for he probably wanted to keep his answer to my question short after being scolded by a 22-year-old youth in a

costume. Yet, his comment was, in fact, quite *well prepared*. What could “the mission of Kalandar” really be? According to Salih, it marks the New Year and the union of different generations. But how would this mission make Greeks, the past people of the village, proud?

Despite this mission of Kalandar, the villagers’ preparation for the event did not seem to be meticulously planned. Kalandar was held on Friday night, but as late as Thursday villagers started calling possible players who could bring the costumes, face-paints and a *kemençe*¹⁵ player. In the tea-lounge the group of five was now adorned in costumes of a bride and groom (both enacted by men), an old man carrying a heavy cow-bell, a drunkard whose head was wrapped in a bandage with blood stains, a sack-carrier in charge of collecting the alms from the visited houses, a soccer hooligan (played by Okan), and finally a giant anchovy costume which was the mascot of the youth Olympics held in Trabzon in July 2011. The two latter figures were contemporary and out of the folkloric context. One of the organizers of the night, Isak, who was wearing the old man costume, expressed his disapproval of these two costumes all night long, “What the hell do a soccer hooligan and an anchovy mascot do in Kalandar. Okan, what you are doing has no place in the script!” Script? When I asked Isak what he meant by the “script,” he told me that his aim with Kalandar had been to follow a script for the skit that they would perform during the house visits. Defensively, Okan said that soccer hooligan was the only thing he could find to disguise himself. “Isn’t being in guise the main point with the Kalandar?” he rhetorically asked. Remembering the pictures from the earlier Kalandar

¹⁵ A stringed bowed instrument, Black Sea kemençe is a folk instrument of northeastern Turkey. Brought by the deportees of the 1924 population exchange, the same instrument is known as a Pontic lyra in Greece.

plays, I asked whether a wolf-man player was a requisite. Their answer was no; the man who owned the wolf skin could not attend the event this year. “The whole idea is to scare, start a mock-fight, and have fun,” Okan answered while painting his face black. “You can scare [people] as you are,” he further added.

Despite the tension over the costumes, the house visits began. The purpose at every house we stopped at was to induce as many household members as possible to come outside for the dance. While the members of each visited house were trying to guess who the disguised players could be, they found themselves amidst a mock-fight. According to the skit, the fight starts when the drunkard tries to abduct the bride, yet the reaction to this act comes not from the groom but from the old man with the cowbell. With this scene the skit suddenly evolved into a mock-fight during which the other two players dragged the men of the house into the chaos. The mock-fight ended as suddenly as it started, and the household showed their appreciation for the performance with simple alms such as nuts and fruit—or occasionally with cash.

Salih wanted to keep the night going, and although the players seemed to enjoy their performances, the more Salih persisted the more the players seemed to get weary of the repetitive skit. At one point, they complained when Salih wanted to take them to three more homes. Skipping those three visits, we drove back to the old tea lounge—a gesture I thought would finalize the event, but I was wrong.

When we reached the public-square like open space next to the village church-turned-mosque, we saw another band of costumed players. At the encounter of two different Kalandar bands, the rule mandates a fight for the sacks full of alms. Neither

side, however, was up for the confrontation. I later learned that it was simply because of the existence of women in the opposing group.¹⁶ Nearly the entire village poured into the square, men started shooting their shotguns that dueled with pistols exploding from the other side of the village. Women seemed to be more interested in taking pictures with the costumed youth and guessing who could be under the masks or the face-paint. Contrary to my expectation that the whole night would be exclusively for men, the feast with alms started in the old tea-lodge with the village women, who stayed only for thirty minutes. The rest, men from various age groups, stuffed themselves with nuts and apples from the sack, while chatting about anything but Kalandar. By midnight, a young man brought in a bowl of boiled corn (it was stored for winter) called *Koliva*, the traditional dish of the Kalandar night.

Originally *koliva* was preserved during summertime and left outside at the house's doorstep to keep Karakoncoloz at bay—the monstrous being that was once believed to stroll through the village during the 12-day period before the Kalandar night. The skit with the wolf-man during the 13th night was an intervention to expel Karakoncoloz whose malicious intent included abducting and attacking souls that were alone out in the dark. Today the name of this creature is only used in regards to the Kalandar players, and the belief in its existence and the necessity to sacrifice food for it has been abandoned for the last two generations. Whereas the Kalandar tradition has disappeared in virtually all Maçka villages, it survived in Livera, but how? With these questions in mind I visited the other “most beautiful village” in Meryemana Valley. One

¹⁶ Apparently, I was wrong with my initial thought that Kalandar was exclusively for men. I will further elaborate the gender related tension, particularly from the perspective of village men and masculinity in chapter 4.

of these two villages is obviously Livera; the other is Larhan, both of which have been constantly given to me as the loci for a proper Kalandar research. Livera is the locale of the festival, but when I asked the relevance of Larhan for my research, the Maçkali's reaction was univocal: "Because it's a beautiful village."

It Is a Messy Village, That Livera

The village of Larhan, or Akarsu as it is officially called in Turkish today, is one of Maçka's most prosperous villages, yet the population is declining. Since many of the village youth and families work in Turkish cities and abroad, during winter Larhan is practically deserted, like many other highland Trabzon villages. This socio-demographic shift, however, brings certain advantages for ethnographers. The elderly villagers tend to stay in their hometown because of their resentment of urban life and affection for their village's natural beauty. Therefore a reserve of oral history informants can be found in these villages. But there is a drawback. Since the village youth have been organizing and performing Kalandar, their absence also means the absence of Kalandar.

My expectation that I could obtain detailed information about Kalandar and Karakoncoloz in Larhan failed immediately in my first conversation. When I asked about Karakoncoloz in a Larhan tea-house, the collective reaction was at first first blunt stares, then the question: "Kara-what? Never heard about it."

It was 75-year-old Yusuf who provided an explanation: he had never heard of anything like Karakoncoloz in his village, neither as a hybrid monster nor as a figure to scare children in tales. When I asked about Kalandar, Yusuf seemed to consider my

question somewhat peculiar. “What about it?” he asked. It was the name of the first month. But it was not January, corrected the other teahouse regulars immediately. It was the month from January 13 through February 13 in the Gregorian calendar. Yusuf provided a straightforward explanation: the 12-day difference was because of the transition from the old Ottoman Rumi (Julian) calendar to the current Gregorian calendar.¹⁷ My inquiries about Kalandar—not as the night of skit performances and fun, but as the first month of the year—elicited more curiosity from the teahouse patrons about my research intentions. I briefly explained Kalandar and its celebrations, and told them that in their neighboring village, Livera, Kalandar stood not only for the first month, but also for the New Year’s Eve skits. When I further explained the costumed play, the teahouse regulars collectively dubbed it *momoyer*—or *momoyeros*, the Greek name given to all New Year’s Pontic folk plays.¹⁸

¹⁷ Although Ottoman modernization switched first from the Islamic Lunar calendar to the Julian, and then to the Gregorian calendar, it long kept March 1 as the beginning of the New Year. It was not until 1917 that the New Year’s Eve celebrations on December 31 became popular.

¹⁸ Hristos Samuilidis, for instance, provides the broadest collection of Traditional Pontic Folk Theatre, of which performances, as he analyzes, reside within the magical qualities of *evetiriakos*, the ancient ritual ceremony that aims to guarantee a good year (1991). The historical categorization of Pontic folk theater that Samuilidis calls *momoyeros* in general, starts with the “archaic epoch,” which was later followed by the Byzantine and New period—the period under the Ottoman rule. Though admitting the difficulty in reaching the archaic sources, Samuilidis categorizes the archaic epoch akin to a medical technique: *homeopathy*. As a technique of healing “with the use of substance that is also the cause of the disease,” homeopathy takes its authority from the “death and birth of nature.” Thus it stands for a “magical intervention” in winter, by means of copying the malevolence it creates. According to Samuilidis this malevolence that is associated with winter resides in the Byzantine era of the Pontic ritual/plays. The most significant cultural impact of this epoch was Christianity becoming the creed of the empire. However, Samuilidis convincingly argues that the immersion of Christianity into the Roman-politeist empire was not easy. An addition of a twelve-day period at the end of the “archaic” Julian calendar was required. With Christianity, the ritual healing of the nature during winter, when the dead were believed to rule the world, evolved into a celebration of the birth of god. Hence an archaic simultaneity of the death and birth gained a new, this time, Christian content. Samuilidis, however, remarks that this transformation into monotheism meanwhile adopted the theatre tradition from the Byzantines. The Byzantine celebration of the New Year, *Kalandes*, with acting and mockery blended into *momoyeros* as to give the latter a satirical quality that involved the mocking of “rulers, citizens, and villagers.” Thus a ritual became a play, as Samuilidis concludes.

I then asked Yusuf the meaning of Momoyer. He did not refer to “tradition,” nor could he provide a concrete definition: “It is the name of that type of entertainment (*eglence*), the name given to those in costumes.” He first mumbled and then described the entertainment and the costumes in detail:

Back then we used to pierce holes in lambskin and make masks out of it. 3 or 4 of us hung up big cowbells. The lambskin-faced players were the momoyer. There was also Kizir and a bride; the former was in charge of protecting the latter. When we visit houses, men from the household would try to abduct the bride. During the abduction poor Kizir pretended to be knocked over and would die or faint. And this is when the Momoyer took the stage: they surrounded the attacker and threatened him to pay or get beaten up. Only after being given alms, would they resurrect the Kizir by poking him with a big needle.

When asked the about the history of momoyer, I received one collective answer:

It was learned from the Greeks. This answer complicated the picture: Two similar winter

With the new epoch, as determined by the period between the Ottoman conquest of Trabzon in 1461 and the Great Deportation in 1923, the ambivalence of the Pontic ritual/play disappeared (169). Pure theatrical satire, Samuilidis writes, replaced the *evetiriakos* and other magical content that had been long forgotten. With the impact of Turkish reign, the satire of the ruler became the main theme and characters such as the feudal lord (*derebeyi*), and the judge (*kadi*) appeared as the harbinger of chaos and mock-terror. Despite the tyranny of the *Derebeyi*, which in the new epoch targeted the player in the bridegroom costume or *kizir* (the village headman’s assistant) and demonstrated the “socialization of the Pontic theater” (*passim.*), Samuilidis suggests that the archaic quality of the *momoyeros* that had redressed the deadness of the winter survived within the skit of *kizir*’s resurrection. In his conclusion, however, he contradicts his own explanation of the genealogy of the *momoyeros*, who appeared in the Byzantine era as religious Roman character, but ended in a pure satirical/theatrical form during the Turkish rule. Thus the intertwining of playful and ritualistic elements in *momoyeros* (or *Kalandar*), disappears in analyses such as Samuilidis’ that which reduces its subject matter in an evolutionary narrative incepting as magic then arriving at the ritual form and finally maturing as pure political folk satire.

plays in two neighboring villages. Both were named after the anthropomorphic creatures that led the skit. Whereas in the Livera, the creature Karakoncoloz was the evil abductor of a bride, in the Larhan play the creature was obviously a protective figure, who was also monstrous and animal-like. In Livera, the mention of Greeks, Kalandar or Karakoncoloz was not favored as seen earlier in the brief tension at the Livera teahouse. In Larhan, however, the Greek origins of the play are publicly acknowledged. More importantly, momoyer plays had been abandoned in Larhan. Brief oral histories could help to interpret these fundamental differences that lay between the two villages.

Local histories that are never told to strangers tend to unfold when one least expects it. In Larhan, villagers rightly asked my reason for “choosing” their village to survey momoyer/karakoncoloz traditions. They had already learned that prior to visiting the village I did not know that momoyer, or momoyeros, were performed in Larhan. I then confessed that I came to Larhan because I was told that Livera and Larhan were the two most beautiful villages in the Meryemana Valley. Thus came affirming nods and raised eyebrows. “True indeed,” said Ismail, another regular of the teahouse, “But here is much prettier than Livera. In every way! First it is located on a plain, not like the hillside houses of Livera. Second, things are not very messy (*karisik*) here. People are relatives. It’s not messy like in Livera,” he continued.

Being members of the same kin is the norm in Trabzon villages and Livera was not an exception—I remember meeting many uncles (father’s brothers) of my interlocutors. But what did Ismail mean by this bold statement; what makes Livera a messy place? Macit, another regular of the teahouse, intervened: “Livera is composed of

the Tonyali and Oflu (two of Maçka's neighboring districts), they migrated there after the Greeks left." I responded:

MA: I remember the separate cemeteries for the Oflu and Tonyali. But both sides insisted on burying their dead near their doorsteps, not in those cemeteries.

Macit: Told you that it's messy there. Vendettas continued among the Oflu and Tonyali for a long while, long after they ended here.

MA: Vendettas?

Macit: Yes, because of the land [abandoned by the Greeks]. There were Greeks here, too, 30 houses and we were 25. The Oflu migrated here as well, but they were all relatives and they adapted the life here.

MA: But I know that there were Turkish Liverans when the Greeks were the majority.

Macit: True, but they were 7 houses or so.

MA: So perhaps new settlers learned Kalandar from the remaining Turks?

Macit: I think the Tonyali know this stuff, maybe it was them who called it Karakoncoloz. Plus, Romeyka spoken by the Liveran Tonyali bears almost 80% resemblance to the Greeks' language.

MA: But when I asked the Liverans about Romeyka, they told me none of them knew the language.

Macit: Nope, they do know the language [grinning cynically].

MA: How about here? Is there any one speaking it here?

Macit: Us old farts know it a bit, but cannot understand the Greeks who visit.

MA: Do Greeks visit Larhan?

Macit: Yes, the second generation [Hellenic] Greeks visit Larhan. They know the exact location of their grandparents' houses and stay here, at our local motel.

According to Larhani men, Livera was messy because it was a village of migrants, but as our conversation above revealed, its messiness was also due to the secretive Romeyka speaking skills of the Tonyali Liverans. Moreover, Macit argued that the villages where Kalandar was not celebrated were migrant villages. Yet Livera, one of the largest of these migrant villages, passionately embraced Kalandar for unknown reasons. For the Larhanli, the explanation of Livera's Kalandar tradition was easy: it was the Tonyali, as their hidden Romeyka language uncovered their alleged Greekness, who were bearers of the Kalandar tradition. The Tonyali Liverans would later furiously reject this claim.¹⁹

Before investigating the Tonyali secrecy in Livera, I decided to visit the district of Tonya first. Located in Trabzon's southwestern inland mountainous district, Tonya is Maçka's neighbor in the south. Yet because of the rugged terrain and forests, traveling between these two districts is only possible by taking a large u-turn first through the provincial capital, then driving by the Black Sea shoreline and finally through the mountains. I scheduled a meeting with a local historian from the well-known Iskenderli village in Tonya—arguably the last village in Tonya where Romeyka is still the

¹⁹ The Larhanli on the other hand do not seem to strip themselves of Romeyka completely, they understand the vocabulary used in Hellenic Greek, though they claim the opposite: when I asked an old man the meaning of a neighborhood's name, *Likomati*, he explained me that it meant the wolf-eye. Lykos (λύκος), he said, meant wolf, and mati (μάτι), the eye. The name was given after a Greek neighbor whose eyes were as deep as wolves.

vernacular language. While waiting for Hasan, a Tonyali historian and folk dance instructor, I explained to the local teahouse patrons about the Kalandar celebrations in Livera. To their surprise, they hadn't heard of anything like that in their village or anywhere else in Tonya. They used to perform Kalandar, but only by throwing sacks on doorsteps, as a means to collect alms. called as *canta atmak*, this was just the kids' way of asking for treats from the village adults. They had no knowledge of a costumed skit like the one done in Livera. And Karakonocoloz? The name did not mean anything at all.

Overtly self-confident, Hasan admitted that he knew about Karakonocoloz and the way Kalandar was done in Livera. Yet in an almost hostile tone he told me that Kalandar in Livera was anything but a Turkish tradition. "The youth organizing it are just Greek wannabes," he said. I responded by saying they were all proud Turks whom I knew closely, but Hasan did not want to talk about it more and warned me not to become part of the plot that conspired to frame Trabzon as culturally and historically Greek. What about those Romeyka speaking Iskenderli villagers? They were all ethnic Turks, just speaking a language with some Greek words in it, he explained—a consequence of cultural exchange (*kultur alisverisi*).

Back to Livera

After my conversations in Tonya, I felt the need to open Liverans up to the subject of their alleged "messiness" and the idea that Karakonocoloz was a Tonyali tradition. First I asked Isak about the violence between Tonyali and the Oflu: "We used to fight them [the Oflu], true," he said. The fight was apparently over, and I thus learned

that Isak himself was a Tonyali as well. But then how could the immigrants of Livera, both Tonyali and Oflu, identify with the village to a degree that they became proud Liverans? Isak suggested that I better direct my questions to his historian uncle, Ilyas Karagöz—also a Tonyali.

Karagöz immediately corrected my assumption: his father was not among those other Tonyali, who occupied the lands of the Greeks; rather he had bought his family's land. Then who were those other Tonyali?

The history conjuring the “other Tonyali” starts in the aftermath of WWI, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed and the emerging Turkish state sought to build an ethnically homogenous sovereign nation. 1924 was an important year for Livera because a decree has been ordered that required Greek orthodox residents to leave their town within twenty-four hours. Until 1924 Livera was a town, not a village. With two large and a number of small churches within its territory, the town was the capital of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis, Rodopolis, and home to approximately 1200 Christians (Karagöz, 2009). After the last Greek family was forced to leave Livera in 1924, Muslim notables from the southern Caucasus who had served in the Ottoman military and subsequent Turkish independent forces were given the abandoned mansions and land plots.²⁰ The town was repopulated with squatters and migrants from the highlands of Tonya and surrounding villages such as Mulaga (Karagöz 2005). The Greek name *Livera* was then changed to Turkish Yazlik.

²⁰ These noble families were from Dagestan and Yerivan. Sultanzade Eyüp Bin Hüseyin, arguably a paramilitary leader with Arab descent, and high ranking officer Hüseyin Bey from Of was also among those given property privileges.

The village migrant's memories, however, indicate that the process of settlement was not peaceful²¹. By peaceful, not only do I mean without quarrels and clashes, but also the peace that the dead Liverans commonly are believed to deserve. Both the village Imam and historian Karagöz told the same story that they heard from one of the early squatters. While the Greeks were packing to leave, landless Muslim peasants from the neighboring villages were already in Livera in search of houses and properties they could occupy. One Turkish man looking for a house in which to settle his family ran into a Greek woman crying in front of her family house. She would have to leave within minutes. In her weeping she was scratching deep scars into her face with her nails—a scene the Liveran Imam depicted while expressing the shock and the pain by showing his nails and rubbing them on his face as though scratching himself—a gesture he probably adapted from earlier storytellers. “She prepared her two cattle as if she were taking them to the highland pasture,” said Karagöz. “However, she let the cattle wander alone, muttering through her tears, ‘farewell my girls, we will see each other in another world.’”

Karagöz has rigorously collected not only personal accounts, such as the above, but also any collective information related to the deported Greeks. Another story he told revealed that the Liveran Greeks had Turkish family names. A revelation intended to highlight the differences between the Greeks and their Turkish neighbors (of the 7 houses) proved that the two groups were almost indistinguishable. One of the Greeks, Şabanoğlu (a Turkish family name), asked his neighbor Ahmet to hold onto his money because the former was concerned about being robbed by bandits who attacked the Greek

²¹ Karagöz writes that “chaos (kargasa) continued” until 1928. Local government left Maçka scarcely populated until this year: “1928 yılına kadar Livera’da böyle bir karmaşa devam edip gider. Bölgede olduğu gibi Livera köyüne de mübadil yerleştirilmez” (2005).

deportees walking from Maçka to the Trabzon port. Ahmet promised to do so, but did not bring the money to the Şabanoğlu family, who was waiting for him at the port and forced onboard a ship to Greece. Karagöz later mentioned that with that money and the material collected from the demolished Greek houses, Ahmet commissioned a mansion and declared himself the new *agha*, the local ruler.

According to the stories Karagöz collected, the properties of Greeks were also the source of fights and even vendettas between the *Tonyalı* and *Oflu*. Five years later, however, a decree by the local gendarmerie announced that the rest of the abandoned Greek property would be allocated to the victims of a flood that swept the district of *Of*. State forces raided the squatted houses and banished all occupiers from the village. Ahmet, the new *agha*, assured the *Of* settlers that the allocated land would be under his protection. The *Tonyalı*, though having been terrorized by the gendarmerie, did not leave Livera; instead they built new huts bordering the woods while waiting to reclaim the land they had occupied before the *Oflu* settlers. The conflict between legal settlers, the *Oflu*, and the occupier *Tonyalı*, meanwhile, led to the rise of another powerful figure: a new *agha* named Mahmut. Camps of animosity and alliance thus emerged: Ahmet Agha and his *Oflu* supporters versus Mahmut Agha and his *Tonyalı*. Mostly fueled by the fights over the abandoned Greek property, this sectarian divide would cause blood feuds and family fights until local government finally intervened in the late 1940s. This communal violence caused the separation of cemeteries in Livera, hence the practice of burying the dead near family homes, as Karagöz explained to me. Yet he also noted that separating

the dead from the communal burial was a rather unusual practice for Muslims (*“Muslumanlik’da yeri olmayan bir is”*).

Putting the dead in their resting places seems to have been a problem in Livera even before the population exchange. While rekindling the memory of his jovial childhood, Karagöz could not avoid recalling a terrifying event: At the age of five while playing with his friends, he coincidentally found a burial chamber next to an old Greek house. As curious as any child would be, he and his friends descended underground. They found an ossuary full of skulls and bones. Village adults tried to calm the children by explaining that it was Greeks’ way of burying their dead, not the Turks’, and they then shut the entry of the ossuary and converted the land on top of it into a hazelnut grove. Karagöz said that he vividly remembered that no one could find a plausible explanation for the presence of an underground mass grave. “The past in Livera,” he added, “buried with the untold stories of the dead, lies under our feet.”

The remains of the Greeks rest not just under the hazelnut groves. Like Ahmet Agha, who built himself a mansion with the stones seized from the abandoned Greek houses and the money from his deported Greek neighbor, others did not hesitate to use Greek properties as building material. These were used in houses, pavement, and in the border walls of vegetable gardens and hazelnut groves. After showing me the village mosque, once the metropolitan church of Livera, Okan, the Karakoncoloz player and also the son of the village Imam, took me to Karagöz’s house along a trail we had not taken before. This trail of perfectly aligned stones prompted me to ask him how they managed to keep it so well preserved. Right before stepping off the cobblestone trail onto the cold

concrete, Okan answered that they did not do any particular maintenance and pointed to the concrete pavement, which had abruptly appeared. The villagers eventually got rid of the stones under the concrete, despite the historian Karagöz's "apocalyptic" (*kıyamet koparırcasına*) protests. It was only Karagöz who, in order to preserve what was left behind from the Greeks, had been fighting a losing battle against the other villagers. Except for a few Greek houses, the ruins of one chapel and the two churches that were converted to mosques, the landmarks of Greek architecture had almost vanished in Livera. When we arrived at Karagöz's house I could barely see the now almost hidden cobblestone trail, no longer used and covered in moss.

After the deportation of the Greeks, legal settlers and occupiers established a new Livera within decades. In those years, even the non-Liverans from surrounding villages, who came to occupy the Greek property, evolved into "natives" (*yerli*). Karagöz's wife, for instance, who was a proud Liveran and called herself a *yerli*, later told me that her family settled in the village after the Greek deportation.

Liverans who call themselves natives, albeit knowing that by nativity they don't belong there, may not be natives. As prominent Black Sea folklorist Ozhan Ozturk explains, this could be the reason Liverans continue to bury their dead by their houses: a method of rooting themselves in the land with the help of the dead. This is a plausible yet unsatisfactory explanation since the fight between the Oflu and the Tonyali over the land ownership has long ended. With the changing social and cultural conditions that have been argued to determine community practices (such as burying the dead, or "doing" New Year's with Kalandar skits), these practices seem to survive with a more pressing

necessity for the villagers. How do we locate the existence of both house graves and Kalandar, against the background of Livera's past? Revisiting Kalandar's mythico-historical connection to other twelve-day seasonal celebrations will be useful for understanding how ritual plays of this sort were once considered necessary when the boundaries between the domains of life (dead/living, man/woman, human/animal, scare/fun, etc.) begin to vanish.

Livera folklorist Karagöz had provided me with the history of his village, so I decided to visit him again—this time about Kalandar's survival in Livera and the neighboring villages' decision to abandon it, as was the case in Larhan. Thus we started by discussing *momoyer*, the name given to the New Year's play in Larhan and to certain masked actors within the play. Karagöz's response was again the same: both Momoyer and Karakoncoloz are frightening figures (*korkutucudur*, in Turkish). Surprisingly, he couldn't give me any detailed definitions or etymological roots for the creatures. Karagöz was the author of two books, one on Trabzon folklore and one on the etymological origins of Trabzon village names. Neither our search in the Pontic Greek Dictionary nor the Contemporary Maçka Etymological Glossary provided any definitions.

2) Play and Magic

The difficulty of locating Kalandar as a seasonal folk play with hybrid creatures has preoccupied Turkish folkloric studies. One key scholar, Metin And,²² has dedicated

²² Metin And was among the few Turkish folklore scholars who challenged the nationalist tendencies of folkloric scholarship in Turkey. During the 1960s and 1970s, when the majority of folkloric literature

his life to compile the Turkish theatrical folk plays that once abounded in Asia Minor, all of which, for And, have inspired a theory of magic and play.

The entanglement of ritual and play in Kalandar was a puzzle for the renowned Turkish folklorist, who tackled the topic in his magnum opus, *Play and Magic*. And's book detailed a variety of performances: child plays, religious ceremonies (e.g. Samah of the Alevis), and finally the masked and costumed annual celebrations like Kalandar. And's approach to the play/ritual characteristics of Kalandar was to reexamine shamanism, namely the practices of magic.

And sees a deep bond between play and practices of magic, and the etymological analysis of these two terms' Turkish equivalents is his starting point. And strictly argues that both Latin (*jocus* and *ludus*) and Germanic (*spil*, *spel*, and *gehm*) origins of play and game connate multiple meanings: not only competition in sports and fun, but also rapid movements of animals such as wing-flapping and leaps. Play, or game, indicates a human behavior that is also observable among animals. How, then, does one introduce ritual and magic into this picture? In order to understand the multiple meanings of game and play in various languages, one should turn to the Turkish word *bugu* meaning magic (36) and *oyun* meaning play or game in contemporary Turkish, but which is also the word for shaman for the Northeastern Siberians of Yakut (37).

asserted the pure Central Asian origins of Turkish rituals and celebrations, a claim affirming the nationalist mythology positing that Turks are ethnically from central Asia, And instead articulate a rather curious origin for Turkish folklore: Dionysian rituals, And noted, had long been the proto-versions of Turkish folklore. And's objection to nationalist folklore literature was even apparent in his book's title, "Dionysus and the Anatolian Villager." Turks, according to And, for millennia preserved their Dionysian veneration to such a degree that it survived in the more "Turkish"-looking folklore—Turks therefore were not central Asian, but Anatolian—the "easterners" as it is in the Greek language, and as was Dionysus.

According to And, the verbal stem *o-* in Turkic languages, a linguistic family of suffixes, is the source of the noun for weed (*ot*), the verb “to provide medicine” (*ota*), and the noun for medicine man (*otaci*). And’s way of explaining the ritual/play becomes more sophisticated with his discussion of *bugu* (the general term for magic in Turkic languages). The verbal stems *-bo* and *-bu* are the origins of *Bogu*, and *Bugu*,²³ both of which refer to shamans and rulers in various central and northeastern Turkic languages. Simultaneously, this Turkic term has various connotations: *bugulenmek* (to be enchanted, in Modern Turkish), *buguluk* (magical), and *budik* (dance, leap, deceit and game). Thus, not only does And detect characteristics of magic and ritual in play, but also he highlights the playfulness, deceit, knowing and game in magic and ritual. And does this to such an extent that his explanation for ritual attains a game or toy-like connotation, as seen in his definition of “to play”:

The function of ritual is not only a mimesis (*benzetmece*), but also sacrilege in the strict sense of the word, through which the worshippers supplement themselves with the sacred phenomenon... [This is how] primitives, by means of *playing rituals* (*rituellerin oynanmasiyla*, emphasis mine) constituted a form of *proto-government* (*ibid*).

Constitution of a form of proto-government by supplementing it with a sacred phenomenon (kingdom, nation, etc.) has been an essential element in political formation,

²³ In contemporary Turkish *bo*, is uttered to scare someone as an imitation of ghosts and genies like the English “boo”.

but the role of ritual/plays in this context should be examined further. Hinting at the inextricability of ritual and play, And claims that ritualistic folk plays, in particular the varieties of seasonal costumed plays such as Kalandar, are transformed versions of shamanistic practices. His approach, which simultaneously sees shamanistic character in games, and playfulness in magical practices, appears in his earlier study in which he describes an unusual connection: the deity Dionysus and the Turkish (or Anatolian in And's terms) villagers.

The Eastern Deity

In his early study on Anatolian folklore, And argues that costumed and masked plays/rituals of reversal refer to a subtle yet lingering veneration for the divinity of rebirth, Dionysus (1962). Indeed there is an Anatolian connection between Dionysus and folkloric rituals. Dionysus stands out among the Olympian gods as “the stranger god from the east”²⁴, and the oldest testimony on a winter festival with Dionysian content comes from central Anatolia. In 400 CE, the Bishop Asterius of Anesia, Cappadocia targets the January *kalends*, the celebration of the New Year, in his sermon:

Charlatans, conjurors, and some of the populace (demotai) divided into groups and ran from door to door: amid shouts and applauses, and demand money from

²⁴ Moreover Dionysus is the god of deadliness (Berkert 1985), man-womanish qualities (Otto 1995), and an indestructible life (Kerenyi 1996). He is also the primary god of wine making, ecstasy and drama. For a recent study discussing the bond between theatre and sovereignty in references to Ancient Greek theatrical tradition and the cult of Dionysus, see Choudhory 2014.

the household in return for their wish of prosperity... On the same occasion on a cart like those one sees in theatre among soldiers disguised as women, a fictitious sovereign was enthroned who was derided and mocked (183).

Similar to And, Ginzburg, too, indirectly refers to public's re-enactment of sovereign gestures in medieval Europe. To what extent could this be historical continuity? Following the above quote, Ginzburg further mentions that celebrations involving alms-giving, animal masquerade and battles between two groups cover a vast area ranging from "France to Central Asia, passing the Greek, Armenian, and Turkish communities of Asia Minor" (186). Here is revealed a "meta-historical partial isomorphism" (Ginzburg's term) of rather similar ritual/plays, ranging not only over a vast geography, but also over a long duration of time cross cutting antiquity and pre-modernity. The relevance of Dionysus and the historical and ethnological literatures relating folk celebrations to this divinity could shed light on this trans-historic and trans-geographic argument.

Ginzburg's archival finding of Dionysian elements in Kalandar-like festivities directs us to the political implications of these theatrical communal events. In a similar fashion And claims that proto-government is constituted by ritual theater. Carlo Ginzburg's historical study of ritual-plays from medieval Eurasia, along with the ethnological work of Hans Peter Duerr (that I will later elaborate), examines these folk political performances in tandem with their re-enactment of the boundaries that divide the wilderness from civilization and the dead from the living. With rich historical and cross-

cultural examples, this scholarship demonstrates that the porosity among these boundaries should be interpreted for its political connotations, not simply for its supposed historical and cultural exoticism. Shamanism and costumed/masked celebrations, certain periods of the year, such as winter, and certain occasions, such as the witch's Sabbath, are the moments when these boundaries assume their most porous form. According to Ginzburg and Duerr, folk festivals or mythic creatures and deities of hybrid nature, particularly the figure of the wolfman, exemplify this trans-historical entanglement of nature and culture with the dead and the living—or “the dreamtime” as Duerr names this porosity.²⁵

Ginzburg's work on ecstasies, which he argues arise during ritual/plays (such as the witch's Sabbath), is animated by a commonality despite the vast geographical and historical dispersion of plays/rituals: they invariably involve battles between forces of chaos and other forces that reset the natural and cultural order (*passim*). The ones saving the community and the cosmos, such as the Italian *Benandanti*, Hungarian *Taltos*, shamans, and eastern European werewolves (fighting against vampires) are in an eternal ecstatic struggle to secure order and the sources of subsistence (crops, herds, etc.). This ecstatic mode, Ginzburg argues is represented “in the temporary departure of the soul from the inanimate body.” This is why stories, narrated within historical archives, tales and legends, have portrayed these ecstatic battles as “temporary death” (172), a mediation that might occur between the living and the dead or between man and animal.

Thus Ginzburg concludes in highlighting “a commonality...behind stories, roaming questers, brawls and disguises.” He writes: “there is a common content: the

²⁵ Note that Duerr's dreamtime is different than Australian Aborigines' dreamtime.

symbolic identification with the dead in the immobility of ecstasy or frenzy of ritual.” (195) This ecstatic ritual, particularly in western folklore, is related to the “nocturnal divinity that leads the cohorts of the dead (195). This divinity, Diana or Artemis, is crucial for comprehending Dionysus’ relevance for folkloric plays/rituals such as Kalandar.

In his study examining witches as “night travelers,” Duerr too refers to the veneration of Artemis. Yet he reminds us that Artemis is the goddess of “not agrarian, but nature’s fertility” (12) and likens this nocturnal goddess to Dionysus, the tree god who is not the god of wine as an agricultural product, but the deity of wild wine (12). In this divine connection in *unruly (re)production*,²⁶ Duerr sees a mythical continuum to such a degree that he deems the rituals of Artemis-Anahita-Diana from the palatinate region of Roman Germania to be akin to the rites of Artemis of Asia Minor (13). Dionysus, the prototype of earth-mother or Great Goddess, is the master not only of wild wine and trees, but also of wild animals (21). This is why he is represented in animal skins.

Dionysus’ affiliation with natural reproduction and wild animals posited him as an ambiguous gender: He was pictured as “man-womanish.” The rites of Dionysus, Duerr writes, were “observed principally by women and slaves, by the groups of the periphery rather than the center of society.” The dominance of cross-gender costumes in Kalandar, can easily be attributed to the Dionysus-Diana who was believed to have “turned things inside out.” In Maçka and other parts of Trabzon, the month of January (vernacularly pronounced as Kalandar) is also known as the month of the Old Woman (*Kocakari Ayi*).

²⁶ I am inclined to liken Duerr’s interpretation of Dionysus to Negri and Hardt’s communist theory of the state-form, which posits the living labor of Dionysus in opposition to capitalist work. The former “produces life and creates its own time.”

Dionysus-Diana is not only an androgynous figure, the but also the patron/ness of outlaws, strangers and slaves (23). 19th century British folklorist Cuthbert Lawson's approach to the etym of *Karakoncoloz* is informative for he attempts to reveal the anthropomorphic genealogy of the malevolent monster. *Kaliontzides*, Lawson writes, meaning the "sailor of a galleon" (Turkish qalioundji or kalyoncu), is humorously substituted for the dreaded name of the *Callicantzari*, which reveals the origin of *Karakandjolos*. *Koundjul* does not only mean wolf-man, but also the "slave of the lowest kind" (215). Thus it calls to mind the "enslaved sailors" rowing on Turkish galleons—a human that is included in the social domain but with no rights.²⁷ Anthropologist Michael Meeker's records of *Karaconcoloz* stories from *Of*, Trabzon affirm the entanglement of folklore and social history—that *Karakoncoloz* is an unknown evil creature riding the

²⁷ Published in 1910, in a detailed collection of modern Greek folk religion, John Cuthbert Lawson discusses the significance of *Callicantzari* (plural form of *Callicantzoros*) under the subtitle "Centaur," in the chapter entitled "The Survival of Pagan Deities" (190-253). *Callicantzari* are the most monstrous of all the creatures of the popular imagination, Lawson reminds us, and none are better known to the Greek-speaking world (190). Lawson's collection of folkloric material from various regions in Greece depicts almost the same story narrated to me in the Trabzon villages: a half man and half animal creature covered in fur, who is the "mischievous sort visiting the earth during the Dodekaimeron or 'the period of twelve days,' between Christmas and Epiphany in Greece, or mid-December and mid-January in Trabzon today. Lawson, however, passionately denies the animality of the *Callicantzari*, even though all folkloric variants seem to describe it in hybrid forms all around Greece. What Lawson seeks, instead, is a pure origin, either animal or human form, for the *Callicantzari*: "What appears to have happened in these cases [hybrid forms of *Callicantzari*] is that, as the belief in the metamorphosis of *Callicantzari* was lost from the local folklore, a sort of compensation was made by depicting them arrested in the process of transformation, arrested halfway in the transition from man to beast" (206). Thus he strives to generate a solution to the false problem he poses: "What therefore remains to be determined is whether these beings were anthropomorphic demons or simply men" (ibid.). Later he unfolds the topic with a fascinating explanation of *Callicantzari* as the pure symbol of a primitive tribe that historically transformed into a folkloric figure.

In a direct historical transcription of ancient texts, such as those by Homer and Hesiod, Lawson concludes that the *Callicantzari* is nothing but a remnant of a barbaric tribe called the *Pheres*, who inspired the imaginations of the mythological half-human half-animal creature like the *Silenus*, *Satyr* and more importantly the *Centaur*, namely those who accompany *Dionysus*. The story of *Pheres*, Lawson further notes, tells of the defeat and "expulsion of a primitive and wild mountain-tribe by a people who, in the wearing of body-armor, had advanced one important step in material civilization" (243). For Lawson, the depiction of the war between the *Lapith* and *Centaur* that was told by the poet *Hesiod* is a metaphorical defeat of the *Pheres*. Their wild, non-polis like lifestyles apparently later gave way to beliefs in hybrid creatures between man and animals like the *Centaur*s in the past or the *Callicantzari* in modern times.

harsh winds of the winter over the Black Sea (1966). In Sürmene, another district in Trabzon, I was told similar stories about *Karakoncoloz*, which resonated with both the Diana-Dionysus cult and Lawson's anthropocentric explanation that Callicantzari is a metaphoric representation of barbarians who fought the Greek city states:

“Karakoncoloz was a figure of menace and scare (*bela ve korku*) because it was, well, a monster (*canavar*), both like a man and animal, with horns and hair, and everything. He was believed to ride his boat from the other side of the [Black] sea during the storms before the *Kocakari* month (the period from January the 13th and the February the 13th). During his visit everyone well hid their calves and sons (*buzak ve usak*), and left loaves of corn bread and *koliva* (the same corn dish served in Livera after Kalandar) at their gates so *Karakoncoloz* would eat them and stay away from the younglings (*yavrular*)—I mean both the calves and the boys.

Although the memory of this past folklore survives in Sürmene, the belief in protecting the “younglings” from *Karakoncoloz* has been abandoned.²⁸ The Sürmene people, who once strictly followed the folk methods of protecting their livelihood and new generations (sons and calves together) by giving away food, now discuss *Karakoncoloz* only in tales meant to scare children. How did this transition happen? And why does *Karakoncoloz* folklore, with its ritualized play mode, still survive in Maçka?

²⁸ Note, however, how the folklorist refers to both calves and boys as if they are the babies of one species.

In Maçka, tales of Karakoncoloz live on not only to scare children, but also in the flesh and blood festive mode. Similar to the folklorist in Sürmene, I aspired to reach clear-cut definitions about the nature of Karakoncoloz in Maçka as well. The villagers of Livera however, despite having been amused by my diligent insistence to learn about what they do for fun, had too been puzzled about the origin of Karakoncoloz. During the night of the celebration in 2011, the costumed players, especially the two organizers of the event, Okan and Isak, confidently responded to my questions about proper Karakoncoloz costumes. Isak prompted, “with our faces painted in black we are all Karakoncoloz on that night, costumes do not matter much.” Nonetheless, they both agreed that there was a script to follow. It was based on the abduction of the bride, her rescue, and finally the banishment of the player who caused the chaos—a script that aimed to scare and stage some fun during the dull wintertime.

As for the meaning of Karakoncoloz, Isak added smilingly, “the name tells it all, don’t you sense the terror in it?” Indeed, *Kara* means “black”, but no villager, neither elders nor young Kalandar organizers, had precise definitions either for the etym or the genealogy of *koncoloz*. All explanations given to me emphasized only the qualities of the monstrous being. After my relentless questions, the local historian and uncle of Isak, Ilyas Karagöz, gave me only a two-word long description for *koncoloz*: “malicious being” (*sirret*). Isak explained that Karakoncoloz was a creature that terrorizes humans. Yet Okan noted that the player disguised as a drunkard, whom one might consider to be devilish, could easily create the effect of fear and terror: “The whole aim is to cause chaos, dragging the household into the turmoil,” they both reiterated constantly. The part

when the village children were frightened was also another peak of the event: “imagine your neighbor appears in a terrifying disguise, the person you call brother... Wouldn’t you be scared as hell?” ask Isak, laughing. This folk play of dread and laughter staged by the mimicry of a monstrous being had the power to convene the entire Livera community. Considering Kalandar’s past ubiquity and present day disappearance in Maçka, how did Kalandar rise to such a communal event in Livera?

3) Eternal Time, Mimesis and the Wolfman

Hristos Samuilidis introduces *momoyeros* as a general term for Kalandar-like folk plays and approaches the topic from the same perspective as that of the ancient Greek poet Hesiod. The etym of Momoyer, Samuilidis writes, may be *Momos* (1991: 29), the deity of mockery and ridicule, which is the son of the Night (*Nyx*), as described by Hesiod in *Theogony* (2006: 214). Turkish folklorist and Surmene native Ozkan Ozturk suggests an intriguing nexus: *Mimos*, *mimikos*, and *momoyeros* in Greek and *momoyer* in Turkish perhaps derive from the same etymological origin, all of which are related to the act of mimicry. Ozturk argues further that *Maymun*, monkey in Turkish, is also an etymological derivation meaning “the animal that mimes [humans]” (2005: 873). How can we then interpret this puzzle around a folkloric figure? What is it that Momoyer mimes? Given the missing Liveran knowledge about Karakoncoloz, who seems to resemble Momoyer, we can assume that it is a folkloric creature of evil that visits the earth during the time the of the dead (the twelve-day period between January 1 and 13), but we still need to ask why Kalandar players in Livera name themselves after this

creature? What did Isak mean when he said they were all Karakoncoloz? On what grounds does a folkloric form manage to survive? Let us again turn to the ethnological literature.

Eternal Return

Belief in the appearance of monstrous hybrid creatures during a certain time of the year has long been an intriguing topic for historians, folklorists and anthropologists. Mircea Eliade (1971), for instance, has regarded the periodic ceremonies as the emblematic embodiment of the belief in monstrosity and the concomitant necessity to expel it (CITE). For Eliade these ceremonies can be categorized under two headings: “annual expulsion of demons... and rituals of the days preceding or following the New Year” (CITE). He further notes that these two categories coincide in almost every case. With its variant celebrated in Maçka, Kalandar indeed fits into both demon expulsion and celebration of the New Year. Why, then, does the demon appear at the dawn of “new time”? Eliade answers this in his book’s main argument, that there is always an “eternal return to mythical time,”—a pure time to recapture the instant of “creation” (54). This instant of creation, as Eliade claims, inspires the urge to return to the temporal archetype, a story of cosmic inception (cosmogony) within which the categorical distinction between man and animal loses its validity (*passim*). This urge is so pressing and strong that ancient texts and tribal societies indicate a similar trans-historical intolerance against historical memory that is “the recollection of events that derive from no archetype, but the collection of personal histories” (CITE). Is there an “eternal time” that a modern rural community like Livera can refer to?

This topic of “the return to a mythical time,” was indeed a reason for debate during my conversation with a Liveran *petit*-bureaucrat, Şakir. During one of my regular visits to his office, we, as usual, were talking about the Greeks’ interest in Kalandar. When I asked about the significance of celebrating the event on the night of January 13, Şakir repeatedly referred to tradition: “It must surely have significance but we cannot figure out what that is because it must have been depicted from an old Turkic calendar.” After hearing my response that the Greeks of Maçka had celebrated Kalandar on the night of Epiphany as the festival of the 12th night and perhaps Maçka Turks somehow kept that 12-day period, but moved it to between New Year’s and January 13, Şakir first paused and then reacted in a higher, still polite voice, but in apparent irritation: “This cannot be true because Kalandar was celebrated before the birth of Christianity.” Şakir quickly interrupted me before I could give examples from Roman/Byzantine *kalends* in response to his probable story of Turks’ presence on the Black Sea coasts of the Asia Minor. Instead of referring to the typical nationalist story in which Turks are narrated as semi-nomadic people from Central Asia to Asia Minor, he opened an older page in history: “Even Hesiod tells my grandma’s story, our story!” I was puzzled and thus asked him if he meant *Theogony*, anticipating that we might connect our debate to Dionysus. Now we were both lost, so he rushed to the bookshelf and pulled out a dusty book: Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, not *Theogony*.²⁹ He rapidly turned the pages and found the verses where Hesiod described how to plow a garden. “This is exactly how my grandma plowed our

²⁹ Interestingly, Byzantine historian Anthony Bryer expresses his astonishment by the similarities that he observes between contemporary rural Trabzon and Hesiod’s *Works and Days*; See Bryer 1975.

vegetable garden! Same technique, same tools...”³⁰ Note how Şakir strives to prove that Kalandar did not belong to Greeks’ Christian celebration of the New Year, but to Turkish heritage. It was the first time a Liveran was claiming the ownership of Kalandar while evoking a mythological Greek past. The text *Works and Days* narrates everyday activities of the ancient people with the involvement of Olympian deities and various non-human agents. I unintentionally provoked Şakir by asking him about the “origin of the January 13 celebration.” Only by means of “returning to a mythical time,” the time of *Works and Days*, could he avoid my inquiry into the significance of January 13. Şakir’s invocation of the mythical time would not have worked if a personal history, that of a dead kin (grandma plowing), had not blended into this temporal shift. Our debate over January 13 allowed for the reappearance of Şakir’s late grandmother not directly from his memory, but from the pages of *Works and Days*.

In his discussion of “the eternal return” Eliade reminds us that during the ceremonies of the twelve-day period before the New Year the dead “come in procession to visit the families” (1971: 67). Focusing on the “twelve-day” will demonstrate why this is the period when the visits of the dead coincide with the appearance of monstrous beings, and why a playful ritualistic intervention such as Kalandar is needed. Eliade has already indicated how the annual invasion of the dead means suspension of the profane (i.e. historical) time, which necessitates a ritual intervention by the living. In a similar vein Duerr explains the twelve-day (“dreamtime”, as he calls it) after juxtaposing geographically and historically diverse examples of winter celebrations:

³⁰ Şakir here refers to *eliktrin*, the two-pronged tall hoe, which is used in momeyeros plays in Greece. Hesiod describes the same hoe as the essential tool for horticulture on the steep gardens.

Between the times, when the old time is over and the new one has not yet begun, everything is beyond the bounds of normality. Order becomes reversed and its continued existence is threatened. The powers of order and those of chaos are joined in battle... these groups of people were all united by the common theme that “outside of time” they lost their normal, everyday aspect and became beings of the ‘other’ reality, of the beyond, whether they *turned into animals or hybrid creatures or whether they reversed their social roles*. They might roam bodily through the land or only in spirit, in ecstasy, with or without hallucinogenic drugs... Between the times, order and chaos ceased to be opposites. In such times of crisis, when nature generates itself by dying first, humans die also, and as ghostly beings ranged over the land in order to contribute their share to the rebirth of the nature. The aspect of the struggle against the forces of darkness expressed itself with greater or lesser intensity in all of this. In the course of [this dreamtime], *knowledge became lost... the boundaries dissolved between the living and the dead*. (1987: 33-35, italics mine)

Note the forms that humans change into when in the other reality, or during the dreamtime period (the twelve-day when time is suspended), and remember Isak’s earlier remark that they are all *karakoncoloz* during the Kalandar night. One might then justifiably ask: What is the significance of intermingled boundaries between animal and human, man and woman (that I will discuss in detail in chapter 4), and all sorts of other

hybridities for Liverans? And why invoke the dead? How does a winter event with a skit of hybrid monster expulsion refer to the “dissolved boundary” between living and dead? What could be the “lost knowledge” in Kalandar, which prevails during the twelve-days?

Miming and the Wolf

Introducing the necessity to evoke mythical archetypes in resistance to historical time, Eliade reiterates a crucial dimension of seasonal celebrations that conjure “atemporality.” This conjuring of mythical archetypes (such as Dionysus or Karakoncoloz), or eternal time, operates via pure imitation (of the archetype) (76). Following Walter Benjamin’s theory of the mimetic faculty, Michael Taussig explains this “atemporal” urge to imitate: “...the nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become other” (1992: 13) – a faculty, Taussig notes, that is necessary to every process of knowing and naturalization of identities. Moreover, what is most intriguing about the magic of mimesis is the power residing in the artifact (such as folklore) that is a copy (signifier) of an original (signified) (ibid). As we have seen in the testimonies about the Karakoncoloz/Momoyer, imitating a dreadful monster would immediately help the imitator summon the hybrid qualities of what is imitated. This is the reason, I believe, that over the course of my participation in two Kalandar celebrations there was an absolute lack of diligence for the costumes and preparation. A Karakoncoloz player imitating a drunkard could have easily become the “evil-doer.” This inattentiveness to detail, which I found surprising during my first Kalandar, has little to no importance

when considering Freud's discussion of the practices of magic: the effigy does not have to resemble the target person of the magic (1990a: 138). Just as we have seen with Momoyer, the "mimicker" signify a pure-mimicry. How can we interpret this?

Taussig's interpretation of mimesis is an invitation for a deeper analysis of momoyer as pure mimicry—or sympathetic magic, the "old" terminology of the faculty that Taussig uses in reference to Frazer. Mimesis, for Tausig, is "to yield into and become the other" (1992: passim). Who could this other be, concerning the Karakoncoloz/Momoyer skit? Could the other be the Greek, who was forced to leave his centuries old motherland, and whose property was either occupied by his Muslim neighbors or confiscated by the young Turkish nation-state? A question of this sort clearly suggests that the victim of past violence and the subsequent traumatic memory is reflected in a folkloric representation. But such a "metaphorical explanation", building a direct relationship of signification between present folklore and past violence, would be devaluing the ethnological richness of Kalandar and the celebrations alike.

Second, as shown by both ethnological literature and by the Livera and Larhan villagers' accounts, being in animal costumes and acting like animals is one of the crucial characteristics of winter plays. Indeed, inquiring about the wolves was another task in Maçka, since I was already familiar with folk creatures such as *callikantzoros* and *lycanthropos*³¹. Karagöz, however, responded sarcastically to my questions about folkloric wolves. Once he warned me not to roam alone at nighttime for it was the wolf mating season and they could easily "devour" me. I was terrified and asked whether there were wolves around *Livera*, he reminded me that the wolves were *bipeds*. He was clearly

³¹ For a folkloric analysis of lycanthropy, see Senn, 1982.

joking, but he added in a lower voice, almost mumbling that those biped wolves were “competent to ruin and waste anything human, particularly memories.” Karagöz was referring to his fellow villagers’ “devouring” of the Greek memory—in particular the destruction of the physical sites of remembrance—churches, houses and chapels.

Attributions of animal qualities to violent acts that are instinctually destructive, as Karagöz did with the wolf devouring memories, also appears in Giorgio Agamben’s approach to sovereign violence and its re-enactment with the figure of the wolfman as he appears in European folklore. Long before his study of sovereignty, Agamben seems to have noticed the presence of monstrous hybrid beings in rituals of reversal. In *Infancy and History*, he cites an ancient Chinese genie enthronement ceremony called *No* and Frazer’s example of a Scottish seasonal festival of *calluinn* (2007: 76-77). In both events, performers in animal masks cause chaos and are then ritually banished from the community. However, when Agamben directs his focus to the relationship between the concept of sovereignty and hybrid folkloric figures from diverse rituals, ceremonies and festivals, the monster gains a different significance. Agamben conceptualizes sovereignty, first, as a zone of indistinction—a zone that is reminiscent of the in-betweenness of a wolfman trapped between man and animal, nature and culture. Arguing that festivals and ceremonies with the wolfman and its banishment have always been a folkloric enactment of sovereign violence distances Agamben from early anthropological scholarship. He argues that the latter has interpreted these festivals, or folk plays, as cultural artifacts functioning in the reproduction of the communal order, but not as

essential material aspects that enable and enact law and violence, hence politics. This enactment of the “zone of indistinction” is thus symbolized in the body of the wolfman.

At first Agamben’s approach might be considered as casting a fixed light on animality. For Agamben, however, sovereignty is nothing but a “point of indistinction between law and violence,” a distinction seen in the folkloric expulsion of the wolfman (1998: 32). Agamben later grants a juridical terminology to this indistinction: the state of exception. He explains the state of exception as a condition in which the suspension and implementation of the law by the sovereign (whether a monarch or a modern state) become indistinguishable from one another. The exercise of the state of exception creates political bodies by means of reducing victims of sovereign violence to what Agamben calls “bare life”. Bare life, the embodiment of bio-politics that kills bodies or lets them live, however, does not only signify the body of the victims of sovereign violence, but also the sovereign himself: such as the two-bodied king that Agamben references, citing Kantorowicz’s study of the medieval kings, or the two bodied wolf-man (one, the wolf to be expelled, and the other, the man to be included in the community). The monstrous qualities therefore reside beyond clear-cut distinctions between nature (animal, wilderness, world of the dead) and culture (human, city, world of the living), and they are primarily related to the body of the sovereign. But how could we pin down who this sovereign might be in the context of Livera? In light of Agamben’s assertion that a “symmetry” resides between the sovereign (executioner) and the *bare life* (victim), we have seen how the presence of monstrous hybrid beings in folk plays suggests a new

understanding of the bond between the sovereign and his victims (1998: 135). Let us now turn to Kalandar and the expulsion of the black (kara) wolfman (koncoloz).

The wolfman, the utmost example of social banishment in Indo-European folklore traditions, is a hybrid being confined to the body of both human and animal, nature and culture, a “pure threshold of indistinction” as Agamben calls it (1998: 105). Why, then, does Agamben draw upon this monstrous figure by depicting the figure of *wargus* or *friedlos* from ancient English law, namely the wolf-man (sacred wolf, or the bandit wolf-man)? According to Agamben, the figure of the wolf-man is destined to be banned from the community and live without *peace* (*friedlos*, means peaceless man in archaic German) (2005: 41-52). This play of banishment was a popular archaic way of re-enacting “sovereignty” because it is the sovereign who can “decide” to expel in order to restore order. However, the sovereign act of the ban, which is both a violent and lawful decision, simultaneously excludes *wargus* (from the city), but also includes it into the domain of law. Therefore *wargus* is always in “constant transition between man and animal,” (109) culture and nature (respectively, village and the woods, for this chapter’s concerns, regarding the history of the Oflu and Tonyali migrants) and law and violence. *Wargus* therefore belongs to none of these dualisms, but instead to a third category. It is a life that is reduced to bare life, precisely like in the example of the medieval king, whose physical body can be discarded, yet his body-politic will continue to rule. Or like Livera’s *Aghas* which emerged during the years of fighting between the Tonyali and the Oflu. Even though these *Aghas*’ authorities were acknowledged, killing them in vendettas was not considered a crime among the villagers.

As for the creaturely qualities that are inherent in sovereignty, Duerr (1987) seems to agree with Agamben as the former, also referring to wolfman folklore, writes that “in archaic times, a person who stood outside the law, the culture, was considered dead by ordinary people... the embodiment of these dead was the bear, or even more importantly, the wolf.” Immediately Duerr follows by invoking the irreducible meaning of the dead (61). Death is not an experience but the boundary of all experiences: “One can only live consciously when being conscious of life’s limits. Only a person who had seen his animal part, who had ‘died,’ could consciously live in culture” (ibid.). Duerr cites *nagual*, the concept of the Tzotzil Indians of Chiapas. *Nagual* belongs to human nature, but about which “we can say nothing, or at least nothing that would be intelligible to those who have never crossed the boundary.” Similarly, villagers of Livera and Larhan could not “say” definitions for either Momoyer or Karakoncoloz. Even wolves, according to a Liveran cab driver, are both vicious and lovable thanks to the “beauty of their fur and the friendly sparkle in their eyes.” In coastal Surmene, for example, the wolf was once believed to have these dual qualities as well. It was certainly an animal to avoid, but also to admire and ask assistance of when needed--to protect infants, for instance. In Surmene, elders remembered the days when wolf jawbones were hung on top of cradles to scare away Karakoncoloz—the evildoer wolfman.

How can we examine a folkloric figure bearing connotations of the dead and animals? First, the differences between Momoyer and Karakoncoloz should be mentioned. The former is a mimicker in an animal-like guise, but also a savior when a villager attempts to abduct the bride-costumed player. Karakoncoloz, however, is the

name of the frightening chaos-bringer who is in charge of the bride abduction: a specific folkloric term/figure of both Kalandar skits and childhood tales in Livera.

Notwithstanding this major difference, the time of Kalandar both in Livera and Larhan has always been a strictly observed twelve-day interval between the old and new year. A period that not only requires ritualistic/playful interventions, but also a future prediction for the coming year, as Suleyman from Livera has told me:

[Future prediction] is what we call Breaking Kalandar (*Kalandar'in kirilmesi*, in Turkish). It is the day after the twelfth night, the Kalandar night. Each house would wait for their first visitor, who symbolized the predictions of the coming year. If he or she happened to be somebody they loved, it was considered a sign that the year will be good. It was also common to drag a calf or a dog to the house and make them circle inside to “break Kalandar”. Those [animals] were always considered good guests. Although our boys still celebrate Kalandar, breaking Kalandar is no longer done. It's only Cemil who sometimes visits the families he likes and helps them set festivities in motion.

Cemil was the “village madman,” who, in his early sixties, was known for his child-like behavior and speech impediment. Cemil, frequently mute, never allowed me to ask him about Kalandar during my stay in Livera, but his excitement about the celebration was noteworthy. His acceptance by families as a “good guest” by nature was due to his harmlessness. The villagers seemed to regard him in the same league as their beloved

animals, which I found rather strange. Cemil was deemed mentally handicapped and his opinion has was never asked for when it comes to village decisions, but when the future of a family was at stake during Kalandar he was preferred over any sane villager.

Suleyman told me that many families even pretended not to be at home if the first visitor of the thirteenth day was someone other than Cemil. Apparently only during Kalandar time, Cemil's so-called muteness and sporadic sounds gain importance and are demanded to predict the new time (new year) to come. Both Duerr and Ginzburg reiterate that in New Year celebrations the victory or the defeat of the cosmic fights among groups, such as werewolves against vampires, or Italian Benandanti against witches, or Circassian shamans against Karakoncoloz-like Abhazian vampires,³² foretell the year to come. Needless to say, the winners of these cosmic fights are always in ecstatic modes, imitating animals and pronouncing unrecognizable words as if possessed by dead ancestors or spirits.

I am inclined to think that this mode of playing animal/dead in celebrations is akin to what Taussig suggests by mimesis, "yielding into the other." Instead of just an empirical other (e.g. the deported Greek), the other should be considered to be of multiple temporalities (past and present) and not only of culture, but also nature (creatures of any sort). Indeed this yielding is a "tendency to let oneself go back and sink in nature" as Adorno and Horkheimer have conceptualized mimesis (Taussig 1992: 46). Taussig, on the other hand, takes a more anthropological stance: This tendency is a not simply a

³² 16th Century Ottoman traveler Evliya Celebi writes his own account of witnessing the fight between these shamans and vampires, see Dankoff, 2011.

negative passivity but also an “active yielding as bodily copying of the other.” This yielding, according to Taussig, resonates with Freud’s concept of the death drive.

Freud defines death drive as “a compulsion to repeat which overrides the pleasure principles” (1990b: 24). The part that interests us in Freud’s self-challenge to the pleasure principle comes when he unfolds the meaning of the “compulsion to repeat.” He gives the example of children’s tendency to create games. A child left at home by the mother reenacts the moment of temporary abandonment by repeating an action almost in a ritualistic fashion³³ (12-17).

With the bond between the mimesis of the dead/animal and annual folk plays, I aim to link the death drive qua “compulsion to repeat” to the Liveran villagers’ annual repetition of the Karakoncoloz ritual/play. Although Freud’s explanation for children’s compulsion to repeat is grounded on psycho-developmental empiricism (invention of repetitive game signifies child’s trauma), it is still of value for it aims to relate repetition to death drive. Gilles Deleuze’s (1995) work on repetition, however, is more beneficial for the purpose of analyzing the Liveran villagers’ reasons to celebrate Kalandar, especially considering that the neighboring villages have long abandoned the tradition. For Deleuze, the death drive (“instinct,” as he uses instead) is a result of direct consideration of repetition; it’s not connected neither with destructive tendencies nor aggression (16). What could it be then, and how can it help us understand the motivations of Liverans’ to do Kalandar? Slavoj Zizek provides a plausible answer.

In his attempt to return to Deleuze as the materialist philosopher, Zizek highlights the bond between the repetition and death drive (2003b). He too writes that death drive is

³³ Freud’s example is the boy throwing a toy under the bed and dragging it back repetitively.

anything but destructive tendencies, or the “obliteration of biological life.” On the contrary, death drive targets the “afterlife;” it radically aims to obliterate the symbolic texture that enables either mourning (accepting the loss through symbolization) or melancholia (reflecting the loss onto different beings or objects, such as ghosts) (2003b: 13). Thus it is a drive resurrecting the spirit of the dead.

We might approach the Liverans’ reason to become Karakoncoloz from this paradox of “the living dead.” Note that Liverans are unable to explicate their reasons of strictly following the twelfth night interval for the ritual/play. Moreover, when Kalandar is the topic, they are particularly reluctant to refer to the Greeks, whose bones and skulls have been found in a village ossuary. Yet they have been passionate enough about the event to call it a tradition. I think one should pay significant attention to the Liverans’ perspective on Kalandar and yet approach it beyond the “invention of the tradition” terminology—for there may be a sheer forgetting but also preservation (remembering) of a ritual/play. Deleuze regards this duality of remembering and forgetting in opposition to memory itself. “When working through of memory is missing,” he writes; “only the repetition of the knowledge’s object” remains (1995: 14). And it is “played... repeated, enacted instead of being known.” When I explained to the Liverans the folkloric and mythological “knowledge” about Karakoncoloz, Isak asked me if I would contribute to make Kalandar a more proper “festival.” Apparently they were not “knowledgeable about their tradition, all they care about was doing it,” Isak told me apologetically.

For Deleuze, masked and costumed plays are a gateway through which one can enter the terrain of the death drive—a terrain that expands to “pure repetition.” Zizek has

already demonstrated that death drive is a compulsion to step beyond the world of symbolic representation—a step that leaps over melancholy and mourning, hence the boundary between living and the dead. Masks and costumes, anthropologically read as pure symbols, stand out for Deleuze as disguise par excellence, disguise without symbolically referring to what they hide. Deleuze likens this to pure masking, a way of distancing from representation towards repetition, or to what he calls “metaphysics in motion” (1995: 8). This new metaphysics-yet-to-come involves “inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps, which directly touches the mind” (ibid). This set of motions and movements is apparent in animal-mimicking shamanistic practices (Abram 2010), or, as folklorist Metin And suggests, in the dual presence of Game (oyun) and Magic (Bugu) in old Turkish language and folklore.

4) Community

Liverans, and other villagers of seasonal folk plays, who have facilitated the New Year to come, have the mastery, in Deleuze’s term, of “touching the mind” with the help of bodily movements. Perhaps this is why, as both Larhan and Livera villagers have testified, being meticulous about masks and costumes—supposedly symbolic materials—is never relevant. The content of the play and the symbolism it could convey is less important than its playful form residing in the movements of the body.

Over the course of the two Kalandar events I attended, the parts of the skit that villagers seemed to enjoy most were the episode of bride abduction and Karakoncoloz expulsion and the moment in the finale when they guess who is hiding under the masks.

During the final stage of Kalandar, this game of guessing expanded to the whole village after the players' house-visits and skit performances are finished. The entire village (men, women, children, and elderly) gathered at the small square next to the mosque (formerly a Greek church). People exchanged jokes amongst the Karakoncoloz players who bounced and ran around, having been chased and forced to expose their true selves.

“Kalandar is the only occasion we get together and see each other. You see, winters are very grim and boring here because everyone is busy with their own life. It's a village, sure, but not the same old village. At least once a year, we *remember* that we are Liverans thanks to Kalandar,” was Suleyman's response to my question why Liverans celebrate Kalandar. During my interviews in other Maçka valley villages, I heard a significantly different explanation as to why Kalandar, or Momoyer as used in Larhan, is no longer celebrated: Village imams had discouraged Muslim villagers from celebrating because costumed and masked plays had no place in Islam—they were “customs” (*adet*, in Turkish), of the Greeks, and/or their youth were not interested in celebrating it. It became obsolete in the Muslim community.

Remarkably, Livera is inhabited by youth who annually organize Kalandar, and one of them, Okan, is the son of the village Imam, who seems to be neutral towards the event. For Livera's Imam, too, Kalandar is a tradition, and inasmuch as all traditions are concerned, it should survive as well. As seen in Suleyman's statement above, and the finale of the event as a village get-together, Kalandar also is the sheer moment when Livera comes together as a community. Although it is administratively a “village”, with its daily commuting bureaucrats, service workers, and elders on retirement pensions,

Livera is a modern community of pious Sunni Muslims. How does such a modern village sustain this sense of community that seems to contradict with that of its neighbors? I will explain with the help of a terminology that crosscuts celebration and community, that is, *communitas*.

Victor Turner defines *communitas* as the “shared sense of comradeship and communion,” positing it in the equation: ritual::structure | celebration | *communitas*::play (1980). By this equation one could approach *communitas* as the “community that plays,” or *Communis Ludens*, to adopt Huizinga’s terminology (Huizinga 1964). Yet Turner’s approach to the matter both intersects with and diverges from the Liverans’ way of perceiving Kalandar. Note that the annual event making Liverans a community is not enunciated as a celebration—Kalandar has never been celebrated, but always *done* as an obligation.

Turner’s approach to the topic differs. He conceptualizes the co-existence of “both ritual and play” (1980: 28) in communal celebrations. Although Liverans’ reluctance to name Kalandar a celebration seems to resist the duality of concepts that Turner suggests, their way of doing Kalandar still creates, in Turner's terms, a shared sense of communion. The concept *communitas* and the ways in which Turner sets it in dyadic relationship with “social structure” thus deserve further consideration.

Celebration’s utmost significance is to release *communitas*, that is, the “sense of comradeship and communion,” (29) which, Turner argues, is confined by social structures. The signifier par excellence of this confinement, or “framing” in Turner’s terms, is the ritual. In his equation celebration stands like a border (betwixt-and-between)

between the two camps: structure::ritual | celebration | play::communitas. Turner, however, reiterates that celebrations contain both ritual and play frames. Interaction between the structure and the communitas, respectively embodied as ritual and play, creates a gravitational force, which pulls the community together in celebration--the border category, in Turner's schema. Although the Liveran villagers refer to neither festival nor celebration, Kalandar, I argue, perceptibly creates Livera when the entire village is pulled together to the village square by the force of this celebration. Kalandar, as Liverans repeatedly claim, is nothing but "village fun," (koy eglencesi as in Turkish.)

This theoretical distancing from structuralism leads Turner to a self-criticism of his earlier theories of ritual (1995). Analyzing celebrations provides him with a new lens through which he revisits his *ritual process*, a concept that once helped him to approach "calendrical and seasonal celebrations" as "symbolic-status reversal" rituals. Later he argues that these celebrations are not only reversals, but also subversive in character (1980: 27). What authority do they subvert against? Despite his positioning of communitas vis-à-vis structure, Turner's approach does not detach itself from the overdeterminacy of a social structure.

He views *communitas* as the "revitalizer" of social structure (1995:116), a "process" that manifests symbolic expressions in rituals. Symbolic interpretation of rituals and plays has always been tempting particularly when the "meaning" of folkloric celebrations is under scrutiny. This meaning has been believed to reflect the fabric of the social, as Turner asserts. But how can we analyze a folk event and its elements without establishing an unmediated relationship of signification between the event itself and the

sociality? Unlike Turner's approach that presupposes society as the creator of folk rituals or celebrations, Levi-Strauss defines the ritual as the replacement of words, a "mute gesture that actualizes a mythology" (Houseman and Severi 1998: 179). Although I approach Kalandar in a way that is akin to Levi-Strauss' perspective in that it sees ritual as a "mute gesture," my approach diverges from his understanding of this gesture: a ritual event such as Kalandar does not necessarily actualize a mythology. What, then, could Kalandar actualize?

Despite its ambivalences, Turner's use of *communitas* is beneficial for seeking answers to this question. On the one hand, as we have seen, Turner adopts *communitas* to diverge from structuralist-functionalist interpretations of celebrations, yet only to again posit it as the revitalizer of social structure. On the other hand, he conceptualizes *communitas* also as "a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, and a storehouse of possibilities" (1980:12). Turner's definition of a "sense of community," or *communitas* resonates with the Liverans' reasons for doing Kalandar: both as a spontaneous folk theatre and an annual obligatory ritual. How can we further analyze what this obligation actualizes?

5) Conclusion

In his study of the origin and future of community, Roberto Esposito tackles the history and the etym of "community" by means of unpacking the Latin origin of the term, namely, *communitas* (2009). First, *commun* is what is not *proper*. Hence community is not constituted on property. This initial point is crucial considering Livera's history

(“messy,” as the Larhanli describes it). One could argue that what makes Liverans Liverans is the Greek property of which ownership occurred either by occupation or by state allocations. The villagers have been the guilty parties in an anti-Christian game of violent wealth re-distribution. This violence reached such an extent that the occupiers and legal settlers had disputes at the expense of expulsions and killings. By far this could be the most “historically” plausible explanation for Livera’s uniqueness; a marker that nearly all Maçka residents mention as Livera’s *messiness*. Yet we still cannot discern the Liverans’ reason for doing Kalandar by obligation. Note that Esposito’s *communitas* is nothing but obligation. How does something communal become an obligation?

Besides the etym *commun*, *communitas* has another etym that includes a larger semantic complexity: *munus* (Esposito 2009: 6). *Munus* refers to both obligation (*dovere*), as in debt as Esposito reiterates, and the gift (*dono*) (4). Esposito then rightly asks how gift giving becomes obligatory. It becomes so because subjects of the community are “united by an obligation in the sense that one say ‘I owe you something’” (6). What could this obligation be concerning the Liveran community? First and foremost, though Liverans are aware of the fact that most are not the original Liverans, they are proud of their locale to an extent that they use its former Greek name instead of its legal given name, Yazlik. Although they are aware of the fact that they *owe* the physical village (land and property) to Greeks, in their irritation towards curiosity about the Greekness of Kalandar, they indicate that they were given more than land and property—particularly the past that appears in the form of ossuaries in the stories of deportations. This is a gift that is impossible to accept and pass to a third party—as if the

ritual is an obligation that has never been fulfilled. Note that Livera folklorist Karagöz calls Kalandar an inheritance (*miras*) from the Greeks, and Salih, the villager at the old tea-lounge, names it a *mission* that would make the Greeks proud.

Esposito indeed names *communitas* as an obligation constantly lacking, always in the making (2009: 6-7). Reminiscent of the death drive, for Esposito *communitas* is the exposure of the subject to “what interrupts its closing and turns it upside down.” (7) Put in mythological terms, this definition is rather Dionysian. As in the dual nature of this mythic deity, this exposure of subjects (hence the community) to constant interruption (i.e. never ending obligation), is both “hospitable and hostile” (8), exactly as the wolves are described in Livera. As seen in Okan’s and Isak’s unenthusiastic yet obligatory approach to Kalandar preparations and celebrations, this New Year’s play not only makes the community (this is why it is a tradition, not vice-versa), but also creates a locus through which obligations both past and future have been conjured. I believe the communal obligation that surrounds Livera is perhaps what makes it both a messy but also a beautiful village in the eyes of their neighbors.

This communal obligation, or *communitas* for Esposito (as constant interruption) and Turner (as fertile nothingness), concerning Liveran’s dedication to Kalandar has caught the attention of folklorists like Metin And, who have examined many seasonal folk plays. Recall that And sees these folk plays as rituals through which its practitioners “supplement themselves with the sacred phenomenon.” What could this sacred phenomenon be, and what does it supplement? By his theorizing of repetition, Gilles Deleuze has already provided possible answers: “When working through of memory is

missing... only the repetition of the knowledge's object" remains. A sacred object that not only does resist remembering, but also the very knowledge that incorporates it.... If one cannot know about this sacred object, how could one capture it? Deleuze explains that by playing, repeating, and enacting, instead of knowing about it, this sacred phenomenon is supplemented into the communal being. This sacred phenomenon, or the object resisting knowledge and knowing, appears in what Duerr calls the dreamtime, during which not only a struggle is engaged against the "forces of darkness," (1987: 33-35) but also the demise of knowledge indexes the dissolving boundaries between the living and the dead, and the man and the anima, and the insider and the outsider. Thus Kalandar-like folk plays against evil beings become obligatory communal events: the staged enactment of evil and its theatrical expulsion constitutes the very communal being, or the sacred phenomenon. According to And, without this "objective supplement" no community proper is possible; neither communal memory, nor knowledge of the origin of the community itself could achieve this task; as Liveran villagers have demonstrated, *doing* Kalandar is what matters, not its mythology nor its memory.

A crucial component of this *communitas*, the community by play/ritual, still entails further attention: dependency on the evil other, confronting of which occurs in the entanglement of fear and fun, chaos and order, or "fructile chaos" (if put in Turner's terms) and obligation and spontaneity. What are the other domains where engagements with evil others take place? Both And's suggestion that the creation of communal sacred phenomenon constitutes a proto-government, and Ginzburg's historical finding that the Anatolian *kalends*, the Eastern Roman monthly folk plays, have indicated these domains.

The Trabzon people's simultaneous emulation and mockery of sovereign power along with their aspirations and confrontations of political authority will cast light on the different forms of the evil other dependency.

CHAPTER THREE: The Conspiratorial Other

After learning of the Karagöz family genealogy and participating in conversations related to Kalandar in the neighboring districts of Maçka, I embarked on the road to Tonya, another mountainous, but more isolated district of Trabzon. I was told to find a young and knowledgeable folkloric dance instructor named Yusuf Kurt. Upon my arrival in Tonya, I met Kurt in a pharmacist's cramped waiting hall. After hearing that I studied Kalandar, Kurt promptly warned me about the cunning conspiracies aimed to present Trabzon as culturally and historically Greek. He implied that my fascination with remnants of the Greek past in Trabzon could not remain naïve ethnographic curiosity; the knowledge could contribute to the "conspiracy." This suspicion about the neutrality of knowledge (of the past and folklore) had dominated my relationship with the Maçkali and was particularly intensified when Kalandar was at stake. Kalandar's withdrawal into conspiracy theories was marked by Greek visitors in Maçka from 2009 and ended in 2012, which cultivated an anxious anticipation of the Greeks' return. "Will they come back? Why did they come in the first place?" were the most frequent questions I heard during my fieldwork in 2012—questions hinting at both the Greek past and the increased presence of Greek and other international tourists visiting the old churches and monasteries today. This chapter therefore examines this period when suspicion of the Christian other culminated in Trabzon. The character of this suspicion, as I will demonstrate, appears as both systematic and spontaneous, and simultaneously as an explanation and cultivation of uncertainty.

These dualities residing in conspiratorial thinking will help us see how power³⁴ is perceived in conspiratorial logic. We have seen in the first chapter how the evil figure of Karakoncoloz has to be expelled during Kalandar; in this chapter I will focus on the specificity of naming the evil power. The evil power expulsion during Kalandar can be examined most productively, I argue, in connection with another performance that aims to name evil powers. This performance, a new form of believing in and living with evil powers, can be detected in the popularity of conspiracy theories in Trabzon and the rest of the eastern Black Sea region in Turkey. Before outlining the connections between Kalandar and conspiracy theories below, I should briefly mention that the pervasion of conspiratorial thinking about evil powers, increased historical attention to the region's multi-ethnic folklore (with Greek and southern Caucasus elements such as Armenian, Georgian, Lazi and Hemshin), and the touristic interest in Christian religious sites occurred roughly during the same time in the 2000s. The three domains, ethnicity, folklore, and history, were no longer under the nation-state's patronage and subject to its claim of homogeneity; quite the contrary, the state now placed greater value on the touristic potential of the region. Historical revelations about the region and increasing reference to sites as Christian has not only attributed new meanings (and confusion) to existing folkloric rituals (Kalandar), but has at the same time required new ways for naming evil powers. The suspicion of the other and the urgency to name it as a powerful agent (as Greek, Christian, or Israeli) signal a deeper kind of suspicion, as individual family stories from Livera will show us. I will draw on scholarship of witchcraft and

³⁴ In this chapter, power will refer to the ability of secrecies that are believed to, first, orchestrate historical and folkloric revelations, and second, to reside in the ethnic and religious other. Chapter three, on the other hand, will extensively cover how belief in this power shapes the Trabzonlu's relationships with the state.

magic to discuss this culmination of the suspicion of the other, which, as we will see, is also the suspicion of the self. This dual suspicion is best embodied in conspiracy theories, which is an investment in uncertainty as much as an explanation or naming of the evil power.

1) Beyond Folklore: Conspiracy Theoricism

In one of Maçka City's rare sunny afternoons, I stopped by the small cabin-like shelter where cab drivers gather over tea and wait for customers. These cab drivers, who provided my transportation to the highland villages, were the natives of these villages, including Livera. A familiar, yet troubled acquaintance, Eyup, was with us that day. I found my interactions with Eyup unnerving because, first, he was never hesitant to expose the symbols of his affiliation with the local branch of the ultranationalist Nationalist Action Party (MHP)³⁵, and second, because he would never miss an opportunity to mock me in public.

The sense of unease I felt around Eyup began with his ambivalent remarks about my interest in Kalandar. That day with the cab drivers, after directing his yellow eyes on me, Eyup approached me, saying "Well, well, the American spy is among us. Y'all better speak your word carefully." With a skeptical smirk, he grabbed my shoulder and in alarmingly serious tone, said, "We know that you are here to ship information about us to Americans... but, of course we know that you will take what you learn here about

³⁵ His thick, pointy, and downward moustache has been the symbol of the crescent moon, the emblem of the MHP. Eyup's nationalist pride was also visible on his car's back window, where there was a large sticker reading "Nationalist," (milliyetci) adorned with triple crescents from the MHP's emblem.

Kalandar and us to Americans... Yet, for our benefit, right? They will use this information for the development of Maçka.” Was he sardonic or serious? Was his constant suspicion of me, expressed frequently in a joking manner, related to his political affiliation—MHP affiliates are notoriously conspiratorial like any ultranationalist party members—or to something else beyond institutional political identifications? In Maçka my curiosity about Kalandar made villagers suspicious of my naivety about the potency of this ethnographic information. As in Favret-Saada’s ethnography in the French village of Bocage, Liverans, too, seem to be aware of one fact: “knowing for the sake of knowing was unthinkable” (1981: 9).

Studying witchcraft in a French village not only allowed Favret-Saada to grapple with grandiose concepts such as “belief in evil powers, uncertainty, and suspicion,” but also clearly demonstrated that ethnography of suspicion cannot be done without the anthropologist being stuck in a web of belief in witchcraft. In Maçka, as glimpsed through my encounter with Eyup, the web that I have been caught in is made of conspiracy theories in place of witchcraft.

When in Bocage, Favret-Saada was dissuaded from examining witchcraft for she would not have been able to handle the potency of it; instead, it was suggested that she study folklore—a field of knowledge believed to bring no harm. Unlike Bocage, knowledge about folklore (Kalandar) in Maçka is not deemed innocent; quite the contrary, it is at the very epicenter of the quartet of power, uncertainty, belief and suspicion. In this chapter, I examine the conspiratorial suspicion that arises particularly

when Kalandar is at stake. In so doing, I argue that conspiracy theories should be studied as an occult practice akin to witchcraft and magic.

Studying witchcraft ethnographically has long enabled anthropology to holistically examine a range of topics such as “belief in good and evil, causation, divination and healing” (Fevret-Saada 1991: 10-11). The ability to study seemingly unrelated aspects of social life together, as Evans-Pritchard and Max Gluckman did, has given credibility to the early studies of witchcraft (Mitchell 1956, Turner 1957, Marwick 1965).

The holistic approach of these studies, however, has tended to see the prevalence of witchcraft in a given society as a “symptom,” through which grandiose topics such as social change and colonialism could be analyzed (Douglas 1970 xx). Later generations of anthropologists, critical of the structuralist-functionalist approach of the earlier scholarship of witchcraft, have focused on this occult practice’s relationship with modernity—not as its anomaly, but as its unanticipated outcome (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, Geschiere 1997). In tandem with post-colonial critique, the literature on contemporary witchcraft has demonstrated how this practice is not a remnant of tradition, but a modern phenomenon taking new forms in reaction to emerging power relationships under regimes of new nation-states and capitalist markets (Geschiere 1988). Such a stress on the “ambiguity of power” (Moore and Sanders 2001: 5) has not only historicized the topic, but also enabled us to analyze the very metaphysics of the state and the capital. This shift in the focus of power and how hidden forces shape certain cultural forms has paved the way for the conjoint study of conspiracy theories and occultism (West and

Sanders 2003)—another validation of this chapter’s study of the suspicion of power in knowledge, especially the knowledge about the past and present other.

“Varied social experiences of global power” and this power’s claim to “transparency” animates Harry West and Tod Sander’s interest in conspiracy theories (2003: 15). While seeking to demonstrate that conspiracy theories are constructions of truth against the hegemonic discourses of transparency (of markets by IMF, politics by national governments, etc.), they meanwhile show how this recent “modern” tension between conspiracy and transparency shares commonalities with “traditional” occult cosmologies. One presumption, according to West and Sanders, in studying occult practices enables us to analyze them along with conspiracies theories: both conspiratorial logic and occult cosmologies regard “power in operation in secrecy to fulfill its objectives” (*passim*). While searching for ways in which to study conspiracy theory alongside traditional play/ritual, I focus on the Trabzonlu’s reasons to deploy conspiracy theories. In this chapter, I therefore ask what could the power in this province of Turkey be—the power that is believed to conspire against the will and well-being of the community.

My reason for focusing on conspiracy theories, however, is not akin to West and Sanders’ method of analyzing one social-political phenomenon (conspiracy theories) to explicate and criticize the other (discourses of transparency). Theirs, and other anthropological studies’, efforts in studying various forms of suspicion in relation to the canonical topics of the discipline (magic, witchcraft, occultism, etc.) seems like a return to the classical conceptualization of these topics as a matter of “social diagnostics.”

Simply put, when a power source—whether it is the government, the IMF, or a figure of authority—declares a transaction to be transparent, it immediately casts a suspicion that secrecy might reside beneath the superficial truth. Hence every revelation leads to more secrets and suspicion. In this chapter, I adopt this approach that points at the impossibility of neutral revelations, particularly folkloric and historical ones in the context of Trabzon. But I also diverge from this approach. While holding onto West and Sanders’ approach that posits power (always in the form of institutions) to fathom the new forms of suspicion, I rather draw on the complexities of Evans-Pritchard’s understanding of witchcraft—a cultural approach that is “concerned with... systems of [social] thought” (Moore and Sanders 2003: 6). Similarly, I view conspiracy theories as a witchcraft-like systematic thought regarding sociality.

Evans-Pritchard’s classical work on the Azande witchcraft highlights one beneficial point for this chapter: the evilness of power. Among the Azande, the temporality of unfortunate incidents, such as the collapse of a granary on top of people sitting in its shade, are explained as the transaction of evil powers. Yet the recognition of these evil powers could never disrupt the social harmony of the Azande society for witchcraft is a “socially relevant cause... that allows interventions [with oracles] and determines social behavior” (1976: 25). Without reaching Evans-Pritchard’s conclusion that Azande witchcraft builds on [social] knowledge of cause and effect, hence “a way to explain what is unexplainable” (Moore and Sanders: 6), I argue that the belief in the evilness of power resides in the way power is believed to work: always in the background, conspiring. Therefore, the commonality between witchcraft and conspiracy

theories doesn't reside only in their engagement with power, but also with the qualities of this power, which appears in hindsight and thus reveals its conspiracy. Thus I spin what Evans-Pritchard argues about the witchcraft on its head: belief in evil power, such as witchcraft, or conspiracies, is a short circuit in the chain of events of cause and effects, not only is witchcraft about “explaining what is unexplainable,” it also invests in the unexplainable and the uncertain.

The prevalence of conspiracy theories in Trabzon will demonstrate why and how this type of investment gains popularity and how it regards historical and folkloric revelations and clarifications as a threat. The suspicion about knowledge in folklore and the revealed past will also show how conspiracy theories' engagement with power resides beyond the social costs of modernity, markets and state politics. As Dominic Boyer writes in his study of *Stammtisch*, the (East) German regular's table where past and present political incidents are conspiratorially explained, conspiracy theories “not only reveal but also cultivate doubt and uncertainty” (Boyer 2006: 332). In the context of Trabzon, I discuss why investing in suspicion and uncertainty becomes an urgent task.

Dualities in Conspiracy Theories

The way in which folklorist and publisher Omer Asan was stigmatized in Turkey is an example of how cultural and historical revelations can be deemed conspiratorial. Asan published his first book entitled *Pontic Culture* in 1995 and was immediately

charged with accusations of “separatism.”³⁶ *Pontic Culture* was nothing but a pure descriptive folkloric and ethnographic account of Asan’s village, Karacam, or Ogene, the former Greek name the villagers prefer. Asan’s book delineates the presence of Greek elements in Trabzon’s rural culture: the province residents, particularly in the highland villages, have long spoken the Pontic Greek language, Romeyka, and have blended the folklores of various ethnic groups in the area. Right after the *Pontic Culture’s* publication, a local court released the verdict of its indictment. On a television news show, in defense of his book’s innocence, Asan was scolded by the host for his unintentional mistake: serving the Pontic Conspiracy, a secret Greek agenda to reclaim northeastern Turkey.

When I asked Asan about his days of publicity in 1995, he said what happened to him was a spontaneous, almost arbitrary reaction both by the state and the nationalist groups. “Without knowing anything about the content of my book, both the court and the nationalists attacked me,” he explained. According to Asan this could have happened to anyone; writers of books with similar contents had not been persecuted. While warning me to be careful with my Kalandar research, Asan also noted that I might be absolutely safe with my findings, or even be “hung up high like a flag” (*bayrak gibi direge cekerler adami*). What drives the Trabzonlu to deem folkloric and historical studies as conspiratorial engagements to a degree that could incite to hang up the curious voices? Why have revelations of this sort incited fervent reactions from both the state and its

³⁶ Separatism (*boluculuk* in Turkish) has been referred to as the agenda of the armed Kurdish movement that once aimed to establish a separate nation-state. Since then, the term has the connotation of “the highest crime against the Turkish nation.” With Asan’s trial, it was the first time “separatism” was enunciated defining a case related to Trabzon, the region publicly known as the fortress of Turkish nationalism.

long-lasting companion, the ultra-nationalist block? Could this be, as the Turkish left has reiterated, an outcome of the systematic paranoia of the Turkish state ideology against anything (cultural, historical, etc.) non-Turkish and non-Muslim, or, as Asan argues above, an absolutely spontaneous and random attack on a historian/writer?³⁷

The ambivalence surrounding conspiracy theories, that is, whether they are systematic or spontaneous, or products of reason or paranoia has puzzled an array of literature, not least anthropology. George Marcus, for instance, defines conspiracy theories as “paranoia within reason” (Marcus 1999). Yet, before Marcus’s groundbreaking work that rethinks conspiracy theories as a logic that is inextricably reasonable and paranoid, the preceding scholarship has tended to locate conspiratorial thinking in pure radical suspicion, paranoia, or authoritarianism (Hofstadter 1966, Lipset and Raab 1978). Not limiting conspiracy theories’ allure to psychology, the second wave of conspiracy theory scholarship has managed to look for the roots of conspiratorial thinking in socio-economic processes, such as globalization and unemployment, racial discrimination and risk. Anthropology’s initial response to this socio-economic explanation of conspiracy theory has been to expand the scope to non-western societies. The prevalence of conspiracy theories has now found a place in the torment of development and modernization, taking the shape of occult practices and post-colonial suspicion.

³⁷ One radical difference between the tone of conspiracy theories in Turkey and elsewhere should be noted. Contra the general scheme of a conspiracy, particularly American variants suspicious of “deep politics” of hegemonic power (West and Sanders 25), Turkish versions never posit the Turkish state in league with conspirators. Instead, conspirators within (Kurds, capitalists, the EU sympathizers) and without have long victimized the Turkish state, hence the nation. I will discuss this belief in the “victimized state” in chapter three, yet note that “conspiracies targeting Trabzon” is believed to be the local chapter of this larger scheme, or “plan” as one frequently hears in Trabzon, of manipulating and controlling Turkey.

Suspicion in the form of conspiracy theory in Trabzon, however, did not become public because of a socio-economic downturn (Albayrak 2003, Bakirezer and Demirer 2009). Quite the contrary; the broad popularity of conspiracy theories and their visibility in both local media and everyday life coincide with the economic boom of 2002-2011, which brought an increase in tourism related revenue to Trabzon, and particularly to the Maçka valley, home of many Christian religious sites and national parks. A visible increase in service sector employment followed this economic boom. This era of growth, however, coincided with various cases of violence that the local media outlets did not hesitate to relate to “plots set against Trabzon” (Trabzon uzerine oynanan oyunlar) (Kutlu 2005).

The crime scene of the most shocking Trabzon-related killing, however, was not Trabzon, but Istanbul. Prominent Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who long worked to seek the public recognition of Turkey’s foundational “violent act,” the Armenian Genocide of 1915, was killed in broad daylight. Dink’s murderer, a 19-year-old, traveled almost 700 miles from Trabzon to Istanbul to perpetuate the crime. Under custody he testified that he could not tolerate Dink’s “insult to Turkishness”—a then-definition of crime in the Turkish penal code, according to which Dink was previously put on trial. Dink’s murder aptly rendered Trabzon the center of public attention in Turkey. What was happening there? Why did a young man travel all the way from Trabzon to kill an Armenian journalist in Istanbul? Was he just a puppet in the hands of the notorious “deep-state”³⁸ that ordered him to kill Dink because of the latter’s

³⁸ For two brief anthropological analyses of the popular belief in the existence of the “deep state,” see Jenny White, *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*, New Haven: Princeton University Press, 2012; and

persistence on the historical factuality of the Armenian Genocide, a historical event that both the Turkish government and a vast majority of Turks adamantly deny?

As the local Trabzon news archives show, this culmination of suspicion of secret organizations and the increasing violence against Christians has a history in the province. In 1997 a mob refused to let a ship unload its Greek tourists, suspecting a secret meeting to re-establish the Empire of Trabzon, the Greek Orthodox Empire that ruled the province until its conquest by the Ottoman Empire in 1461. Groups of local people had been frequenting the woods near the town at night to hunt down priests believed to be hiding there after facilitating local Muslims' conversion to Christianity. Stories reached remote districts about secret dorm rooms in the Catholic church in the city of Trabzon where youth were converted to Christianity and then shipped to Greece. In 2006 an Italian priest belonging to the same church was fatally stabbed. The killer stated afterward that he could no longer stand by and watch as his people were converted to Christianity. The suspicion of anything reminiscent of Christianity peaked in 2009 when the balconies of a scenery tower were removed because the architectural feature was perceived as a giant cross. Rumors circulated that it was the sign of an unknown but powerful agent of malicious Christian conspiracies. Even during the early stages my fieldwork, a professor at the local university warned me about the "local sensitivity" (*halkin hassasiyeti*) pertaining to Christianity: "You may even curse someone with the heaviest slur, but never use the term Greek [Orthodox]." Similarly, another professor who helped me connect with an isolated village where a local dialect of arguably ancient Greek language

Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*, New Haven: Princeton University Press, 2002.

(Romeyka) is spoken was yelled at when on the phone with a resident from the village. The villager the professor phoned was suspicious of my interest in Kalandar, which could jeopardize his reputation in the village. I could hear him shouting over the phone protesting to the professor against “summoning anyone who conspires to relate them to Greeks.” The professor’s response, on the other hand, was surprising. To soothe the angry man on the phone, he explained that what I did was quite the contrary; to prove that Kalandar was Turkish in origin, not Greek. By no means did I introduce my research to this professor as a study aiming to prove the Turkish origins of Kalandar. Probably he thought he could help me gain access to the information about Kalandar in a secure way only while presuming that my interest in the topic had nothing to do with its alleged Greek connections.

During the early days of my stay in Maçka, my enthusiasm to learn about the old and new ways of celebrating Kalandar was taken suspiciously, as happened in Trabzon City. I had the impression that the information generated from my research and its possible “use” provoked a strange curiosity among Livera’s bureaucrats/public workers. Şakir, for instance, the village bureaucrat who claimed Hesiod wrote his grandmother’s story, questioned me again and again to learn what exactly I did for research. Multiple times he asked, “why do *they* want you to study our Kalandar,” and “where will you store your research findings?” His skeptical tone and gestures made me feel as if I was being interrogated; moreover, Şakir managed to confuse me about the intention of his queries. Was he acting as a villager who had participated in Kalandar various times before or as a bureaucrat suspicious of a stranger? The pronoun “they” in Şakir’s questions was a

reference to “Americans” and its utterance was common when I introduced myself to others—an elementary school teacher and a retired police officer, both from Livera, asked me the same questions. The initial encounters with these village-bureaucrats conveyed the same message: studying folklore, collecting local information without a [political] purpose would not be convincing; moreover, it might inadvertently serve a bad (foreign) intention. No one seemed to be satisfied with my explanation that my research would serve my own academic career and the body of information collected from it would become my dissertation.³⁹ Instead, I was given the impression that a research project like this must have had a larger goal that was beyond studying Kalandar, and the data could serve for a different, perhaps secret, intention.

What could this intention to study Kalandar be—unbeknownst to its researcher? Another common question, in addition to why I study Kalandar, could help us lay out this larger, and allegedly “concealed” intention: “Is it all true what Ilyas Karagöz has written about Kalandar?” Remember that Karagöz is a respected, but also ostracized, village elder and historian who has written not only about the Greek origins of Kalandar, but also about etymological origins of Trabzon hamlet and village names. The reason for Karagöz’s ostracism from the community was partly due to the villagers’ awe of his knowledge of local history, and partly Karagöz’s self-isolation due to his apathy in relation to his fellow villagers’ suspicion and fear of anything related to Greeks. My almost daily interactions with Karagöz had intensified the villagers’ suspicion of my presence at Karagöz’s house.

³⁹ Yet, I should add that the village youth showed almost no interrogative approach to my presence. Instead, they were much more inclined to learn the origin and the history of the festival.

My conversation with one cabdriver, who drove me regularly to the village, embodied this suspicion. Zekeriya, a Livera native, earned his living as a cabdriver, as did many village youth. While driving me to Karagöz's house, he told me the story of his family: one side from Tonya, the other from Of had settled in the village after the Greeks' deportation in 1924. Yet he immediately added, "No Greek heritage in me, thank God." But why did he feel the need to give out this familial information? Over several rides in his cab, Zekeriya told me about his troubled relation with local history—at a very criminal level. He was imprisoned because of archeological artifact smuggling: he illegally excavated abandoned Greek houses and was caught while attempting to sell his "treasures," as he called a virgin Mary icon and a dagger. He had a troublesome relationship with Karagöz, who was, albeit in a very different way than Zekeriya, also an archeology enthusiast. Once Zekeriya had stopped at Karagöz's house where a relic saved from the then-Greek Metropolitan Church sat by the main gate. He reprimanded Karagöz for publicly exhibiting a Christian icon—it was a stone carved sun disk with an embedded cross. "You are a Muslim man, shame on you," he yelled at the old man. I found Zekeriya's reaction to Karagöz shocking because even if the majority of the Liverans disapproved of Karagöz's "Greek-crazy" enthusiasm—"Yunan hayrani" they called him—they never dared to directly speak of their disapproval. Moreover, Zekeriya warned Karagöz, saying "You are not aware who you serve, old man!" Karagöz had only grinned and had not taken him seriously. Who could it be that a historian inadvertently served? It was Zekeriya who hinted at what this interest in local history could serve:

Z: *Resurrection* of old church and monasteries (kilise ve manastirlarin canlanmasi) is not a coincidence, of course [referring to touristic and historical interest in Christian sites in Trabzon].

M: So you are saying that there is a “plan” behind it?

Z: Of course, an Israeli plan!

M: Israeli? Why would Jews want to resurrect old Greek churches? What is their benefit in it?

Z: Hocam (professor, he calls me), how can't you see it? Both Christians and Jews are the enemies of Islam.

One should disregard Zekeriya's pseudo-Islamism here. As his adventurous life with Christian relic smuggling has shown, he did not refrain from making a living from Christian artifacts. Not to mention that as a cab driver his primary customers are tourists visiting the Christian sites. But note how he deemed the production of knowledge that could possibly reveal a Greek past not as neutral scholarship, and further believed that this scholarship served a secret agenda against “Islam”—by which Zekeriya meant Turks⁴⁰, in particular the proud Trabzonlu. Conspiracy theory is commonly seen as the discourse connecting the dots, but as the above variant in Trabzon demonstrates, it is also a conviction that points at how the local perception of threats spreads to national and even global levels. How does this conspiratorial epidemic work?

⁴⁰ For a comparative study on Turkey and Poland, examining how religious and national identities overlap, see Chris Hann, “The Nation-State, Religion, and Uncivil Society: Two Perspectives from the Periphery,” *Daedalus*, vol. 126, no. 2, 1997.

One may wonder if an eccentric figure with criminal background, like Zekeriya, is the best example to understand the popularity of conspiratorial suspicion in everyday life in Maçka. A story of another youth, Baris, one of the Kalandar players, will demonstrate how widespread this type of suspicion has become. Baris, a 19-year-old unemployed high school graduate,⁴¹ aspired to be a cabdriver like his peers. Being unemployed made Baris available labor for the elders of the village, and he seemed eager to help as much as he could. Ever cheerful and neighborly, Baris was an unlikely source for Israeli and Greek conspiracies, of which reality Zekeriya was certain. But Baris proved my assumptions wrong. After I expressed my surprise in the way Zekeriya treated their elder Karagöz, in a calm tone Baris told me that things might not be as they seemed. When in high school, he and his classmates were suspicious of their philosophy teacher: he was a bit too interested in Maçka's Christian sites. With an audacity rarely observed among teenagers, they took their suspicion to their parents and later "heard" (duyduk ki...) that their teacher was under the scrutiny of the gendarmerie intelligence service. That teacher was never charged with any crime, but his folder was classified under "Christian missionary activity" (misyonerlik faaliyeti) and he was said to be in contact with foreign groups in a campaign aiming, if I may use Zekeriya's term, to *resurrect* churches and monasteries abandoned by Greeks.

Active touristic interest in former Christian sites, and proliferation of historical and folkloric scholarship has incited conspiracy theories in Trabzon, but one particular event has indeed *resurrected* Greeks in Maçka in flesh and blood. On January 4, 2009, a group of Greek visitors came to Livera in *Karakoncoloz* costumes to celebrate the New

⁴¹ A year later he became the village school bus driver, a sign that he earned the villagers' trust.

Year by acting in the Kalandar play. They were motivated to participate in Kalandar because their grandparents were originally from Livera or surrounding villages. The Greek visitors' ancestors had been deported during the population exchange in 1924 and some of them had promised their grandparents that they would visit the homeland. The Greek visitors were welcomed, but also confronted by feelings of awe and suspicion on the part of some of the Muslim Turkish inhabitants of the village. One group of villagers protested the unexpected visit and did not participate in Kalandar. Questions were raised: "What do the Greeks intend to do in our Turkish village? Why do they want to celebrate the New Year here? How do they know about the Livera villagers' Kalandar festival?"

In 2010, the same band of Greeks returned to Livera for Kalandar, bringing with them their own Karakoncoloz costumes. The village abounded with Greek and Turkish celebrants. Every celebrant seemed to enjoy the visit since it was not an entirely unexpected event compared to the previous year. The only unpleasant incident was a minor fight between a few Greek visitors and a senior villager who shouted at the visitors for walking over his father's grave—not a surprising reaction, considering the deceased was buried in vegetable gardens adjacent to houses. The Greeks, however, by no means intended to dishonor a grave. I was told that they were simply dancing in costumes without knowing that they were next to a tomb. This incident seemed to strain the relationship between the Liverans and visiting Greeks. The Greeks did not journey up to the village for Kalandar the next year; rather, they performed the dances and skits in Maçka City. In 2011, the year I participated in Kalandar for the first time, the Greeks did not come to Maçka at all. I was told "a few extremists" (bir kac asiri) had protested the

Greeks' presence in their premises, despite the village headman's eagerness to host them. Karagöz, however, thought that it was the headman who had irritated the Greeks. "He [the headman] received orders from the then-governor to rile everyone in the village against Greeks' participation in Kalandar. Their plan worked, and then of course, the Greeks heard that they were not wanted. Why would they visit a place where they are not wanted?" In response to my surprise that the village headman disapproved of the Greeks' visit, Karagöz corrected me by saying "His father, [a former headman, and the agha in the 1920s] visited Greece multiple times, they have relatives there." Karagöz was clearly implying that the Livera's headman had Greek kin. But why would someone of Greek descent, oppose a band of Greeks attending a folkloric event? The anticipation in Maçka as to whether the Greeks might return will shed light on this puzzling suspicion of the religious/ethnic other that is intimately close to the self.

During my days before the festival in 2012, I happened to witness this strange anticipation of the Greek return. There was neither public unrest nor a wave of rumors; yet a sincere curiosity about the Greeks' possible visit was in the air, especially among the village youth. Since I stationed myself at the hotel where the Greeks had stayed during Kalandar, the village youth were constantly asking me if I knew whether the Greeks would come. My negative answers caused some pensive looks. Over my conversations with local shop owners, I was told that the Greeks might actually show up at the last minute; however, when I reported this to the youth organizers of Kalandar, they immediately reacted scornfully to the shop owners who gave me such information. Shop owners in Maçka were "greedy mongers salivating at Greek euros" (Euro gorunce

salyasi akan tucrar). In his study of violence against Tamils in Sri Lanka, Pradeep Jeganathan discuss how “anticipation of violence” becomes a tactic for Tamil identity (1999: 115). Although Jeganathan’s study focuses on physical violence and its anticipation among the Tamil, it is still beneficial for understanding the Maçka Turks’ anticipation of the Greeks to come. The narrative of anticipation, Jeganathan explains, is never related to one event, but a series of events (119), hence a temporal collision: “they are both about the past and the present; about recollections as well as anticipation” (117). This anticipation cements Tamilness.

In Maçka, the anticipation of the Greeks to come, however, gave way to more suspicion—as we briefly saw in the youth’s distrust of local shop owners. Whether Greeks would come became a stressful curiosity day-by-day until additional news reached the village: If not all Greeks, Kostas, the Greek who organized the pervious Kalandar visits would come. Yet the source of this information was unreliable. From the Greeks’ interpreter it was learned that Kostas might visit Livera; however, the interpreter was a Romeyka speaking native from the Ogene village, whose folklore, featured in Omer Asan’s book, *Pontic Culture*, incited the conviction that there was a Greek conspiracy. The Greeks’ interpreter was an untrustworthy person for Liverans, not only because he was a Greek speaking Turk, but also because he was once banned from entering Turkey. But how could a person banned from Turkey help the Greeks communicate in a Turkish village? Asking this question proved my naivety one more time: He could come and wander in Turkey freely thanks to his “business” in Belgium—an implication not only of dual citizenship, but also the interpreter’s shady connections

with the EU, an agent that is commonly featured in conspiracy theories all around Turkey. Note how the anticipation of the Greeks' visit in daily conversation fueled more suspicion, to a degree that it encompassed a Romeyka speaking man and the EU. As in the Tamil anticipation of violent conflict, the anticipation of the Greeks' visit in Maçka was also surrounded by past and present events.

Yet the sense of anticipation created more suspicion and the conspiracy theorists were not satisfied with any counter argument—a property of conspiracy theory, which, after hearing my report of the above conspiracy theory, a shop owner affirmed: “In Maçka we are suspicious of everything, even the things we come with... we do this just for the sake of being suspicious.” I will now examine how this essential aspect of conspiratorial logic works. In order to do so, as West and Sanders remind us, we need to focus on the mechanism of these theories, rather than their veracity (2003: 15).

2) A Folk Historiography

How and why do conspiracy theories in Trabzon orchestrate suspicion? A conspiracy theorist is never satisfied with factual evidence, but is instead continually caught up in the ways in which the act of speaking/writing, even curiosity (such as mine in Kalandar) secretly signals something else: the conspiring, hence evil, power. For conspiratorial logic the meaning in counter-argumentation never dissipates the uncertainty, moreover it intensifies it. To ponder how Trabzon conspiracy theories' investment in uncertainty functions, it's helpful to consider them alongside Livera's annual play/ritual, Kalandar. Critical anthropological studies, too, find a similar voice in

occult practices. For instance in exorcism (Scott 1994), and in spirit possessions and medium sessions (Morris 2000, Ivy 1995), the materiality of language (the sound or script) receives an outer-worldly quality diffusing from different realms. These realms could potentially inhere the evil (like *yaktovil* in Sinhala exorcism, (Scott 1994, Perera 2001) or the dead (Ivy 1995, Nelson 2009). In her analysis of blind mediums in Mount Osore in Japan, the site of the dead, Marylyn Ivy suggests that the material dimension of ritual language captures, without referencing, abject experiences of death or trauma that exceed conscious commemoration and memorialization (1995). The skits of expelling evil Karakoncoloz during the masked play of Kalandar could recall the traces of memories that are never fully erased, but at the same time do not fit in national or cultural conceptions and identities coherently. However, Kalandar *used to be* a good method in times when the certainty of Liverans' religious and ethnic background was not at stake. The Greeks' initial visit in 2009 disrupted this safe uncertainty and exposed an aspect of the ostensible Turkishness of Kalandar. After this event, explaining the Greeks' presence via conspiracy intensified in Maçka. Therefore, conspiracy theories' speculation about the presence of Greeks and later the anticipation of their return, along with a distrust in historical and folkloric revelations should be seen as an effort to reinstall this uncertainty.

Approaching conspiracy theory from the angle of occult performance provides us with a vantage point from which we can observe how simultaneous explanation and investment in uncertainty work in conspiracy theories. Certain popular and academic writings on conspiracy theories equate the pervasiveness of the phenomenon (to an extent rightfully) with populist right-wing politics (Fenster 2008, Clarke 2002). However, they

seem to attribute a “cognitive failure” to conspiricist logic (Clarke 2002: 281) and attack the cultural studies literature, particularly John Fisk’s approach to the topic, because the latter sees an “empowering” and even “anti-bourgeois” aspect in conspiracy theories (281). What entraps both camps is the impulse to reduce conspiracy theories to a non-sense articulation of irrelevant topics, or the overemphasis on conspiracy theorists’ claims to absolute truth as largely an anti-hegemonic discourse.

On the surface, conspiracy theories search for absolute truth, but the conspiracy theorist’s way of seeing the world signals more than this. The dualities in conspiratorial thinking reach their peak when a conspiracy theory is heard: the conspiracy-teller is well aware that a secret power or organization has victimized us, yet it is only the conspiracy-teller who *knows* how we are bonded in a conspiracy and who pities those who cannot see the truth that he can touch—as Zekeriya did when I could not see how Israel was involved in the Greek conspiracy. A conspiricist is hence both the knowing subject and the victimized object (all Muslim Turks of Trabzon, as in Zekeriya’s story) in the conspiracy plot he narrates. As for the indubitable knowing of the conspiricist, with respect to the paranoid, Lacan reminds us that, “the speech of the paranoid is never a ‘disinterested communication’ but always ‘bears a witness’” (cited in Song 2010: 121). Hence, like the paranoid, a conspiracy theorist not only believes in the plot but also knows that it is the absolute truth. In this ritual of knowing, as Song shows, what the conspiricist bears witness to is the impossibility of truthful referencing (123). This is why Song adopts “trauma” to unravel the dual nature of the conspiratorial thinking. As he further notes about the Labor Day pigeon-shoot in Hegins, this paranoid-traumatic

subjectivity gains a second layer when the matter is the un-articulated “inanimate” past that is recalled in the “clarity” of the present. Hegins conspiricists’ method shows how the truth—so obvious but conspired against by the media, Jew, etc.—is impossible to reach and must therefore be supplemented with an abruptly emergent gesture: the pigeon-shoot.

Let us turn to the relevance of the conspiracy theories by conjuring up another gesture, Kalandar. When the people of Livera resettled in a ghost town deserted by the deported Greeks and listened to the stories of what happened to the former owners of their houses from the seven remaining Muslim families, they may have re-conceptualized the Kalandar as a means of referring to that memory. This is why, I think, the content of the costumed play does not bear great importance for the celebrants; however, the festival time matters. *Doidemekoron*, the twelve days that the evil Karakoncoloz rule the earth, might have been intuitively preserved as a materialization of this memory. This silent pact with ghosts may have been broken not only when the violent past of the region attracted folkloric and historical, and touristic interests, but also when grandchildren of the former Greek residents visited the village. The Greek visitors exposed the necessary link with, but also the inefficacy of, the festival in the operation of traumatic memory, as they had become the primary evil actors in all local conspiracy theories.

Before unpacking the belief in the secret plans of the Greeks, suffice it to mention that Trabzon’s reaction to historical revelations by means of conspiratorial thinking hints at the impossibility of reaching the ethnically and religiously clear past. This impossibility requires a supplementary ritualistic enactment, which is nothing other than

the Kalandar itself. Hence conspiracy theoricism arises as a folk historiography once Greek participation in the festival breaks the silence about the multi-ethnic past comprised of violent episodes.

Conspiracy theoricism as folk historiography resonates with what anthropological scholarship has shown us, that conspiratorial logic claims that the full, absolute truth can never be reached because our (human) ways of knowing and reasoning are always under danger of secretive power and organizations. This paranoia, as Marcus analyzes it, however, resides in the boundaries of reason (Marcus 1999). According to Marcus, dualities are inherent in conspiratorial thinking: “progress and abjection, enchantment and disenchantment... desire and knowledge,” all of which “whispers” the tension located at the core of “optimistic modernity” (17).

Another duality, commented on in the same volume by Stewart and Harding, can be observed in conspiracy theories, for they simultaneously appear as the symptom of and the remedy for the scenarios they narrate. Their contribution to Marcus’ critique of “optimistic modernity” has come, as we have seen, from West and Sanders, who contrast conspiracy theories with mainstream assertions about transparency—of markets, nation-states, and more importantly, history. The strength of West and Sanders’ approach to conspiracy theories lies in their evaluation of ritualistic occultism in relation to conspiratorial thinking. Their methods thus help them to locate the rise of occultism in certain places where a broad belief in conspiring evil powers is at stake. I nonetheless believe that their approach regards conspiracy theoricism as a tool for social diagnostics and reduces its dualities, as Marcus mentions, to a singular cultural reaction to certain

macro policies. As Trabzon conspiracy theories have shown thus far, this form of suspicion can be both systematic and spontaneous, and can simultaneously explain and cultivate more doubt and uncertainty. In addition to these dualities, conspiracy theories reproduce another duality: belief in the power of the other that is wrapped in doubt of the self. This oscillation between the self and the other, I argue, brings conspiracy theories closer to the belief in magic and witchcraft.

Suspicion of the other, suspicion of the Self

A general condition in all conspiracy theories is the conspiracy theorist's firm belief in, and energetic ability to explain what is really happening behind the scenes. We have seen how in Livera this performance of explaining animates the conviction that "Greeks are coming here because they have secret intentions for our land." Yet, this explanation invests in doubt and uncertainty even as it explains what is hidden. What could it be that the Trabzonlu aim to keep in uncertainty?

Yusuf Kurt, the folklorist in Tonya who warned me about the dangers of studying Kalendar, and I ended our conversation by exchanging email addresses. His email address caught my eye and I asked if it meant anything proper. It was in Greek, a referral to his village's old name. At my surprise, he continued: "My last name, (*Kurt*, or wolf in Turkish) comes from our old family name,⁴² *Likoglu*, which was derived from Lykos, that

⁴² The Ottoman Empire did not require its Muslim subjects to have family names; thus tribal and clan names ending with *-oglu* (similar to suffix *-son* in English) were common in the empire. In 1934, the republic, however, mandated that all citizens "choose" official family names—a reform to which many families either responded by registering with derivatives of their old tribal names (keeping the exact tribal

is, wolf in Greek.” Why would one who implies his Greek descent in his email address also believe in Greek conspiracies? This contradiction resonated with similar familial revelations in Livera.

Recall that Livera’s folklorist Karagöz implied that the village headman was of Greek descent. Karagöz also referred to the man who fought with the Greek Kalandar player for dancing on his father’s grave—both the headman and the Greek-fighting-man are from the same family. Further information about long forgotten family members came from other Liverans who were also suspicious of my research on Kalandar. Şakir, for instance, the village-bureaucrat who had questioned my intentions week after week, confessed a critical piece of information about his grandmother—the same grandmother who, according to Şakir, had lived a life that was depicted in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*. While explaining to me how he could have been a Kalandar expert, Şakir complained about Karagöz: “He tends to relate all of his findings to Greeks and Europe.”⁴³ When I asked him what would make him a better expert on Kalandar, he answered with his brief family history: “A Cepni Turk from my father’s side,” he said, but his matrilineal lineage revealed striking information: They were all Greek-speaking people from Yomra, Maçka’s neighboring district.

Şakir was not the only one revealing his Greek connection. One night while having a leisurely drink with a few Liveran youth in a minivan on a hilltop facing the

names was banned) or inventing new last names. Northeastern Turkey has the highest number of family names ending with the suffix *-oglu*, all referring to the tribal and clan origins.

⁴³ During our work on folkloric texts and daily conversations, Karagöz several times contended that the proto forms of European folkloric rituals and plays could be observed in folkloric traditions in the Caucasus, which, according to Karagöz, could be the birth place of Kalandar as well.

Maçka valley, I listened to the brief childhood story of Tuncay.⁴⁴ Tuncay was in league with all the middle-aged men from the village who constantly questioned my presence as a Kalandar researcher. That night he told me that he was concerned I might collect the *wrong information* from the *wrong people*—hinting at Karagöz. He further continued, saying, or maybe threatening, “In the end you will write about this [Kalandar], right? Well, do it, but if we don’t like what you write, we will react accordingly.” But what could it be that Tuncay and his fellow villagers might not like? “Anything that could fuel these people’s [Liverans] anxiety as to why Greeks are coming here,” he answered. I should have understood, he suggested that “Livera was a cosmopolitan village” (kozmpolit bir koy), and this was what made it “unique, and different, say, from the homogenous Larhan.” Tuncay implicated that Greeks and Turks could have intermingled in Livera, and elsewhere, but he also verified what I was told in Larhan—that it was a messy village (karisik bir koy) of illegal settlers from various places. Tuncay continued to explain his family history and Greek connection.

Tuncay was born in a house that was left behind by deported Greeks. Throughout his childhood, they had Greek visitors who came to see their ancestors’ abandoned house, and his father cordially hosted these descendants of the previous household. Tuncay could remember an old villager helping his father with translation during the Greeks’ visits. Yet, his father had several times corrected the interpreter’s translations. If Tuncay’s father was a Greek speaker himself, why did he have “the last Greek-speaking local” (koyun rumca konusan son yerlisi) interpret when Greeks were in his house? As seen in Tuncay’s story of his Greek-speaking father, the highland Trabzonlu did not want

⁴⁴ In chapter four, I will discuss in detail the significance of drinking with men packed in a minivan.

to stand out in public as people with Greek relations. Considering the nation-building project which aimed at ethnic and religious homogeneity, this was a reasonable and popular reflex; yet it still does not explain how this reflex evolved into the massive conspiratorial suspicion of Greeks and Christians in general. As we have seen, Kalandar is at the locus of this suspicion and therefore it should be examined along with conspiracy theories. I will draw on theories of magic and witchcraft to unfold the operation between Kalandar and conspiracy theories.

In his introduction to the work of Marcel Mauss, Levi-Strauss reiterates that Mauss's great contribution to the theory of magic has been the latter's ability to perceive that "as we come to the representation of magical properties, we are in the presence of phenomena similar to those of language" (Levi-Strauss 1987:34; Mauss [1950] 2008:79). However, whereas Levi-Strauss sees Mauss as the champion of locating language at the center of the study of magic, he also critiques Mauss's inability to locate language in the unconscious. For instance, Mauss conceives of *mana*, the Polynesian name for the magical quality in everything and everyone, at the level where "unconscious" and "collective thinking categories" overlap (Levi-Strauss 1987: 35). Here Levi-Strauss's main reason for criticizing Mauss is the latter's reduction of the unconscious and language to the realm of the collective (i.e. the social) (35). For Levi-Strauss, then, this is problematic because the logic of naming the unknown as *Mana* cannot be applied cross-culturally, as a signifier in the universal symbolic system, namely language. In contrast, Levi-Strauss views *mana*, as he does other primitive names such as *wakan* and *orenda*, as a "floating signifier, a "symbol in its pure form" (63-64). A contemporary study of

political violence and naming casts yet another light on the topic of linguistic performances of naming evil powers. James Siegel's study of witchcraft in Indonesia in particular traces the link between conspiratorial suspicion and folkloric play.

In his attempt to understand witchcraft accusations and lynching in post-Suharto Indonesia, James Siegel challenges Levi-Strauss' structural understanding of language. Siegel reminds us that according to Levi-Strauss, symbolic systems are incommensurable; "one cannot translate music into the language." Shamans on the other hand, with the help of floating signifiers, can cure victims of evil powers; for Levi-Strauss, this shows the "effectiveness of the symbols." A shaman, or a witch, as persons considered "off system," can complete (or restore) the symbolic structure by means of a floating signifier. However, names (vocabulary) are less important than the structure here (Levi-Strauss 1967: 198). But Siegel draws out the crucial point that the "witch," as in the sudden emergence of witchcraft accusations and killings, cannot be considered an off-system figure because the system has changed. With the fall of Suharto appeared a mass fear of social disorder (due to the memories of past political violence during regime changes) (225); the pressure to articulate what was happening became intolerable, as Siegel notes. Hence the incommensurability of the systems, the impossibility to articulate the political violence within the new (or any) system, causes more suspicion, which then leads to witchcraft accusations and subsequent killings. The witch, as Siegel notes, is therefore nothing other than "a symptom of the failure to signify" in this picture (228). To make a crude analogy, conspiracy theoricism, as in the case of Indonesian witchcraft accusations, signals "the failure to signify." This is why, after the eastern Black Sea

region was opened to religious tourism, a mass suspicion materialized about why otherwise forgotten people (Greeks) and sites (Churches and Monasteries) were *resurrected*, or were *named* as conspirators, in Siegel's terms.

This urgency to name the evil power in the Javanese context, Siegel writes, is not only due to belief in witchcraft, but also to “a coincidence of factors (i.e. change in the political structure) which compelled villagers to accuse (220). Witchcraft accusations and the concomitant killings, however, do not suffice in explaining the misfortune; quite the contrary, they create more suspicion—not only of the other, but also of one's self because the witch murderer, according to Siegel, asks: “If [my neighbor that I accuse] is a witch, by confronting him, who am I?” (200). This splitting of the self, as Siegel calls it, the suspicion that one could be an evil power agent (witch) as well, intensifies the suspicion particularly when “it names the foreign within oneself as the effect of an alien force hidden under the guise of one's neighbor” (220). Note that in Livera the neighbor accused of being a conspirator is the past Greek neighbor,⁴⁵ who, since 2009, has been under suspicion of conspiring to reclaim the land once belong to him—the land that the present day Turkish Liverans occupied in 1924. This suspicion of the evil plans of the other becomes more sound when Liverans, like Şakir and Tuncay, speak aloud their suspected affinity to Greeks by kinship. Similar to Siegel's witch killers who are sure about the maliciousness of their neighbors and simultaneously suspicious about their own viciousness (as killers); the Liverans too are sure about the powerful schemes of the Greeks even as they are suspicious of their own Turkishness. This suspicion of the other/self, I believe, is the outcome of the first Kalandar visit by Greeks in 2009, after

⁴⁵ Interestingly, the word neighbor in Turkish, *komsu*, is used as a euphemism for Greeks or Greece.

which Kalandar became an issue of unsecured ethnic Turkishness in Livera and Maçka. Conspiracy theories have thus brought back the ethnic guarantee that Kalandar once provided.

In Maçka, Greek conspiracy theories have become prevalent *magically*. Here I use magic akin to Mauss's use of the term, which is "a priori belief in the magic of the other" (2008: 119). For such belief oscillates between self and the other; a magician who is skeptical of the efficacy of one's own magic still believes in that of the other, as Mauss encapsulated the practice's paradoxical character (112-168). But what's "the magic of the other" in the context of Trabzon? We have so far seen how other-dependency resides at the core of conspiratorial thinking. As seen in witchcraft accusations and killings in Indonesia, this other-dependency appears in the form of witchcraft—the Javanese's way of grasping violent political change. Rather than a causal explanation for external phenomena, witchcraft for James Siegel, however, is an attempt to name the "unnameable"—one's "inner witch" (210-233). I argue that the pressing possibility of housing an *inner Greek*, the existence of which Liverans intuit in their lineages, can be considered what is unnameable in the sense Siegel uses the term. But why does this possibility take the form of suspicion of the power, or magic, of the Greeks who could reclaim the land and revive Christianity in Trabzon? What could this magical power of Greeks be?

3) Conclusion

In analyzing the rise of nationalism and xenophobic conspiratorial thinking in post-socialist eastern Europe, Slavoj Žižek notes an “inner split” that resonates with both Javanese suspicion of witches and Trabzon Turks’ conspiratorial suspicion of Greeks. From his quintessential psychoanalytical perspective, Žižek locates this split in the unconscious, within which the other is believed to prevent the self from reaching his full identity. Yet it is only this sense of suspicion of the other that could solidify the identity of the self. The other embodies this inner split: “it is in us but more than us,” so the hatred toward the other is, in fact, the hatred toward this excess [in us] (2003a: 130). Moreover, the other has somewhat *magically* stolen and activated this excess within his own ethnicity, which Žižek calls the “theft of enjoyment,” the enjoyment that the self believes to emerge in one’s direct identification with one’s ethnicity. What Žižek conceptualizes as the theft of enjoyment, I think, is akin to what Liverans have probably seen in the Greeks’ power to claim their Kalandar and possibly land.

In ethnic conspiracy theories such as the ones we have seen in Trabzon, the other is depicted as the evil agent with the ability to capture the ethnic “thing” (das Ding, as Freud named it)—the excess that makes the self fully a self. For far right extremists, as Žižek puts it, the other would do what self cannot do: “enjoying their ethnic *thing*,” (2003a: 136). However, there resides a dilemma in this libidinal economy: the self can only sense the existence of the *thing* when the threat by the other signals its presence (136). As we have seen in Livera, the more Liverans explain via conspiracy theories, or *name* as Siegel would call it, Greeks’ real intentions to reach the *thing*, the more it slips

away. The more it slips away, the harder presses the urge to invest in uncertainties—so as to keep the Greek at bay as the other. Liverans thus *enjoy* their ethnic *thing* only when it is stolen, for its absence is the only moment to sense its presence.

What is the involvement of the major powerful agent, the Turkish state, in this chase for suspicion and enjoyment? I have briefly mentioned that the state's lifting of its patronage of the ethnic and religious homogeneity of Turks has changed the course of belief in conspiracy theories in Trabzon, where being a proud Turk is considered being the vanguard protecting the nation. But to what extent does the Trabzonlu's interaction with the state overlap with the latter's changing aspirations of reproducing citizenry and sovereignty? Chapter Four will address the problem of statehood in Trabzon.

CHAPTER FOUR: State and Evilness

On a humid summer day while I was driving with Zekeriya, I saw a young man walking towards Livera and taking pictures. Apparently Zekeriya had encountered him before, but did not know why he wandered about. In an interrogative tone, he asked: “That kid has been taking pictures around lately, who the hell is he? What is he up to?” Zekeriya spoke aloud his suspicion of a stranger, but did not expect an answer particularly from me. He was therefore surprised when I told him that “the kid” was a college student at a university in western Turkey and was working on his senior thesis. “He works on Maçka tourism,” I further explained to Zekeriya. Nodding approvingly he said in return, “Masallah Hocam, you work like a MIT (Turkish Intelligence Service) agent.” This, however, was not the first time a Liveran approved of my relation to the strange kid.

Zekeriya was right; like an MIT agent I followed the kid down the narrow streets to learn of his real reason for visiting Maçka. I first encountered him when I was with Isak, the Kalandar player from Livera. At that time Isak was working at the Tourism Development Office—an office funded by an EU agency assisting “local development projects”, namely, the enchantment of touristic potential in Maçka. The young researcher walked in the office one day while Isak and I were discussing our usual topic, Kalandar. Rather timid and polite, he explained his that his research goal was part of a larger project imposed on him by his advisor. His advisor assigned him “the Maçka task”, and there were more students involved in the project working in other districts, who were required

to gather as much data as possible. Isak gave him copies of the generic brochures and info pamphlets before the student left for his expedition in the town. Isak then turned to me and asked whether I believed what the kid said. “There is only one way to know,” I told him. I then proposed to go after him, so that we could get a sense of his reliability. Almost in gratitude, Isak asked me to please follow him.

Pretending that it was a coincidence, I found him taking pictures of an old Greek mansion. I watched him from afar and then walked around the block to meet him coming from the opposite direction. He immediately recognized me:

K: Oh hi. We met at Isak’s office, do you remember?

M: Oh, yeah, you are doing a research on Maçka tourism, right? How is that going?

K: It is so-so.

M: Why, is something wrong?

K: People are strange here, no one wants to talk or share document with me. You saw what happened at Isak’s office. He dumped the brochures on me and almost shooed me out.

M: Well, people here are extremely suspicious of strangers. Even if your intentions are innocent, they may not buy them at face value.

K: That’s true I guess.

Are the Maçkali the only suspicious ones? Right after explaining how suspicious they were, I realized that what I was doing resembled the Maçkali’s style of suspicion that

frustrated me. After realizing this, I immediately ended the conversation and left, asking myself why I acted in the same manner that the Maçkali had acted toward me during the early days of my research. What is the source of the license that gives one the right to interrogate someone else akin to oneself—a researcher in my case, or a fellow villager, as we have seen through the Liverans’ questioning of Ilyas Karagöz? We have seen instances of official suspicion with the involvement of the Maçka governor against the Greeks’ Kalandar visits and with the gendarmes’ raid on Karagöz’s house; yet how does civilian suspicion of someone proximate (also, the outsider as I will explain) differ from the systematic and organized suspicion of the state’s agents?⁴⁶

From the vantage point of the differentiation between stately and popular forms of suspicions, this chapter aims to map the Trabzonlu’s past and present ways of forging a popular sovereignty vis-à-vis the state’s sovereignty. Following conspiricist suspicion’s vast allure, which is embedded in its ability to name evil powers, in this chapter I examine how sovereignty does not necessarily take the “stately” form. In so doing, I draw on Trabzon history that exhibits how the violence between stately forces (Imperial Ottoman or Republican Turkey) and local landlords and their kinship alliances has constituted a popular and local sense of sovereignty. This historical background, I argue, is glimpsed in present day Trabzon civilians’ confrontations with state agents (police officers, gendarmerie, governors, etc.). Although in most cases these confrontations happen to be physically violent, they also contain elements of mockery and fun.

⁴⁶ Before delving into the civilian and stately forms of suspicion in rural Trabzon, the presence of security forces in Maçka, or elsewhere in rural Turkey, should be noted. In administrative capitals of rural districts, such as Maçka City, local police manage urban security. Non-urban areas, hamlets and villages, belong to the control of the gendarmerie. Both the police and the gendarmerie forces, however, are overseen by the central government; all officers and soldiers in rural Turkey are outsiders in their duty precincts.

Particularly on the side of the Trabzon civilians, these moments of mockery and fun occur when they render potent state agents in disrespected and defeated positions by surpassing their sovereign power and monopoly of violence.

I do not view the glimpses of these fun moments as “weapons of the weak.” As the vignettes below unpack, these moments of fun also cause troublesome confusion, and even fear, on state forces in Trabzon. This togetherness of fear and fun, as we have seen in its ritual form in Kalandar, also enables me to shed light on contemporary scholarship on sovereignty; particularly because, as Derrida claims (2009), it still references an escape from the fearsome and insecure “state of nature.” Following Derrida and Agamben, and in the light of the man-animal figure Karakoncoloz, I discuss why questions of sovereignty should be taken into account along with the matter of animal nature. This chapter thus is an effort to rethink modern sovereignty in a peripheral region, where the presence of an expulsion ritual of a wolfman creature and conspiracy theories targeting evil powers blend with the confrontations of state forces in moments of violence and fun.

1) Spontaneous Suspicion versus Organized Suspicion

In his response to Veena Das and Deborah Poole’s claim that anthropology’s interest always resides in the margins of the state, Talal Asad highlights the bond between suspicion and sovereignty (2004). But where do the margins of the state lie and why is it necessary to focus on them instead of political power’s epicenter? According to Das and Poole, there are three loci where these margins become more perceptible: first,

physical and spatial margins, the periphery where the state falls short in diffusing order and law. Second, margins become tangible at the legibility or illegibility of the bureaucratic artifacts of the state, namely, its “practices, documents, and words,” identification cards, checkpoints, and such. The third locus of the margins of the state is the space where “bodies, law, and discipline” intersect (6-10).

In the same volume, Asad enlists the three tenets of the modern state: abstraction, equality, and generality. Dating back to the political theory tradition of Hobbes, who, with the metaphor of the Leviathan, conceived of the state as an abstract entity, Asad argues that the abstract differentiation between the state and the society has enabled “the exercise of specific legal power”—whether this is claimed by government or by citizens” (2004: 282). The categories such as government, citizen, or immigrant created by this abstraction are the essence of the modern liberal state for they are used in everyday life and transferable from one context to another (ibid). This is how abstraction constitutes “equivalence,” as Asad puts it, which enables the equality notion of the modern state.

Thus, the equality notion of the liberal state is conceived particularly in the domain of law, which dictates the absolute equal treatment of all citizens. Belief in the universal applicability of law and order, hence its generality, however, manifests an inherent problem, as Asad identifies it:

If this is the case that people in society are never homogenous, that they are always constituted by different memories, fears, and hopes, that they have different histories and live in different social-economic conditions, then the

official who chooses or judges may be held accountable for who, how, and why, he categorizes. But the act of categorizing always involves abstraction from one context and its application to another context—and it is always, in a sense, *uncertain*.

Equality, generality, and abstraction thus rest on uncertainty. They define the margins of the state... (283) [Italics mine]

Asad's point here resonates with what West and Sanders argue about the paradoxical relationship between transparency and conspiracy: that is, the claim of the former leads to more conspiratorial theorizing and suspicion. Asad indeed refers to suspicion as the utmost outcome of these three tenets of modern sovereignty, which “occupies the space between law and its application”—ostensibly the most transparent domain of the state (285): “all judicial and policing systems of the modern state presuppose organized suspicion, incorporate margins of uncertainty.”

A gendarmerie captain's curiosity about “native's culture” (yerlilerin kulturu) once demonstrated to me how the state's abstraction that is built on uncertainty may be in conflict with a civilian's way of managing power and suspicion—despite the Trabzonlu's and state's agents seemingly overlapping suspicion of Christian (and non-Turkish such as Kurdish) others. I met the gendarmerie captain, Savas, on a lazy day by the fireplace of the restaurant I frequented. I was the only soul in the facility, trying to warm up after a long, wet walk from a near-by village, and a conversation with gendarmes was my last wish. Yet, two of them stepped inside. After exchanging greetings, the captain kindly

asked me my reason of sitting alone in a restaurant. He seemed curious after learning that I studied anthropology:

S: Well, what is anthropology?

M: The study of cultures.

S: Cultures? This is excellent!

M: Excellent? Why do you think that it is excellent?

S: Because you can tell us about the culture of these people [the Trabzonlu] (bu insanların kültürü).

M: This is rather a large topic, but I will try my best. What about it?

S: I simply do not get it. These are [The Trabzonlu] supposedly the most patriotic Turkish nationalists, right? Everywhere in Turkey, they are known as the strong supporters of the state (devletin her daim yanında), right?

M: Yes, indeed. No question about that.⁴⁷

S: Well, actually they are not! Listen, I served in Hakkari and Sirnak [provinces in Turkish Kurdistan]... With the Kurds, the enemies of the state, I had a better, err, more respectful relationship. But with the Trabzonlu... They are very unruly men (basibozuk adamlar). Kurds do not want us there, and we see that clearly. But here, they are openly nationalists, but by no means do they respect our authority! Do you know how many times a week my men have fights with them? After settling one fight, we have to deal with the defiant person's agnates who demand revenge.

⁴⁷ During this conversation, I tried not to disagree with the caption in any way for he could arbitrarily set obstacles for my research.

M: I never thought the Trabzonlu would confront any security forces.

As seen in the gendarmerie captain's inability to locate the Trabzonlu culture, the equivalence the abstraction of the state is supposed to create might fail. Note that for him the Kurds, and their armed struggle, were easily "categorized," to put it in Asad's terms. The Trabzonlu's disrespect for authority, however, seemed to perplex the captain's ability to categorize—the outcome of the abstraction of the state that is transferable among different contexts. Following Asad's terminology, the equivalence that the abstract quality of the state constitutes seems not to have worked out, at least for the security forces in Trabzon.

While explaining the culture of the Trabzonlu as a paradox, namely as extreme Turkish nationalists and yet disrespectful of security forces, Captain Savas's voice carried a tone of utter confusion. He linked Trabzonlu's lack of respect for the (armed) authority to the latter's culture. But what did he mean by "culture?" Captain Savas seemed to believe that a community's observable demeanor vis-à-vis political authority should be the direct outcome of their culture. We can track what the captain said to be the Trabzonlu culture only by its footprints submerged in local history. This genealogical perspective, to a degree, diverges from Das and Poole's "margins of the state" perspective. Trabzon as a peripheral province, and Maçka as the periphery of the periphery provides a good case to analyze the "margins of the state." These episodes of encounters between civilians and security forces also fit well into the second and the third categories of the margins of the state: both happened at the practice level (routine control)

of the state, and, as we will see in the following accounts, they involved bodies, the recognition of the state's authority, and the law. These empirical evidences of the marginality of Trabzon, however, do not suffice to grasp the everyday tension surrounding state agents. Asad's contribution, that is, the necessity to include suspicion in civilian-stately interactions, has helped us conceive of this tension, but we should focus more on the Trabzonlu's engagement with political authorities in order to see how the sovereign power of the state is perceived, treated, and even surpassed within different everyday occasions.

My conversation with captain Savas was interrupted when he asked for the restaurant's signature baked rice pudding from Gokhan, the 20-year-old waiter of the restaurant. His response to the captain was astonishing: "we are out of it," he said in a harsh tone. While I was trying to comprehend Gokhan's reasoning with his answer—I had pudding an hour ago, there was plenty of it—the captain took Gokhan's answer rather calmly and yet huffed out his disappointment. Commanding his man to leave, he did not catch the quick wink and grin that Gokhan sent in my direction. "What was that? Why did you tell them that you didn't have any pudding," I asked Gokhan. "That was funny, wasn't it," he responded in a victorious laugh. Gokhan's reaction to the gendarmes was unprecedented for me, considering that he had just done his military service and was proud of fulfilling his patriotic duty (*vatani gorevi*). He was also very open about his anti-Kurdish sentiments, to a degree that without hesitation, several times he proclaimed the nationalist motto "A Turk has no friend other than a Turk" (*Turkun Turkten baska dostu yok*). Why did he then refuse to serve the gendarmes—to assist another who was

considered to be carrying out a patriotic duty? Could it be just an over-confident youngster's questioning of authority? What makes confronting security forces entertaining, or fun, as Gokhan called it?

The way Gokhan tacitly mocked the gendarmes in Maçka was beyond a single case. Later Gokhan explained that he simply wanted to show the gendarmes that they could not act “cocky” (*artistlik*)⁴⁸ anywhere they wanted. But his refusal to serve the gendarmes and overtly show me how he could mock them affected me particularly because he acted it out⁴⁹ in order to expose the acting out of the authority—his “cockiness”. In a more violent encounter, I witnessed another case of playing with authority with authority's methods, that is, use of violence.

In summer 2011, I joined a group of environmental activists in order to reach Ogene, the highland village of Romeyka speakers. I relied on the group's connection with Ogene locals in order to expand my research there. The village men who welcomed us took us higher in the mountains to their lodge, where we could chat and play music over dinner while they would cook. While driving uphill in our minibus, we were following a local's car and being escorted by another. It was foggy and only after arriving at our destination did we realize the escort was no longer behind us. Twenty minutes later, the escort car's headlights appeared splitting the fog, and the driver's face was covered in blood and bruises. On the way up, he apparently had a dispute with another car over right of way, then both drivers pulled over. A fight broke out, according to our escort, when

⁴⁸ Gokhan's word choice in Turkish was striking. *Artistlik* can be translated as “cockiness”, but its literal meaning is “acting” or “playing,” as it is derived from “artist.”

⁴⁹ Gokhan celebrated his way of mocking the captain by saying “Nasil oynadim onlarla ama,” meaning “What a trick I played out/acted before them.”

the other driver yelled at our escort that he (the other driver) and his passenger were army officers and warned our escort to behave. But he did not; on the contrary, he attacked the officers. This unexpected fight, however, did not seem to change the mood of the escort driver, whom, we later learned, was the musician of the night.

While he was wiping the blood off his face, I approached him, thinking that he needed comfort. In a radiant disapproval, he said he felt rather well and added that “it was a good work-out (*iyi spor oldu*), not a fight, and plus, those officers need to learn how to lose sometimes.” What makes the Trabzonlu civilians, who claim to be respectful to state authorities, eager to mock and physically challenge the agents of the same authority? Moreover, how can the distinction between civilian and state be drawn and sustained, particularly when civilians, such as the Trabzonlu, proclaim to be taking on the sovereign acts of suspicion, interrogation and violence, that characterize the state?

2) Sovereignty, Trabzonlu’s way

In chapter two we have seen how “organized suspicion” has been incorporated in Maçka. The governor’s and gendarmes’ suspicion of Greek involvement in Livera, particularly surrounding Ilyas Karagöz’s residence—was an instance resonating with Asad’s “sovereign suspicion,” the essence of the modern state’s judicial and policing systems. But how can we elaborate on civilian suspicion, with its interrogative tone, especially when it reaches and even surpasses the extent of sovereign suspicion? How can we locate conspiracy theory, the suspicion of evil powers discussed in chapter two, vis-a-vis the power of the state? Note that “suspicion for the sake of being suspicious”, as

one Maçka shop owner said, pervaded the valleys of Maçka when the Greeks' presence became visible. What could the social and historical background of the Trabzonlu civilians' ways of being suspicious be—a mode of suspicion almost to the same degree as the sovereign, and thus organized, suspicion of the state? Could it be their “culture” as the gendarmerie captain believes it to be, although contrary to Geertz's contention that states and sovereignties are not necessarily entities whose nature and practices can be derived from, or reduced to, any cultural logic? (Geertz 2004, cited in Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 300). In order to understand the entanglement of the sovereign (organized, systematic, and paranoiac) suspicion with popular (spontaneous and conspiracist) suspicion, we should nonetheless follow Captain Savas's suggestion—not in his reasoning that one's culture determines one's relation to the state, but in the possibility that anthropology could provide a window of understanding into the entanglement of sovereignties and different views of “culture.”

For a long time, though unacknowledged, anthropology has been “about” the state, write Das and Poole (2004: 5). Canonical works, such as that of Evans-Pritchard, have shown how even “primitives,” such as the stateless Nuer, had a sense of administrative rationality, political order, and authority akin to that of Europe's. Even despite the lack of these tropes of modern power in non-western (or tribal) societies, as Das and Poole argue via Clastres' paradigm of a collective resistance to the emergence of the stately authority, anthropology has long assumed “the state...[as] an inevitable or ghostly presence that shaped the meaning and form that power took in any given society” (225). In response to this political anthropological scholarship, contemporary

anthropologists have suggested a concentration on the “instances of the state” at local levels and the interactions between its bureaucratic bodies and civilians for a better understanding of the variables of statehood (cite). In her essay in the same volume, Das suggests a different approach following Michael Taussig (1997), which diverges from her initial theory of the “margins of the state”: the state should be seen neither as inevitable nor as ghostly, but as an oscillation between “a rational and magical mode of being” (ibid). Das explains why she suggests a magical understanding of the state by enlisting the qualities of the magical: 1) it has real consequences, 2) the forces used in magical performances are not transparent, 3) it is aligned with obscure powers 4) it places the practitioner in a vulnerable position. This argumentation not only enables Das to move beyond the empirical abstractions she introduces in her discussion of the margins of the state (physical and spatial margins, bureaucratic artifacts the state generates, the space where “bodies, law, and discipline” intersect), but also to open up possibilities to track sovereignty beyond political legitimacy, law, and other domains of the state. Thus it becomes possible to analyze sovereignty when it appears within quotidian encounters such as the ones we have seen in Trabzon.

Arguing that a glimpse of sovereignty can be caught at its oscillation between rational and magical modes brings the analysis of the state into recent discussions of sovereignty. According to Hansen and Stepputat, these discussions have been reignited by the historical conditioning of “the global crisis of the nation-state as the main vehicle of the sovereign power” and a theoretical turn (2006: 296). This turn, as Hansen and Stepputat writes, draws from an impasse in the Foucauldian paradigm of power that is

observed as “dispersing in institutions, disciplines and ritual” (ibid). Instead they ask: “How do we understand popular mythologies of power, corruption, secrecy, and evil as emanating from certain centers, people, or hidden domains? How do we interpret the way in which violence destroys social ties but also produces informal authority?” (ibid).

Approaching sovereignty from a point that decentralizes the state brings Hansen and Stepputat’s views closer to Das’s magical state. Their gesture toward this “popular sovereignty” conceptualization inheres in two key focalizations: first, sovereignty should be seen “as tentative and always emergent form of authority grounded in violence that is performed and designed to generate loyalty, fear, and legitimacy from the neighborhood to the summit of the state;” and second that “the body is always the site of performance of sovereign power, which becomes most visible in states of war, extreme conditions, fragmentation, and marginality” (297). In a similar fashion, this chapter first contributes the element of suspicion into what popular sovereignty generates in addition to “loyalty, fear, and legitimacy;” and second this chapter underscores the element of fun in the bodily exhibition of sovereign power (or an aspiration towards it) as we have seen with the Trabzonlu’s staging of mockery and the physical confrontation of security forces. This entanglement of suspicion, the bodily forging of popular sovereignty versus official authority, and the fun and taste of “sportsmanship” require us to re-focalize bodily, festive expressions of popular sovereignty (as we have already glimpsed in Kalandar).

But first, revisiting the history of Trabzon, we should examine to what extent “extreme condition, fragmentation, and marginalization” has configured the sense of popular sovereignty, which I argue can be tracked in present day confrontations of state authority.

A City without Citizens

Gokhan interrupted my conversation with Captain Savas while the latter was explaining to me what he found peculiar about the “culture” in Maçka. “They have built their houses on almost ninety degree slopes of the valleys, but not on the river beds. Our off-road vehicles could hardly climb up there. Imagine that people break up the soil on the same terrain, such a terrain that if they trip on a rock, they could easily roll down all the way to the bottom of the valley. And not to mention how one house is so far away from another, it takes so much for routine patrolling—and those houses are supposedly in the same village. I simply do not understand them [the Trabzonlu].” His curiosity about the peculiar ways of the Trabzonlu was not groundless. In popular knowledge in Turkey, stereotypically the Trabzonlu have always been known as people of hardship, referring to the rough terrain on which they subsist despite the scarcity of irrigable lands. These physical conditions are considered the reason for Trabzonlu men’s short-temperedness, of land disputes, hence their passion for guns and vendettas. In a similar fashion, the local historiography regards the topography as the primary reason for the settlement pattern: a plain, small plot determines the whereabouts of mansions. Trabzon villages are not clusters of houses—as is the common pattern throughout Turkey—but scattered buildings on the slopes, adjacent to small lots of vegetable gardens (Duman: 2011).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ This settlement pattern provided another advantage in times of family feuds: being physically away from a rival family increased the predictability of attacks. Moreover, it was a secure living given the unpredictability of banditry in the riverbeds where transportation roads were located. Even today, decades after the end of insecurity due to banditry and family feuds, this settlement pattern still dominates Maçka, and families still reside in their uphill villages.

A couple of days before Kalandar in 2011?, my acquaintances in the district capital (local shop owners, public workers, and the regulars of the largest teahouse in the city) were recalling the old days of Kalandar. Stories were being told about each village's specific ways of celebrating the New Year. "Nostalgia of the pastoral life," I wrote in my notebook, continuing "very common in the peripheral towns of Turkey." After all, this is a country that has for decades provided the valuable stock of devastating modernization stories to the social sciences (Delaney 1991, Pierce 1965, Beller-Hann and Hann 2001). Why would Maçka be an exception in this sequel of modernity replacing rural peripheral life? My ride to Livera on the night of Kalandar proved me wrong: From the district capital, located at the intersection of three deep valleys, I could see the uphill traffic flowing in the narrow village roads. Could people be driving from the city to their home villages at least to commemorate, if not to celebrate, Kalandar? My designated driver, Okan, corrected me: They were the daily commuters, the "true Maçkali" (Gerçek Maçkalılar). During multiple night rides to Livera after the Kalandar festivities, I again witnessed this rush hour traffic to the villages. Why would a commute between the city and the village make one a true native of both?

Etymologically the name Maçka had long puzzled Ilyas Karagöz, the village historian. Unlike most of the village and township names he had deciphered (thanks to his command of Pontic Greek, Turkish, and German) he could not reach a plausible explanation for the name Maçka. According to Karagöz, there was a clear continuation of political power in the history of his home district; therefore writing about this past should reveal what Maçka meant and who its people were. Karagöz was correct in his

hypothesis--since the medieval Byzantine rule, Trabzon districts have preserved both their administrative territories and names, with each territory a strip of valley vertically located on the Black Sea. The Ottoman Empire adopted the same geographical division, which was then passed to the Turkish nation-state. Yet in both Byzantine and medieval Ottoman records there was no administrative district called Maçka. The present day village names were listed in the Greek Orthodox monastery land and harvest records and Ottoman taxation books, but there was no mention of a township.⁵¹ Although these names exist in both monastery and imperial archives, Maçka did not appear as an “administrative district” until as late as 1913. And this was puzzling to Karagöz, who intelligently directed his attention even to more micro-level histories (of villages and hamlets), yet could not find a way to explain the sudden and artificial emergence of his hometown. The emergence of Maçka City as a district capital is indeed a challenge considering, for example, Foucault’s theory of sovereignty and territory. For Foucault, the relationship between the two in the “classic age” is bound to the emergence of a capital, the physical location of the sovereign. With the transfer of legitimacy from the classical sovereign (such as the king) to a more modern sovereign (people or nation), capital cities gained a new political meaning. They became centers of biopolitics, hence of the modern power. Karagöz, however, realized that there was no Maçka as “historical capital” that he could pinpoint in the Byzantine-Ottoman continuity. Does this discovery of historical absence also mean the absence of sovereignty? If there was no sovereign rule, thus no capital city, following Foucault’s logic, how did the people of Maçka, who

⁵¹ One term arguably in Greek, Matzouka, may be the origin of Maçka’s name. Karagöz, however, thinks that Matzouka should be a generic term, such as “plain ground,” not a specific township’s name. Ottomans used both Matzouka and *Cevizlik*, literally Walnut Grove, in their taxation books.

were apparently the inhabitants of surrounding villages, convert into the “population,” hence becoming citizens of Maçka?⁵²

An anthropologist has provided the solution for Karagöz’s very Foucauldian problem. Michael Meeker’s study of political modernization in Turkey has shifted the paradigm concerning political history in the periphery (2004). Drawing on decades of fieldwork in the *Of* district of Trabzon, Meeker demonstrates that the political power of the state in Trabzon (both imperial and national) imposed its authority solely by violence and dominance, but was also absorbed by the local kin networks. Therefore the history of Trabzon since the medieval Ottoman times has been the history of “absorption of the state” by the local landlords and their kin groups. Yet this absorption was not fulfilled seamlessly, it left behind a history of raids by the state forces, of local landlords’ riots against the state, and finally of alliances with the state. The conflict between the religious and military officials, forming one camp, and local landlords, the other, ended with the final Agha (local landlord) riot in the mid 1800s (176).⁵³ Peace, however, was established by the locals’ “colonizing of the state system,” (368) and not by the imperial state’s violent colonization of a peripheral region. The local’s colonization of the state included “broader and deeper participation in the imperial institutions” of religious education of Sunni scholars (*Ulema*) and provision of military force through the Ottoman land control

⁵² Here I use “population” as Foucault uses the term in accordance with his use of biopolitics and discipline (2009).

⁵³ Meeker discusses in detail the spectacle of violence as a method for local landlords to claim sovereignty. Before the relatively peaceful mid-1800 environment, the historical records show forty incidents by brigands of locals gathered around *aghas*, who then proclaimed their positions as notables (*ayans*), “of having assaulted, robbed, intimidated, or assassinated individuals with military and religious titles” (176). In the city of Trabzon in particular, the conflict and competition between the two local *aghas* and the imperial governor disbursed violence and terror to all aspects of everyday life in the province. Until the mid-1800s when [?] imperial forces managed to defeat local elites and their agnates several times and exile them altogether (195).

system (*Timar*, and later *Itizam*). In this process, Meeker writes, the landlords claimed a place in the imperial state by challenging the strict Ottoman division between rulers and ruled. The local landlords and their agnates in Trabzon, once victims of imperial violence, rapidly transformed themselves into sovereign rulers by means of reading the codes of the imperial social hierarchy that segregated the officials (*askeri*) from non-officials (*reaya*), and of transgressing this system altogether (179). This transgression (Meeker's term) is what Meeker calls "Ottomanization of the Trabzonlu/ "Trabzonization of the Ottomans" (181). The Ottomans had to accept the Trabzonlu's ways of penetrating/becoming the state due to their dependence on local associations for organizing raids on defiant imperial appointees and supporters.

What Meeker argues is that the survival strategy of the northern populace against "the usurper sovereign"⁵⁴ was to become like the sovereign itself. With the commencement of the republican modernization in 1923, bureaucracy, education, and politics have been added into these domains of political adaptation. Since then, northeastern Turkey has produced high-ranking military officers and politicians, including prime ministers. Yet, despite this "state-society" project's success (Meeker's term) in Trabzon, small bureaucrats in Maçka today do not prefer to inhabit the capital, the political center, instead they commute back and forth from their villages.

This spatial division in Maçka against the background of the history of violence and struggle over sovereignty diverges from the general classification of sovereignty as a

⁵⁴ Usurper sovereign is the terminology Marshall Sahlins uses to explain how Hawaiian islanders perceive their chiefs as godly outsiders. Acceptance of the chief, requires a winter celebration, *Mahahiki*, during which, the chief wins a symbolic war against the insider islanders and marries his man to the islander women. See, Sahlins, *Islands of History*.

category. Hansen and Stepputat, for instance, regard political authority reflecting on two models of sovereignty: one, as “intrinsic to the community/people” and second, “as extrinsic, an alien and potentially threatening force that ensures renewal but also needs to be ritually domesticated” (2006: 299). Whereas, the tradition from Rousseau (social contract and general will) to Durkheim (social solidarity), and to liberal democratic theories of political authority today reflects intrinsic sovereignty, the Hobbesian (escape from State of Nature) to Carl Schmidt’s paradigm of the “state of exception,” or “extreme condition, fragmentation, and marginalization,” follows the extrinsic sovereignty concept (ibid). As we have seen in the Trabzonlu’s past and present confrontation of the state forces, this distinction is not applicable in the context of northeastern Turkey.

Contemporary theories of sovereignty, such as that of Giorgio Agamben, are believed to complicate this distinction in favor of the “extrinsic sovereignty,” “state of exception” paradigm (Hansen and Stepputat: 2006, Poole and Das 2004). Yet, contra to its critics, I argue that Agamben conceptualizes the dual existence of these two models of the sovereignty—a duality that he names as the paradox of sovereignty (1998: 15-30).

One crucial tenet of this paradox is “the state of exception,” the suspension of law that reduces a population to killable bodies. In addition to this widely accepted definition, Agamben also notes that “the state of exception” is not localizable, albeit it enables juridical and territorial determination of sovereignty (1998: 19). Affirming Ilyas Karagöz’s puzzlement in locating the district capital in the history of Maçka’s political power, Agamben writes that the state of exception’s infinite dislocation marks its

principle.⁵⁵ This principle of the un-localizability of exception becomes visible, as famously known, when law is suspended for the sake of order and when certain groups or populaces (or bodies, as Agamben puts it) are excluded juridically and physically. Agamben, however, calls this exclusion also an inclusion of these killable bodies—as we have seen with the “inclusive exclusion” of the Trabzonlu during the rebellions against the imperial and republican forces in the 19th and early 20th century.

The second, often neglected, tenet of Agamben’s paradox of sovereignty is the “example.” Though the sovereign power that suspends the law to end chaos seems to locate itself outside the law, this proclamation of stepping outside the law is actually an exclusive inclusion—the paradigm of the exemplary, as Agamben calls it. Note how the Trabzonlu managed to include themselves in the Ottoman imperial system by becoming the local ruling elites (becoming both soldiers and religious leaders), or “standing out”—the verb Agamben uses to define what is exemplary. Note that “the state of exception” that was declared during the exclusion of illegal settlers, who occupied the abandoned Greek property, created a new local ruler, an Agha, who stood out to solve the conflict with the legal settlers from *Of* and managed to include the entire Livera community into the new system of the nation-state. What Agamben sees as the symmetrical duality of exception (inclusive exclusion) and example (exclusive inclusion) that constitutes what he calls “the paradox of sovereignty,” is akin to what Meeker posits with the duality of “Ottomanization of the Trabzonlu/ “Trabzonization of the Ottomans.” This

⁵⁵ Agamben argues that the concentration camp is the utmost instance for the localization of the “state of exception.” This historical instance, I believe, helps him, though in a contradictory fashion, confine his trans-historical conceptualization of sovereignty within modernity.

transformation of the state while imposing a popular sovereignty against its authority continues in Trabzon today via the confrontations with state forces.

We have seen how confronting the state's power takes the form of a popular sovereignty assertion, especially with the conspiricist suspicion of the other, to a degree that it exceeds the state forces' organized suspicion. What is the relation of this expansive suspicion to popular sovereignty? On multiple occasions I have experienced forms of this suspicion, most often blended with conspiracy theories and overt right-wing extremist discourse. My interactions with middle-aged Livera men will help clarify how claims of popular sovereignty inextricably work with suspicion, and even at times call for violent actions.

You Could Be a Terrorist

While walking towards Livera one day, I was picked up by a passing vehicle full of men returning from hunting. They kindly made some room for me so I could tuck myself in the back seat. After exchanging greetings, the driver suddenly expressed his concern about me looking through the rearview mirror. He had hesitated to pick me up for I could have been a “terrorist,” that is, Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militant. Rather shocked to hear that he was suspicious of me being a terrorist, I asked if I looked like one. He continued, “Of course not, you seem like a nice guy, but you know, once terrorists attacked *our* police here, and lately we hear that they are active in Maçka again—you can sense it by the unusual activity of the gendarmes. Don't get us wrong, but we should be suspicious of anyone we don't know.” In defense I jokingly ended the

conversation by saying that if I were a terrorist I would not have dared to ride with cautious men like them.

Having spent 3 months in Maçka when the above conversation occurred, I did not notice any strange gendarmerie activity or news reporting the Kurdish militants' presence in the district. The raid that my driver mentioned, however, left a transcendent impact on Maçka. In 2005, three Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) militants were spotted in broad daylight in Maçka City and had a gunfight with the police. One of them was killed at the scene, the other was arrested, and the third fled. When Okan was telling me about the event, in pride he mentioned that the police had tried to keep civilians away from the crime scene for the latter had been eager to catch the armed militants themselves. One Maçkali truck driver actually accomplished this task when the fleeing PKK militant stopped his pickup truck and asked his help. He first agreed to give the militant a ride, but then drove him to a nearby gendarmerie checkpoint. At the gendarmes' surprise, instead of surrendering the armed militant, the driver started to beat him, and in the meantime, other men at the scene joined in the beating. The two checkpoint gendarmes saved the militant by interfering with the beating. The bravery of the driver was reported in the city and created a "festive atmosphere" when a national daily reported the event.⁵⁶ Local media outlets referred to the event as "Trabzon's good lesson to the PKK; another hard fact proving that the Black Sea people are the biggest fear of not only the PKK, but of all traitors for they know that the Black Sea people will undo any plot aiming to spoil the unity [of the nation]."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/08/27/son/sontur15.html>

⁵⁷ <http://www.gunebakis.com.tr/yazar/trabzon8217dan-pkk8217ya-verilen-ders-1256.html>

Ilyas Karagöz's son, Mamis recalled that day of “festive atmosphere” as a moment that “once again the Trabzonlu showed what *exemplary* citizens they were” (Trabzonlular'ın örnek varandas olduklarını gösterdikleri bir gundu). Mamis was one of the many Maçkali men who spoke openly about his anti-Kurdish sentiments—to a degree that he once planned to raid a pub where, according to rumors, Kurdish songs were played. Gendarmes who learned about Mamis's plan managed to stop him before he could execute it. “Can you believe that this [playing Kurdish music] happened in Maçka,” he asked me, expressing his anger. According to Mamis, if the government would allow them, they [the Black Sea men] could easily solve the [Kurdish] problem. This bold statement pushed me to ask:

MA: But how could you fight an armed group?

MK: You know how we are good with guns and fighting, we can easily surpass those *animals*.⁵⁸

MA: But if you fight them in the same fashion as they fought the state, would it not be acting with them in the same league? I mean you guys as armed civilians...

MK: Maybe, but who else could stop them? We see that the armed forces are incompetent.

MA: What I mean is that if you are armed and fight a group against the will of the state, would not it be like the old days when all mountain people of Trabzon were considered “bandits” (*eskiya*)⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ Below I will elaborate as to why Mamis needed a bestiary metaphor to despise PKK militants.

⁵⁹ *Eskiya* is a derogatory term used to disparage PKK militants.

MK: I suppose so... but that is our history... things have changed, we are not like that any more... we are here to protect our country against separatists.

Note how Mamiş's claim that the Trabzonlu are exemplary citizens relies on a past when the state power, either imperial or republican, rendered them what Agamben calls "bare-life," the killable bodies that fall outside the rule of law. This past, as we have seen, consists of the the years of struggle of the local power holders, aghas and their alliances, against the state power. This memory, namely the oscillation between the state of exception (having been excluded from the right of property and self-rule by being included in a juridical category such as banditry) and example (being included in the nation-state by standing out as exemplary citizen) has marked the Trabzonlu's everyday interaction with the agents of the state today—by means of superimposing, sometimes with violence, their popular sovereignty (as seen in fights with the gendarmes) and surpassing the state monopoly of violence and organized suspicion.

This forging of popular sovereignty, however, does not quite fit in the solemn and rigid display of a state's sovereign violence. As we have seen in the cases of fights with military personnel in rural Trabzon and attempting killings of PKK militants in Maçka, people's display of sovereign violence can combine festivity, fun, and even elements of sportsmanship. Already with Kalandar we have seen how elements of fun and fear intermingle and are incorporated in the body of the Karakoncoloz, the man-animal figure that is expelled during Kalandar skits. Now we should focus on how a New Year's

celebration with the expulsion of this animal figure is related to the utmost sovereign gesture: the banishment, as Agamben names it.

Wolves and Other Creatures

Not only by the presence of Karakoncoloz in Kalandar folklore and rituals, but by Karagöz's nuanced critique of Liverans' and local government's insensitivity about the abandoned Greek houses can we witness the bestial metaphors and analogies. Recall that Karagöz warned me about *biped* wolves, who are "competent to ruin and waste anything human, in particular the memories." In Larhan, an old man had unintentionally exposed his skill in Pontic Greek by explaining the origin of a neighborhood's name with the etym Lykos; in Tonya, a folklore instructor who strictly believed in the danger of Greek conspiracies spoke of his family moniker as "likoglu," a derivation of, again, Lykos in Pontic Greek. In Surmene, old folklore accounts have shown us that jawbone of a wolf has the potency to protect babies from Karakoncoloz, the wolfman figure of terror and scare. Finally, Mamis has expressed his anti-Kurdish sentiments by naming the Kurdish militants that should be hunted down, as animals. Resonating with this presence of folkloric wolves and creatures trapped in hybrid forms, family names, and political metaphors, centuries ago Hesiod warned that wolves were where the hazelnuts were (2006)—the only cash crop in Maçka, or *Cevizlik*, "the nut grove," (the Ottoman name of the district.)

Ages after Hesiod, writers such as Deleuze and Guattari (1997), Georges Bataille (1993), Agamben (1998, 2005), and Derrida (2009) have noted the bonds between

animality—particularly symbolized with wolves—and fear, rituals, and sovereignty. According to Agamben, the wolfman, the utmost example present in Indo-European folklore traditions, is a hybrid being confined in the body of both human and animal, nature and culture, a “pure threshold of indistinction”—a terminology Agamben uses to unpack the indiscernible similarity between the state’s two domains of monopoly, law and violence (1998: 105). Why, then, does Agamben draw upon this monstrous figure by depicting the figure of *wargus* from ancient English law, namely the wolfman (sacred wolf, or the bandit wolfman)? Even though he does not clearly examine the necessary role of a creature of chaos (even today) as we see in Kalandar with Karakoncoloz, the wolfman appears to be a significant figure in the folkloric rituals he evokes. This figure is destined to be banned from the community and live without *peace* (*friedlos*, means peaceless man in archaic German). This act of ban, for Agamben, is an archaic way of reanimating sovereignty because it is the sovereign who can “decide” to expel in order to restore order. However, the sovereign act of the ban, which is both a violent and lawful decision, simultaneously excludes *wargus* (from the city), but also includes it into the domain of law. Therefore *wargus* is always in “constant transition between man and animal,” (109) culture and nature (village and the woods, as we have seen in Livera’s history of illegal settlers’ displacement), and most importantly, law and violence. *Wargus* therefore belongs to none of these dualisms, but instead to a third category. It is a life that is reduced to a bare life precisely like in the example of the Roman *homo sacer*—the signature of biopolitics for Agamben. But what is the position of the sovereign in this scheme that Agamben depicts in relation to Roman law?

Since the sovereign is not bound by and can suspend the law, his bodily form, as in the body of Kantorowitz's medieval king, is the law itself (69). As we have already seen in the brief history of Trabzon, the sovereign (local rulers, aghas, or state forces) terrorize people. The sovereign as the living law, *nomos* in Agamben's term, is also the bringer of anomie for he instates a power structure that is popularly considered extrinsic to the community—"an alien and potentially threatening force that ensures renewal but also needs to be ritually domesticated" (Hansen and Stepputat). Agamben further reiterates that Kalandar-like ritual celebrations with hybrid creatures like Karakoncoloz should be studied alongside their political content in order to investigate, as Eric Santner notes, how the body of the sovereign has been ritually domesticated after monarchies and empires have disappeared from the world-political scene (2011: 3-33). Agamben thus concludes that the unnamed presence of monstrous beings in rituals like Kalandar necessitate a different understanding of the bond between the people and the sovereign in light of his assertion of "symmetry" between the sovereign (executioner) and the *homo sacer* (victim) (1998: 135).

This symmetry between the sovereign and its victim/subject, and how it relies on metaphors of animality is the topic of Derrida's lecture series, *The Beast and The Sovereign*. Derrida examines the ubiquity of animal metaphors and analogies particularly when sovereignty is concerned—most notably in western scholarship that ranges from Plato, to Hobbes and Rousseau, and finally to Schmitt and Agamben. Akin to Agamben's symmetry between the *homo sacer* and the sovereign, Derrida (2005) sees a commonality between what he calls the beast and the sovereign: their "being-outside-the-law" position.

He writes, "...beast, criminal, and sovereign have a troubling resemblance: they call on each other and recall each other, from one to the other; there is between sovereign, criminal, and beast a sort of obscure and fascinating complicity, or even a worrying mutual attraction, a worrying familiarity, an unheimlich, uncanny reciprocal hunting" (35). Interestingly, the figure of the wolf has appeared various times in the writings on sovereignty and history of state-building, referencing both the sovereign and the beastly being that is slain or banished.⁶⁰ Yet, for Derrida the specificity of a single species such as wolf does not necessarily signify the qualities of that species. Rather, what is at stake is the becoming of a political creature that has been represented "in the formless form of animal monstrosity, in the figure without figure of a mythological, fabulous, and non-natural monstrosity, an artificial monstrosity of the animal" (44). Thus Derrida asks why political sovereignty (as the body of the king, state, or people) is conceived as simultaneously the law of reason (above natural life) and the manifestation of human animality or bestiality. His answer, following writings such as that of Hobbes and Schmitt, to track this duality, or paradox as Agamben calls it, of sovereignty, directs his readers to the matter of fear.

Derrida's conceptualization of fear differentiates his understanding of sovereignty from the theories of Foucault and Agamben, insofar as he locates fear beyond bodily fear, hence biopolitics. For the Hobbesian tradition everything crystallizes to fear as Derrida

⁶⁰ Derrida's example on the same page is, in his terms, "uncanny" considering the Turkish nation-state building: "...the nickname 'wolf' is given to a head of state as Father of the Nation. Mustapha Kemal who had given himself the name Atatürk (Father of the Turks) was called the 'gray wolf' by his partisans, in memory of the mythical ancestor Genghis Khan, the 'blue wolf'" (ibid). Note that Mustafa Kemal, then-officer of the Ottoman Empire, was declared a criminal (with a verdict of execution) when he initiated the armed movement of independence against the will of the imperial capital.

writes: one “...can commit a crime and exert terror by fear, but it is the same fear that makes [one] obey the law” (61). Contrary to Hobbes’ emphasis on “Bodily Fear” and the “present” of the body, Derrida argues that in all fear there is something which indexes non-body and non-present: “what causes fear is never fully present nor fully corporeal, in the sense that the purely corporeal is supposed to be saturated with presence. Fear always exceeds corporeal presence, and this is why it is also the passion correlative to the law; fear is thus both the origin of the law and of the transgression of the law, the origin of both law and crime” (61). For Derrida, therefore, the oneness of sovereignty and bestiality (“brutality, poorly controlled instincts, the irrationality of the living being” in Schmitt’s terms as Derrida cites them) is a matter of zooanthropology, an intersection of political theology and anthropology.

Kalandar exemplifies this oneness, which, I believe, is a substantial insight for contemporary anthropological studies that have tended to dissect this oneness into a conflicting double in empirical cases (sovereign versus bare life, state/capital versus marginalized people—whether those are immigrants or refugees, etc.). The example of Kalandar brings this oneness into sharp focus. In so doing, the skit around the expulsion of Karakoncoloz provides a crucial analytical juncture for understanding why the *Trabzonlu* strictly identify with the state’s sovereign will to decide who has the right to live and who will be expelled from Livera. This identification, however, as seen in present-day confrontations with the state’s armed forces, may reach such a level that exceeds the state’s monopoly of violence, and hence its ability to cast fear over civilians. There is still one aspect of the incorporation of sovereignty by means of ritual/play form

and civilians' everyday confrontations with state's agents. This is the entanglement of "fear and fun," as Kalandar skit players mentioned while defining the event, and as we have seen by the ways in which the rural Trabzonlu view their confrontations of armed forces as something entertaining and sportsmanslike.

3) Conclusion: How to Play with the Sovereign

In Maçka City, the only physical exercise option, or "the only option for fun" (tekgüçlük) according to Okan, were night soccer games. Groups of men met on a weekly basis and followed a strictly scheduled yearlong tournament. The games I followed were Okan and Isak's, the village-bureaucrats', roster; a line-up that also included a few youth from Livera, and one non-native Maçka resident. This outsider's presence made all games inherently "political" because he happened to be the governor of Maçka.⁶¹ Having the governor as the team's striker put a certain pressure on his teammates. They all rigorously set their offenses and tried to pass the ball to the governor so he could score. Rather obviously, the hierarchical respect of the village-bureaucrats for the governor was present even on the pitch. The governor had minimal teammate contact with the players: he always arrived after the rest of the team in his car driven by a chauffeur, received passes and kicked the ball. Rival teams' defenders rarely charged him, he only occasionally helped the defense, and always left immediately after the final whistle

⁶¹ Similar to police officers and gendarmes, governors, too, are appointed by the central government—they are not popularly elected politicians. Governors' precincts are determined by their position in the bureaucratic hierarchy and the political stance of the president; therefore almost all governors are outsiders to their provinces and districts. The Turkish nation-state inherited the Ottoman imperial system of appointed governors- a centralist system of decision-making that enabled the Ottomans' control, and when needed, suppressed the local powers.

without having any conversation with the “civilian” players. Apparently the village youth goalkeeper of the governor’s team did not know that his team’s least effective player was also the highest-ranking political figure in his hometown. On one attack, he started yelling at the governor in fury for the latter was hardly helping the defense. “Who the hell are you, man? What are you doing, stay on defense!” were the goalkeeper’s words while he was pushing the governor. Okan and Isak ran to the scene of dispute in panic and fear, and took the furious goalie towards my side—in the meantime, strangely enough, the governor in his characteristic muteness did not react. Before my eyes, their panic suddenly dissolved into discreet laughing. I could hear Okan whispering in the goalie’s ear that the man he had just harassed was the governor, and the goalie could hardly cover his mouth attempting to stifle his laughter. After the teams were back in the game, standing behind the net, I asked the goalie what just happened. After turning towards me, he started bouncing around and said, “Wasn’t that crazy fun, eh? I am such a jackass.” (*Deliydi degil mi? Cok esek bir adamim ben ya*). But wasn’t he frightened after learning that the man he jostled was the political leader of his town? “Just a bit,” he said jubilantly. Would he react the same way if he had known who the governor was? In a mockingly serious demeanor, his answer was “of course, I would, he is the one who should know how to play [soccer] in Maçka, this is a serious game.” How can we make sense of this rather spontaneous encounter between the outsider governor and a semi-professional young goalie? In addition to defining these violent civilian/state confrontations as elements of sportsmanship and fun, we should also regard these moments as confusing and disturbing particularly for the state agents. Why do the state

agents stand passive and helpless when their authority (use of violence, as seen in the stories of the gendarmes during the PKK raid and in captain Savas's complaints about the local culture) is physically challenged?

In his ethnography on militant political identifications and violence in Pakistan, Oskar Verkaaik (2004) asks similar questions: Why does political violence (not by the state, but despite the state's will) such as that of the youth members of the Pakistani party MQM,⁶² bring fun and entertainment to its perpetrators? Why is this "lack of respect [for state's agents] expressed in explicitly plebeian, transgressive, and ludic practices" (11)? Similar to the Trabzonlu's attitude towards the armed agents of the state, as we have seen vividly with Mamis's expressions about the incompetence of the Turkish military against the PKK, the militants of the MQM see the police as "stronger and armed but utterly slow and stupid" (114). MQM members do not miss any opportunity to expose this paradoxical impotency of the police mostly by attacking non-Muslim and non-cooperating groups who are supposedly under the state's protection (ibid). This is how, according to Verkaaik, MQM militants forge their group's sovereignty against that of the state. Verkaaik warns that those moments of violence, taking forms of beatings, mob violence and even popular ethnic cleansing, are by no means against the state discourse of establishing a religiously unified nation; on the contrary, they overlap. Yet, they stand also as a challenge against the state, surpassing its sovereign power. Thus, argues

⁶² Muhajir Qaumi Movement (United National Movement), formerly called the Muhajir Qaumi Movement (National Movement of Migrants), is the political party claiming to represent the Muslim migrant populations of Pakistan, that is, the families of migrants who had travelled from India to Pakistan after independence in 1947. MQM's militant youth groups engaged in ethnic violence against Pakhtuns, Punjabis, and Sindhis during the 1980s and were targeted by the Pakistani government various times as terrorists. MQM still occupies a significant position in Pakistani politics.

Verkaaik, MQM's sovereign gestures vis-à-vis the Pakistani state by means of violence also stand as acts of fun, as his informants openly testify. MQM militants entertain themselves when they violently attack their enemies because first, fun transgresses and makes social boundaries transparent and, second, its intimacy denies outsiders, hence fortifying the unity of the locals (123). Despite the violent state oppression, experiencing the passivity of the same state in the present not only empowers movements like MQM, or the peripheral populace like the Trabzonlu, but also provides them with fun moments when they manage to expose the state's inability to fulfill its sovereign power.

The soccer game in Maçka, too, shows that the Trabzonlu can sustain formal political relationships between the "usurper governor" and the local youth even during a recreational soccer game. I later learned that the goalkeeper apologized, but his fellow villagers Okan and Isak suspended him from the team for the next few games. When I asked Okan about their goalkeeper, he said: "he will become like us, and learn how to treat his governor because he knows that otherwise he would never play."

We have seen similar moments of banishment, albeit in a radically different and violent episode of Maçka history. First, during the local landlords' struggle over sovereignty, and second, fueled by the fights over the abandoned Greek property between settlers and occupiers. The second episode would cause blood feuds and family fights, until the government finally interfered in the late 1940s and allowed the banished occupiers back in the village with the help of a new community leader, Mahmut Agha. Both sides, legal settlers and occupiers, Karagöz reminded me, learned "not to mess with the government and be proper citizens" as their great-grandparents had learned to be

proper subjects of the Ottoman imperial rule—not only fighting among themselves or with the central power, but also adapting into it. This adaptation took its “national” shape first by settling on the Greek property as “citizens” and later becoming bureaucrats, police officers, and so on. This history rendered the Trabzonlu as skillful players with and against the state’s sovereignty; both as exemplary citizens and exceptional (“unruly,” according to Captian Savas) people.

The main reason for a gendarmerie captain to view his populace as unruly is not because of the latter’s explicit rejection of the state’s authority, but due to their acceptance, yet with simultaneous confrontation, of its sovereignty. The duality of popular and state sovereignty, created by acceptance and confrontation of the latter, echoes with what Omer Asan, the folklorist who was persecuted for his book *Pontic Culture*, told me in chapter two. Recall that spontaneous reactions from nationalist circles and/or the systematic attack of the state were reasons for his book’s stigmatization. I believe Asan’s indecisiveness about the cause of the attack on his book resonates with the overlapping spontaneity of popular sovereign gestures and its systematic and organized stately versions—as seen in the suspicions and treatment of others (Greeks, Kurds, etc.) in Trabzon.

We have seen how distrust for the (Kurdish) other causes a disturbing confusion concerning the inextricability of being the victim of sovereign violence and lawful citizens. Ilyas Karagöz’s son, Mamis, regarded the PKK as a band of animals whom only the Trabzonlu men can handle—thanks to their skills with firearms. This bold statement

could only have been uttered with the flashback of a past that is loaded with suppression of the Trabzonlu in a similar fashion.

Why has Mamis drawn on the “animal” metaphor to refer to the annihilation of PKK militants? With Karakoncoloz in Kalandar folklore, in family histories and monikers, and finally in extremist political statements, references to animality abound in Trabzon. The choice of animal metaphors and analogies, such as Karagöz’s biped wolves, seem to arise when violence or confrontation with state authority is at stake. The latter was exhibited clearly during a soccer game when a young goalie described his jolting of the governor by “acting like a jackass.”

Reminiscent of Metin And’s description of shamanistic rituals discussed in chapter one, as indiscernibly playful and serious performances, confronting the state in Trabzon inheres a similar playfulness named by many as “fun” or “sport.” Recall that while explaining the use of animal skins and animal-like sounds and movements in rituals like Kalandar and magical practices, And emphasizes how etymologically the Turkish word for magic, *buyu*, has also the connotation of shamanistic ritual and animal movements. It would not be implausible to suggest that the inextricability of playfulness and seriousness, or of fun and fear as Kalandar players see in what they do, should be thought alongside with what Das calls “the magic of the state:” an engagement with power that also puts one in a vulnerable position—as happened to our young goalie while playing with the Maçka governor. We have, however, seen that his vulnerability is not a position of passivity, but a victorious and entertaining moment against the governor, or, in his words, a way to show the governor “how to play a serious game in Maçka.

CHAPTER FIVE: The Men Karakoncoloz

While walking with the Karakoncoloz players on a damp and cold Kalandar night, I heard a cacophony of shrieks, drums, and cowbells coming from the dirt road above us. Another Kalandar band of Karakoncoloz players was marching. Yet no one in our group seemed to share my excitement about this other band. They pretended that nothing unusual was happening and kept walking to their target house to perform another skit. Our group seemed to avoid any possible contact with the other band. “We have to fight over the alms sack if we encounter them. It is the Kalandar rule,” Okan explained. But , why did they avoid this confrontation? Would not a battle between two separate Karakoncoloz bands have fit perfectly to Kalandar’s theme of violent plays and banishments? The previous year, a “snatch-fight” (kapisma) between the two bands had occurred, Okan told me, however, it had almost evolved into a serious fight. Baris, the youngest among us, was slapped in the face and knocked down, and yet could not detect who slapped him because all Karakoncoloz players were clad in costumes and masks. I found the story amusing, so why not have another “kapisma” this year as well? Apparently, I was the only one finding this intramural snatch-fight entertaining; the band, however, refrained from confrontation.

In order to see the final scenes of Kalandar, the entire village gathered at the square cum field next to the church-turned-mosque. The Karakoncoloz players were running around screaming at the scared kids and amused elders, who were attempting to catch the players here and there to guess who were under the masks and face paint.

During the finale of this chaotic and fun communal event, I finally witnessed the other band of Kalandar players. They hid themselves in costumes with no clear skit characters, and no visible division of individual roles; none of the standard figures -- the bride, the groom, the old man or the wolfman -- were discernible. From head to toe, the other band's players covered themselves in rags, disabling everyone's ability to detect the Kalandar skit characters and to guess the players' identities. Only when they cried out in grunts and shrieks could one notice that they were all women. A snatch-fight (*çival kapişması*) with an all women band, as Okan revealed, would be "inappropriate" (*uygunsuz*). Okan thus instructed the players of his band to hide their sack so that the woman Kalandar players would not attempt a fight over it. Kalandar memories of Maçka elders indicated the absolute absence of women in this play, implying a strict custom. Present day male Kalandar players, however, did not oppose the participation of women in this arguably male ritual, but then why did Okan and his band avoid any confrontation with the band of woman players?

Avoidance of the opposite gender is not limited to the ritual and playful setting of Kalandar, neither is it exclusive to men. Throughout my residence in Maçka, women of marriageable age were a group with whom I had minimum contact. Mothers and grandmothers, of the Kalandar players and others, were always around and available for daily conversations and interviews. Married or single young women's avoidance of men, however, did not seem to stem from a moral or religious principle; their behavior was more like social maneuvering. During my home visits, after brief introductions, I observed these women's meticulous avoidance of the room where I met with their kin.

In this chapter, I aim to shed light on the matter of gender relations surrounding Kalandar, yet from the perspective of men. This is critical not only because Kalandar tradition used to allow only men as Karakoncoloz players, but also because its major component, the skit performed during house visits, stages a reenactment of bride kidnapping (by the wolfman), her rescue, and the banishment of the kidnapper (by the household). How should we understand the dominance of men (in Kalandar and everyday life) and the so-called passivity (as bride being kidnapped and saved in Kalandar) and seclusion of women, given the presence of female Karakoncoloz players? How can we elaborate on gender relations when their ritualistic and everyday life variants collide? What does a “social relation” become after this collision of domains? I turn to Melanesian anthropology, particularly that of Marilyn Strathern, to address these questions.

1) Melanesians and the Trabzonlu

In her introduction to *Gender of the Gift*, Strathern discusses the presence of a “conundrum” in anthropological scholarship of male or female initiation/puberty rites. While addressing what is at stake for this scholarship, she asks: “when a category of persons [men or women] claims ritual powers (through secret knowledge, cult engagement, etc.), is it because they have or because they do not have comparable powers in other terms (in daily life, in politics)?” (98). Strathern lays out the predicament of this conundrum by emphasizing the anthropological habit of seeing society in domains (ibid). This way of seeing society in domains works in two modes: one that sees

“ordered, institutional life [such as marriage] as imposed upon a reality;” and another that “divides up areas of social life into different levels or spheres,” such as public/private and political/ritual (98-100).

Strathern refers particularly to marriage disposals and rituals to exemplify how the way of seeing society in domains works. Domination of women is institutionalized in men’s right to power and rivalry with other men. Yet, this passive and property-like position of women disappears in the ritual domain, which consists of harnessing the natural superiority of female fertility, and the myth of men stealing female powers (100).

“Yet when the observer is confronted with social realities he/she does take at face value, the argument about exclusion proceeds differently. When it is a domain of political or economic action that men create, bolstering their interest in warfare, individual acts of violence, or their extraction of women's labor, it is often treated as significant that women are without the political and economic resources to protect their own interests. To be excluded is to be deprived. In ritual activity, however, men's 'power' may be interpreted as complementary to, as compensating for, or as controlling other 'powers' that women evince of themselves” (ibid).

Where is this power located? Is it found within female superiority, as narrated in cosmologies extant in the ritual domain of male initiations and cults, or within the male domination of women due to the latter’s arguable lack of resources and passivity in the political and economic domain? First, Strathern conceives of sociality as referring to the

“creating and maintaining of relationships” (13) that cannot be reduced to the society that abstractedly lies over onto different domains (102). Second, she relates the anthropological conundrum to the western perspective of seeing sexuality and power as property cum belongings that are believed to reside in individuals (104). With this perspective taken from the Melanesian context, Strathern puts forth the impossibility of presupposing an “antinomy between society and the individual” (12). Moreover, besides this impossibility, she suggests, persons in Melanesia are as “dividually as they are individually conceived,” which renders them to contain a “generalized sociality within” (13). This containment, or sameness of plural and singular as Strathern calls it, expands on to sexual difference as well. Women and men are “dividually” contained in the same form, which she names androgyny. What are the implications of “dividuality” and “sociality within” in the context of Trabzon?

At first sight, sociologically speaking, sexual difference in Trabzon seems to have no similarity with the dividual, namely “the holistic unitary state” through which female or male emerges under particular circumstances (14). To include Kalandar in the picture, however, especially the recent participation of women in skits, complicates this quick conclusion. Pace Gillison, Strathern writes about how the dividual encompasses all (ritualistic, political, etc.) aspects of Melanesian life: “separations in existence (self/other, male/female, human/animal, etc.) are repeatedly destroyed in order that they may be repeatedly created” (ibid). We have seen in the memory of Karakoncoloz how wolves actively partook in everyday folklore (with their jaw bones as charms) and social relations (neighbors named after their resemblance to wolves), hence there has been

involvement of animal nature in the human sociality.⁶³ What perspectives could the gender relations from Trabzon provide us in tandem with Strathern's "sociality within" conceptualization?

In order to examine this conceptualization further, I argue that domains such as political, social and ritualistic exist unitarily at an event like Kalandar.

With its connection to bride kidnapping, Kalandar lays out how the Trabzonlu's perspective of marriage and kinship contrasts with the classical perception that sees sexuality and power residing in individuals as owned monads from which gender and power relations are believed to spring. This "obsession" with the one or "multiplication of ones" (in Strathern's terms) disables our effort for the conceptualization of social relationships (2004: 53), instead we need to search for the partial connections, as Strathern suggests.

Searching for these connections will show us how the Trabzonlu's sense of sociality, especially when gender relations are concerned, sets another zone of contestation with the political authority of the state, which regards its citizens only as the plurality of individual atoms with strictly defined rights and duties that leave no room to another web of relationships other than what it recognizes as legal. I argue that another dimension of the Maçkali's ways of asserting local sovereignty vis-à-vis the state sovereignty appears in the contestation over the meaning of marriage and kinship. I view bride kidnapping as the essence of masculinity and sovereignty in Trabzon, for it and its corollaries (rescue of the bride and marriage agreements or blood feuds) have marked manhood and political power in the province for centuries (Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*).

⁶³ For a recent discussion of the unity of various natures, human and non-human, under the term of multi-naturalism, see Viveiros de Castro "Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Equivocation."

I approach bride kidnapping, practiced either in everyday life or in ritual settings, such as that of Kalandar, from the historical point of view Michael Meeker introduced in his ethnographic study of political modernity in Trabzon—an approach that focuses on how local patrilineal descent groups’ sense of social relation building (via affinity building and alliances) has diverged from and coalesced with the meaning of society as the state defines it. Meeker emphasizes that the networks, or “interpersonal associations, established by alliances and marriages have created a “state society” (passim)—a society, Meeker argues, that diminishes the classical western distinction between the public and private (Hann 1997), and the ruler and the ruled.

In discussing how masculinity in present day Maçka constitutes and is constituted by interpersonal associations, in addition to Strathern’s study (1991) on the concept of gender in Melanesia, I draw on Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s study (2010) on Amazonian kinship. I consider both of these anthropological perspectives, though focusing on matters in different contexts, in dialogue with what Meeker writes about interpersonal associations. Both Strathern and Viveiros de Castro have reiterated that what is considered as owned by individuals in the western understanding of sociality (sexuality, kin, power, etc.) is solely seen through relations among persons in Melanesia and the Amazon. Moreover, both have radically contended that difference (sexual or kinship based, such as the one between filial and in-laws) does not ontologically oscillate between the self and the other, but always “relationally” stays within the self (or the other)—as for sexual difference, it is “androgynous” for Strathern, while kinship is “alliance” (or its twin, intensive filiation) for Viveiros de Castro. In this chapter, I

therefore borrow these two theoretical perspectives to focalize the significance of marriage and kinship for the Maçka men. Bride kidnapping thus stands out as the nodal point of this politics of manhood.

An instance of modern day bride kidnapping, perpetuated by one Kalandar player, will show us how the continuation of the seclusion of women and of the high value placed on female chastity cross-cuts the Maçka youths' complex feelings about marriage as simultaneously a gateway to adulthood and a barrier to fulfilling life goals. The ethnographic goal of this chapter is therefore to understand a masculine structure of feeling. Catching a glimpse of this feeling, I argue, will provide us with a context within which sociality extends not only beyond the the categories of *individual* and *society*, but also engulfs what is ritualistic, political, and sexual.

2) Seclusion of Woman in Trabzon

The seclusion of women has long been a canonical topic for the studies of Muslim societies (Cite). Before Lila Abu-Lughod's *Veiled Sentiments*, however, only an array of ethnographic studies (Bourdieu) has shifted the focus from the rule of Islam to the social structure (nomadic or sedimentary tribalism) as the determinant of sexual difference and gender roles. Although this remarkable shift has demonstrated how the seclusion of women and concepts of chastity (honor, shame, etc.) are deeply connected to the studied community's ways of constituting legality, their methods of conceptualizing social difference has not received enough attention.

Michael Meeker's comparative approach to the topic—he studied gender and masculinity in Malenesian (cite) and Arab societies (cite)—in Trabzon via the route of modernity and sovereignty demonstrates how interpersonal association building among men can only be studied by examining marriage and kinship. For Meeker, putting forth the production of sociality, however, was only possible when he had centralized the matter of sovereignty. In his earlier works, in line with the extant literature relating the seclusion of women to social structure (read culture), the saliency of sociality had escaped his framing. In his 1971 article entitled “The Black Sea Turks,” he writes how the frequent reports of blood feuds along the Black Sea are linked to “affairs of honor involving women” (324).⁶⁴ Emphasizing the land ownership and kinship structure similarities between Caucasian tribes and the Black Sea Turks, Meeker notes how the latter's unusual concern for the chastity and purity of women differ from customs in Anatolia, hence are products of culture (328). Whereas public life, including feud, is the exclusive domain of men in Trabzon, women are secluded in the household— which is untypical of western Anatolian villages (331). Meeker explains this spatial segregation by gender and restriction of women to their fathers' and husbands' houses, first, by analyzing architectural features of houses and second, in an expected fashion, with the concept of honor.

⁶⁴ Meeker does not provide further information, but his presumptions about the popular depiction of stereotypical Black Sea men in regard to blood feuds was not utterly groundless. The early republic passed an amendment that strictly forbade blood feud and vendetta killings. The amendment was extended until 1942 but exclusively for two regions, Kurdistan and East Black Sea, which have been extensively studied as regions with the highest numbers of blood feuds. In spite of Black Sea men's racist stance against Kurds and claims of being the proudest Turks, in Turkey they are popularly put in the contemptuous category with Kurds, as the joke tells: “What do you call a Kurd living by the shore? A Black Sea man.”

The Black Sea house, Meeker writes, is conceived as a female domain where women are in charge of domestic duties and chores: child rearing, cleaning, and caring vegetable gardens. The public, the domain of manhood, signifies where men should dwell politically and socially. Warfare among local lords (Aghas) and blood feuds have dominated this male public. After the Republic of 1923 abolished this Black Sea endemic (Meeker's term) masculine display of power, and set itself as the sheer executor of sovereignty, a new channel for displaying masculine spectacle of power emerged: manifested "in the local electoral contests, which involve the active participation of large numbers of men in opposing alliances, headed by leaders from the larger descent groups" (301)—a transition Meeker calls Turkish modernity or "a nation of empire," implying a continuity between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, a continuity that the latter's nationalist ideology long denied. But to what extent has this transition been seamlessly incorporated? We have seen in Chapter Three that public recognition of state sovereignty did not occur by means of a withering away of local sovereign gestures (such as suspicion and monopoly of violence), so then what forms of masculine spectacle has this local sovereignty orchestrated under the modern regime of power?

Although in *Black Sea Turks* Meeker sees the seclusion of women and the strict concept of honor concerning female chastity as remnants of the past masculine spectacle (thus a product of cultural continuation), his architectural analysis of the Black Sea house in *A Nation of Empire*, I think, sheds light on the issue of masculinity as aligned with sovereignty. What animates Meeker's analysis of the political use of interior space is the similarity which exists between the pre-modern imperial Topkapi Palace in Istanbul and

the mansions, mostly of local lords (Aghas), in East Black Sea region. Revising his earlier argument that the Black Sea household is the domain of woman, hence the locale of her seclusion, in this book, Meeker demonstrates how interior features of the Black Sea Mansion index gender difference (144-152). Akin to the imperial palace's council courts and the petition room in Istanbul, Meeker asks why rural houses in a peripheral province such as Trabzon have large salons where the paternal leader accepts his guests without the latter having any contact with female members of the family. In *Black Sea Turks* he answers this question by addressing the local power struggle among different kin groups of agnates; in his later book he clarifies as to why he revised this conclusion: Agha mansions are the locals' copying of state officials' residences (31): "They symbolized their occupants' claim to the right to participate in the state system by collecting taxes, conscripting recruits, imposing forced labor, and enforcing judicial decision" (ibid).

None of these state system practices, however, have evolved into a pure state form. How did this happen? According to Meeker, by the constantly emerging and vanishing interpersonal associations, or as Strathern would answer, by "creating and maintaining of relationships." Meeker writes how his interlocutors in Trabzon consider these mansions "like a government" (ibid). What Meeker had once argued to be social structures of local culture (Agha ruling system, agnate coalitions, patronymic groups, etc.), is later conceptualized as "sovereign power through interpersonal associations"—a creation of social networks resembling the stately structures of power and ruling, but never fully evolving into the latter (253). How have the Trabzolu's interpersonal

associations historically preempted the danger of being a state? The answer may reside in the paradox that the seclusion of women poses: interpersonal associations exclude the direct involvement of women both socio-politically and spatially, yet the Black Sea woman has remained the vital figure in the power play between the local alliances and the state.

This paradox, I believe, has led Meeker to revise his theory on the seclusion of women. Beside supporting his major argument that the “Ottomanization of Trabzon” (the latter’s quick adaptation into the state system) was also the Trabzonization of the Ottomans (the latter’s benefitting of the interpersonal associations for consolidation of their central power), the duality of the seclusion of and dependence on women helps Meeker criticize his earlier view on the topic that reduces the matter to “Black Sea Turks’ culture.” The interpersonal associations approach immediately posits marriage and kin patterns of the Trabzonlu at the core of Turkish modernization and the transformation of sovereign power.

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, the lack of irrigable lands in the steep Trabzon valleys has pushed men to seek employment in various sectors, including clergy and military in the Ottoman times, and politicians and bureaucrats of any scale in the republic after 1923.⁶⁵ Female labor has thus sufficed to take care of small patches of

⁶⁵ Meeker convincingly explains how limiting topography and environment could work beyond fracturing the social bonds and, instead, could create social and political groups at entrepreneurial, governmental, and educational levels: “Among [men] we find... religious teachers, military officers, stone-layers, wood-carvers, shipwrights and so on. In this respect, the coastal region [the East Black Sea], which is otherwise completely rural in character, bears a resemblance to an urban center. There were, then, two contradictory sides to the rural societies of this segment of the coastal region. Their homelands served as isolated refuges where archaic traits and dialects were preserved. And, yet, [they] were also connected with the outside world” (97). My interactions with my interlocutors in Maçka resonate with Meeker’s observations from 1967, most notably with the group that I call the village-bureaucrats. Interviews with Greek refugees from

vegetable gardens. Moreover this division of labor has also enabled men to become something other than subsistence horticulturalists: actors (read fighters) in local competitions over local power and imperial and then republican officials and affiliates of the state (106). During the times of conflict among fighting local alliances of families against the state, the woman maintaining the small plot of land and home became critical when the male member of the household needed a refuge to protect his honor and dignity. How can this socio-territorial explanation help us understand the bond between the seclusion of women and becoming the state-society of Trabzon?

In his analysis focusing on the Trabzon district of *Of*, Meeker underscores the important role of marriage in determining the interpersonal associations, that is, the intertwinement of affinity and alliance building:

“Setting aside the issue of emotional attachments, of fathers and daughters as well as of young men and women, the arrangements of marriages was the very stuff of interpersonal association, and hence of district social networks. Ultimately, there could be no leading individuals [local lords, or Aghas], and thus no large family groupings, without the regulation of the giving and receiving woman in marriage (sic)” (320).

Livera demonstrate a historical continuity of this contradictory character of the region: It was common among the Greek men, too, to seasonally migrate to different parts of the empire for work. Yet, needless to say, they were not historically allowed to develop religious, military, and bureaucratic careers exclusively available for Muslims. Although a reform edict in 1856 bestowed universal citizenry to the all subjects of the empire regardless of creed, the Greek Orthodox of rural Maçka had long lost the historical advantage of, in Meeker’s terms, becoming a “state-society” as their Muslim neighbors did.

Bride kidnapping and the concomitant settlements, or fights, among alliances could create new partnerships, or jeopardize existing ones and cause blood feuds. Meeker particularly stresses that in cases of settlement or conflict, both parties, the abductor's side and the bride's side, avoided informing the police for this could lead to "the deterioration of the situation" (320). The involvement of the state in the tension-ridden bride kidnapping, Meeker argues, is considered as an impediment in the formation of interpersonal associations. Meeker thus reiterates that kidnapping and concomitant attempts to settle conflicts through marriage or through rescuing the bride, if not through revenge attacks, have been key to constitute or redefine the sociality, or interpersonal associations. Why did such a display of masculinity aim at keeping the state at bay if the intention was to solve a "violent crime," such as bride kidnapping?

Emerged in the form of bride kidnapping, infinitely variable interpersonal associations (a brother in-law or a father's brother's son could be either an ally or enemy) of the Trabzon men stand rival to state sovereignty. Whereas the latter recognizes and seeks only linear and hierarchical relationships, the former benefits from and thus aims to sustain a web of affines and allies. The Trabzonlu's sense of socio-political relation building should still not be deemed an absolute antithesis of the state sovereignty. The relationship between these two perspectives of power and sociality has had moments of symbiosis as much as rivalry. What Meeker explores as Turkish Modernity marks the historicity of this relationship, which, according to him, rests on Black Sea women. He indeed writes, "One could not be a participant in the sovereign power of the state system without women's labor" (106). Competition over women, which could result in bride

kidnapping, blood feuds and seclusion, signifies a political-masculine agenda beyond the Islamic tradition. It has always existed, as Meeker notes, in tandem with local lords' competition not only over local ruling, but also against the state sovereignty. But how should we examine the present day seclusion of women, after the times of blood feuds and armed displays of sovereign violence have long ended? An incident of bride kidnapping which happened during my residence in Maçka will assist in investigating the present day significance of bride kidnapping that, I argue, still inheres the substantiality of interpersonal associations.

3) Marriage as Gateway and Obstruction

20-year-old Alican performed in the first Kalandar I participated in 2010. I did not happen to meet him in later years, but heard that he was working to get into the police-training program and had failed the test. In March 2012, over a lunch date, Isak conveyed more news about Alican: he had kidnapped a girl (Alican kız kaçırmış). I was familiar with the relevance of bride kidnapping, but always thought that it was an abandoned custom. Hearing that it was still practiced stunned me for a moment. Isak later clarified the story: “The bride was Alican’s long lasting girlfriend whose father, however, never approved of their relationship. In order to force her parents to accept Alican as her boyfriend, she came up with the idea of getting kidnapped; and thus Alican “kidnapped” his bride. As in many examples of bride kidnapping, Alican and his would-be bride colluded to elope, and declared it as *fait accompli*. They disappeared for a few days, signifying the loss of the girl’s virginity and therefore that the burdensome shame on her

family could only be avoided by marriage—and so it happened. A week later, Isak handed me the wedding invitation.

Alican's bride kidnapping yielded ambivalent thoughts in the Kalandar band. As all young men aspiring to get married one day, they seemed astonished with Alican's audacity. The main reason for their astonishment was first due to Alican's age. He was too young to get married, particularly because marriage, along with having a job, was still considered as a gateway to adulthood, hence the end of boyhood. As the youngest of the group, Alican's marriage was almost seen as a disruption in the routine sequence of manhood in Maçka: collage, military service, job, marriage... Alican, however, was still in the first stage.

One of the regular Kalandar players, Murat, who was in charge of Livera's teahouse, clearly contended that Alican and his girlfriend did the right thing by setting up the kidnapping. In his late twenties, Murat had long suffered from unemployment, which hindered his relationships and caused traumatic splits. He therefore openly supported Alican's venture of breaking the cycle of being unemployed and single, which hung over the shoulders of all Liveran young men. Concurring with Murat, Isak said that Alican at least solved one problem, namely, the lingering over a relationship. Married Okan's response to the topic, which I will elaborate in detail later, was different: "he [Alican] will have a life with someone he chose, but we will see how he feels a year later." What makes marriage a life decision beyond one's will, as Okan hints at with his own experience of marriage?

Marriage as a gateway to independent manhood seems to have pushed the Liveran men to compromise other aspects of life. Şakir, for instance, once confessed to me that he ended the life he once wanted to live by his own accord. He was interested in reading and conducting research about his village and district, in a similar fashion to Ilyas Karagöz. Yet he got married when his curiosity and research findings peaked—this was how he discovered that the life described by Hesiod in *Works and Days* was identical to his Greek-speaking grandmother’s life. If he had not gotten married, he ruefully stressed, he could have dove into the matter of Kalandar and revealed its past and secrets. How did marriage in Trabzon, happening through bride kidnapping or otherwise, lose its absolute significance as gateway to manhood (i.e. land ownership and thus sovereignty), and evolve into a hindrance of men’s life goals? How would being married obstruct one’s goals, and what could those goals be? A Liveran man’s reaction to female premarital sex will be the focal point to examine the question of marriage from the Maçka males’ perspective.

Peeping at Premarital Sex

After months in Maçka, one day Isak invited me “to hang out” (“bu akşam takılalım mı” was his invitation in Turkish). I was quite sure that I was invited to drink, but could not predict our locale’s whereabouts. After Isak and four others picked me up, we drove in a minivan to a gas station to buy beer, and thus I realized where the locale would be: the minivan. Facing the Degirmendere River, and the Imam Hatip High

School⁶⁶ on the other side of the riverbank, we opened up our first bottles while tucked in the vehicle. The lights from the school's dormitory rekindled Okan's memories about his time there, with rigorous Quran recitations and no contact with girls of his age. "His father is an Imam, that is why he enrolled Okan there [pointing the school]," Tuncay said, interrupting Okan. "The rest of us were with girls in high school, but dating was difficult in a small town like this, and no one wanted to be in trouble with the girls' elder brothers and families," he continued. Women in the old days, however, were "looser" (daha rahat) and less isolated, they all noted. This statement seemed to prompt Tuncay to exuberantly evoke his memories of peeping. On several occasions during their adolescent years, they watched married couples "making out" (işi pişirmek) through windows and doors left ajar. When caught, they were chased away, yet their peeping attempts were apparently considered as children's mischief since Tuncay could still remember the women's laughter—a sign of their past looseness—when men caught them. However, our next drinking locale after the Degirmendere riverbank would host a moment of peeping beyond childhood mischief.

The group decided to drive up to the hilltop neighborhood in Maçka city, "the best view in town," Isak said. Right before we arrived at the hilltop, Tuncay pointed at a parked station wagon, saying, "yep, action is on," to which I initially did not pay much attention. Facing the other side of the valley where lights beamed from the Xortokop village (or Ortakoy in Turkish) on top of the valley wall, we moved to the second bag of beer. Feeling the buzz and rolling the empty bottles downhill towards the beaming lights

⁶⁶ Although initially designed as schools to train only Imams, who are state appointees in Turkey, Imam Hatip High School graduates are allowed to enroll in higher education institutions other than schools of theology.

of Maçka City below, unanimously we decided to leave. After two parking maneuvers, Tuncay whispered, “now stop and turn your brights on” to our driver. When the driver did so, I saw the same station wagon illuminated under our headlights, and suddenly two heads rose up inside it. A grin in his face exposed Tuncay’s thrill, while he was shaking the driver and asking whether we all saw “the view” (manzara). Okan and Isak, however, did not seem to share Tuncay’s excitement about peeping at a couple. They both spoke out that we should have cut the lights and left, but our peeping turned suddenly into a bust. The station wagon’s engine ignited and it started to move, and Tuncay insisted that we should follow them; so the driver did so until we arrived at a street down the hill. She is not from here, just a college girl at the school,” Tuncay said on our way. Otherwise, she apparently would not dare to be in a car alone with a man. All of us had seen Tuncay’s changing mood, first, from over-exuberance with peeping at a young couple and then to solemnity while busting them on “business” (iş üstünde yakaladık, as he said in Turkish). He seemed to enjoy what he peeped at, and then to pose triumphantly after his attempt obstructed the couple’s “business.” He seemed relieved that the girl was not from Maçka—no Maçka girl would do what the outsider college girl just did. Why was it a relief to know that a girl having premarital sex was not a member of the Maçka community?

Tuncay’s self-assurance that no Maçka girl would have premarital sex resonates with others’, such as Okan and Isak’s, prevention of their girlfriends or wives meeting other men—including me. Okan’s treatment of his wife exemplified this sentiment clearly. I received a call from him one day—Isak and he had just returned from a

wedding and wanted to hang out with me in the city. After having a quick supper at a café, we stepped out to plan the night at the nearby teahouse and ran into Okan's wife, Ilkay, who was returning from a quick shopping trip after the wedding. She seemed rather eager to learn about our plan for the night and possibly join us. At my surprise, Okan yelled at her in fury, saying, "Go home! What do you want, a slap in the face?" She immediately left with watery eyes. Isak, in the meantime, could only hold Okan's arm and whisper him, "Easy, man." We have seen young men's avoidance of being seen in public with their girlfriends and wives, and young women's avoidance of non-kin men, but why would a woman avoid even non-sexual contact with men at all costs, an avoidance, as seen in Okan's reaction, which might even be enforced by the husband with physical violence? What is the essence of sociality that this masculine control of female chastity, as seen also in Tuncay's self-assurance about Maçka girls' high morals, aims to create and sustain?

Meeker's kinship-centered analysis of Turkish modernity in rural Trabzon tackles Trabzon males' oversensitivity towards female chastity and premarital sex. He prioritizes Trabzon's success as a dominantly rural peripheral province, partaking in the state system by means of adopting the state institutions and forging its local sense of sovereignty against that of the state. Key to this "exercise of sovereign power" (145) has been, if I may repeat, a disciplining of interpersonal associations, hence a control over women. Throughout the history of Trabzon, the state machine (Meeker's term) in the form of the hierarchy of bureaucratic centralism has been conjoined with the local hierarchy of interpersonal associations—the locals' political coalitions and alliances paved the way for

family building and kin networks (146). Becoming state officials, bureaucrats, soldiers, police officers, and religious teachers (Hodjas) and leaders (Imams) in Trabzon has intermingled with the local network of social relations and roles. This transformation of sovereignty has thus deeply affected Trabzon's sociality, as Meeker writes:

“...each [state official] took his place in a world of nonofficial and as well as official associations. So each was the representative of a discipline of interpersonal association as father, master, relative, friend, partner, and patron. And given that each was the subject of a discipline of interpersonal association, insofar as they were members of the official class, would it not also follow the adherence to such a discipline would also shape the ethics of families, households, patronage, kinship, and partnership?” (145)

How does one approach a disciplined sociality that involves a strict observance of female chastity as the backbone of local aspirations of sovereignty? Let me return briefly to Meeker's changing methodology on the segregation of women. His earlier work, *Black Sea Turks*, argues that the “culture” of the Black Sea Turks, that is, their clan society structure, renders them different from the Anatolian villagers. Clan based patrilineal descent over-determines Black Sea men's perception of gender roles, hence seclusion of women and bride kidnapping. With his later work, *A Nation of Empire*, he abandons this essentialist approach and questions his key concepts, such as culture and society. He starts with eliminating the term “clan society” altogether for, first, it reduces the conflicts

and battles among agnates (due to various reasons, one of which is bride kidnapping) to arguably unquestionable filial identifications. Second, the concept of clan society (read culture) undermines our ability to understand the presence of local forms of sovereign power (alliances and coalitions based on interpersonal associations) that aspired to be in league with state sovereignty. How should we elaborate this focal change that shifts its axis from a stagnant kinship-centered explanation to a more relational approach, through which the Trabzonlu's sense of sovereignty and masculinity becomes visible? Along with Marilyn Strathern's conceptualization of sexual difference in Papua New Guinea, the Amazonian perspective on kinship may help shed light on the matter of masculinity in Trabzon.

4) Amazonians and the Trabzonlu

We have seen how Strathern's "sociality within" concept draws on the creation, maintenance, and destruction of relationships. What does she mean by "relationship" exactly? According to Viveiros de Castro, the relations that Strathern emphasizes as the basis of "sociality within" comprise not only social connections, but also disjunctions (225). This theory of differential relations, as Viveiros de Castro calls it, regards relations with their potential to "make a difference [sexual, natural, social, etc.] between persons (ibid). The name Viveiros de Castro coins for the production of these constant differential relations is "multiplicity", which, he defines in reference to Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of the rhizome as "the mode of existence of pure intensive difference" (109). The instances of alliance formation among various groups in Trabzon, I argue, bear certain

resemblances to Strathern's "relations via connections and disjunctions" or Viveiros de Castro's multiplicities.⁶⁷

As we have seen with Meeker's historical analysis of alliance formation in Trabzon, relations among groups might oscillate between building alliances and establishing enmities. Note the tension among alliance groups in Livera when the Tonyali and Oflu migrated to the village after the Greeks' deportation. Whereas the enmity between the two groups caused blood feuds and the rise of a new Agha ruler, the families were still connected by being Liverans. Marriages had a pivotal role in this "territorialization," to use Deleuze's term. Yet as in bride kidnapping and further efforts to either save the bride or intensify enmity, alliance-based power coalitions against other alliances and the state could pave the way either for affinity building or more "disjunctions" among the groups. What is the significance of affinity building in understanding masculinity in Trabzon?

Introducing the Amazonian perspective of kinship, Viveiros de Castro addresses how alliance is posited vis-à-vis filiation (242), particularly the marriage alliance,⁶⁸ which resides beyond kinship-procreation and functions "as part of a war machine which is anterior and exterior to kinship" (ibid). This critical perspective on alliance and kinship seems to negate the historical picture depicted by Meeker's *Black Sea Turks*, which

⁶⁷ Thinking through multiplicities, Viveiros de Castro notes, is not to substitute concepts such as Culture or Society with a new megaconcept; instead, it aims to render the latter two theoretically obsolete (109-111) by means of opening the social analysis to the perspectival differences of the studied subjects and the anthropologist. In the context of Trabzon, the multiplicity becomes rather a meaningful *perspective* for it also demonstrates how the Trabzonlu strove to differentiate their sense of sociality and power (via interpersonal associations) from that of the state. Over this mode of thinking (through multiplicities), as Viveiros de Castro writes inspired by Peirre Clastres is also "a thinking against the state" (109).

⁶⁸ I consider alliances for bride kidnapping and its corollary bride rescue and blood feud alliances included in marriage alliance all together.

highlights how kinship bonds (within clan society), particularly that of agnates, have yielded to political marriages and thus alliances in Trabzon. In *A Nation of Empire*, however, in emphasizing the prevailing of “interpersonal associations” over filiation, Meeker’s analysis of Trabzon sociality gets closer to that of Viveiros de Castro, which, according to the latter, is best perceptible in affinity-building (241).

Viveiros de Castro’s approach to affinity building radically exceeds Meeker’s interpersonal associations approach because Amazonian sociality, which exhibits examples of affinity building in its purest forms, expands into the spirit world and animal nature, as well. This is mostly because Meeker’s work does not include the ritual aspect of sociality—that which one should recall as a trope of Strathern’s conceptualization of the term, and which has to be thought beyond its ostensibly separate domains, such as political, ritual, or sexual. With this in mind, we should revisit Kalandar, particularly the night of 2012 when two bands of players, one male, the other female,, were proximate enough for a mock fight.

5) Conclusion: A Timeless Slap in the Face

The major component of the Karakoncoloz skit during Kalandar is the bride kidnapping and the concomitant mock fight which occurs in an attempt to rescue the bride (always a male player in disguise) and to then banish the abductor (the wolfman, or the drunkard as seen in the 2011 and 2012 Kalandars). This sequence deserves further attention. First, the kinship status of the bride in the household to which she is introduced is unknown because a bridegroom accompanies her. Are they symbolically the members

of the household that they are introduced to or not? Second, the kidnapping happens at a wedding ceremony because the player accompanying the bride is not a husband (*koca*), but a bridegroom (*damat*). Immediately after the scene of kidnapping, the player costumed as either an old man or woman induces the household to attack the abductor and rescue the bride. An instantaneous alliance between Kalandar players and the visited household emerges, first, to rescue the bride, and then, to banish the abductor. The ritual is almost reminiscent of Viveiros de Castro's description of alliance, that is, a "war machine that is anterior and exterior to kinship." This reenactment of a war machine, an alliance-building ritual, perhaps excludes the participation of women in the socio-politics, but keeps them always included as the bride-to-kidnap in the ritual domain. How then have the Livera men perceived the recent, active participation of women in Kalandar, though in a separate band?

From the perspective of male Kalandar players, the participation of women could not have been pleasant as their unwillingness to confront the woman-only band has shown us. Even in the ritual setting, men of Livera clearly demonstrated their avoidance of women by all means. Interestingly, however, no voice was raised arguing the "unchastity of woman," or "that they had no place in Kalandar." Yet the male band of players still seemed distressed about the possibility of a confrontation, or moreover, a mock fight to snatch the alms sack. In 2010, when the mock fight for the alms sack ended with one of Okan and Isak's player getting slapped in the face and thus losing the sack, they did not know whether there were woman Kalandar players in the rival band. Thus in 2012 not only did they not want to risk losing the alms sack, but also wanted to avoid

any confrontation altogether. Though showing no signs of opposition to women's participation in Kalandar, why did the men carefully avoid any confrontation with the women?

We have seen this paradoxical masculine position toward women, and even marriage, in the testimonies of men like Şakir, who openly talked about his seemingly happy marriage with children almost as if it has obstructed him in fulfilling his life goals (to be a local researcher like Ilyas Karagöz). During one of my minivan hangouts, Murat, the Livera tea house manager, advised Okan that he should have accepted the fact that he was now a married man and should spend time with his wife—apparently Okan, too, complained about his husband duties, namely, being home at a certain time every night to watch guard over his wife, Ilkay. During our casual conversations, all young Livera men seemed to be eager for marriage, which was still considered a gateway for manhood and adulthood, but then why did they view married life as a burden? I will return to Alican's bride kidnapping one more time.

Again, it was not Alican who by force kidnapped his girlfriend; on the contrary, they planned it and eloped together. Yet this was still a meticulous plan to be executed by just the two lovers. Alican had to position his friends on the night of the kidnapping with a vehicle, escape route and refuge apartment—not to mention, post guards to watch for possible rescue attempts. After the kidnapping went public and the marriage plan was announced, the same helpful friends of Alican assisted the couple with wedding arrangements and the convincing of the parents. This event resonated with past cases of bride kidnapping from the province, which were once the heart of building alliances, or,

in Meeker's terms, interpersonal associations. But why did the Liveran youth, Okan, Isak, and others, feel so ambivalent about this bride kidnapping?

Marriage is still mandatory for them all (*Evlendeden olmaz*, as Murat has frequently mentioned), as required by their families. Yet marriage in present day Maçka no longer needs interpersonal associations; it has now only an asocial filial purpose. Bride kidnapping, however, still seems to rekindle memories of social, alliance-based, marriages. Alican's bride kidnapping has almost revived this past form of marriage alliance, yet with stark differences: First, his girlfriend was involved in the kidnapping, to a degree that she had convinced Alican to elope; and, second, despite its *fait accompli* status, their marriage involved the state's recognition of their new legal status.⁶⁹ Remember that in order for Alican's girlfriend to have an affair with him, she had to escape her father's authority and take refuge in the state's recognition of their affair. Marriage under the patronage of the state thus leads to what Okan once called it: a very predictable affair (*herseyi belli bir iliski*).

Moreover the state's involvement in the regulation of marriages has brought more protection for women. Maçka men may still follow their customs of secluding women, but they all know that they could be legally persecuted in cases of violence against their wives and sisters. Perhaps this is Okan's reason for threatening his wife who wanted to join a men's night with a slap that would never land on her face in public. But why do men, who observe a strict gender-based segregation, not find women's participation in a male-only event like Kalandar an unacceptable violation of their masculine space?

⁶⁹ The only legally binding marriage for Muslims in Turkey is non-religious civic marriage that is executed by public marriage clerks.

The recent participation of woman in Kalandar involved a potential for affinity-building through alliance (in the bride kidnapping skit) and it occurred without the involvement of any sovereign power external to the community's own—a potential glimpsed in Alican's bride kidnapping, but never fulfilled because of the legal marriage after the kidnapping. At the ritual stage, during the mock fight in 2010, the male band of Kalandar players not only accepted women's participation in the reenactment of marriage alliance theatrically, but also their own defeat, allegedly at the hands of women. Yet the Liveran young men nevertheless felt ambivalent towards the presence of women in Kalandar, and thus avoided a confrontation with them in later years. Women Kalandar players, too, seemed to be aware of the peculiarity of their participation. Perhaps this motivated them to form their own group, instead of asking to join the male Karakoncoloz player band—an unthinkable second option, I believe, as we have seen in Okan's physical threatening of his wife.

It is nonetheless plausible to argue that the slap Okan threatened to give his wife had already hit his Kalandar mate's face in 2010. Yet, it was a tolerable strike since it occurred within the ritual enactment of a fight between coalition groups that were formed to build an interpersonal association, or alliance, to rescue a bride and celebrate a communal event. As in the old days of bride kidnapping, interference of any outsider power to the community was avoided. A seemingly individual violent gesture, a slap in the face, perhaps by a woman in a man's face, signals not only the fragility of masculinity, but also that men can recognize and accept this violent gesture only when it does not involve the judicial interference of the state.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion

Following my stay from Kalandar in June 2012, I returned to Trabzon exactly one year later to catch up with Okan, Isak, and particularly Ilyas Karagöz, whose health, I had heard, was in critical condition—he had been diagnosed with lung cancer.

The summer of 2013 was unusual for Turkey, let alone Livera. The season began with the protest of a construction project on the last patch of green space in the heart of Istanbul, Gezi Park. A non-violent sit-in which rapidly evolved into nationwide protests against the government with mass civilian-police clashes. During the Gezi Park protests the Turkish public expected to hear mollifying speeches from statesmen. Instead, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP, in Turkish) accused the protestors of being “pawns and puppets” (*piyonlar ve kuklalar*) deceived by a “plot” (*oyun*). According to AKP, international capital and the west were behind the largest popular protest in Turkish history. Why would a government striving to prove itself as a guarantor of economic growth and secularism deem its political and economic partners as conspirators?

What could AKP’s entrance into conspiratorial paranoia via the Gezi Park protests implicate about conspiratorial thinking in Trabzon? Conspiracy theorizing in Trabzon has manifested characteristics counter-intuitive to the extant scholarship on conspiracy theories: conspiracy theorizing, as recently seen among AKP officials and supporters, followed an economic boom, not depression, and the practice crosscutting secularists and Islamists alike. To what extent could the Trabzonlu’s conspiricist sense of

viewing past and present communal relations illuminate these paradoxical characteristics and the conspiratorial tone now perceptible in the national politics of Turkey? Trabzon's self-suspected affinity to Greeks by kinship, as Chapter Two and Three highlight, has revealed a complicated identity politics besetting the stronghold of AKP. As discussed in Chapter One and Two, the reenactment of an evil hybrid creature, its expulsion, and Greek conspiracy theories has enabled the Trabzonlu to embody what was once believed to disrupt the order and to name their inner witches—or Greeks. A strictly technocratic and neo-liberal minded party, AKP is deprived of reenactments of any sort of evil power, but how have they licensed themselves to name their witches? What are the parallels and divergences between AKP's state paranoia and the Trabzonlu's conspiracy theorizing?

1) A Politics Like No Other

As a young party, established in 2001, AKP embarked on its journey to power with an unprecedented ideological self-definition in Turkish politics: conservative-democrats. AKP's election victory was a response of the Turkish public to Turkey's most devastating financial crisis in 2001. A purely pragmatic centralist party, AKP filled the political void created by this crisis with a pro-EU (contra to its origins with the Islamist Felicity Party) and critical stance against the nationalist bureaucracy and military (contra to all secular center right and left parties). AKP stood clear with its divergence from the spectrum of Turkish political parties thanks to its repudiation of political paranoia (always suspicious paradoxically of both non-Muslims and political Islam and any ethnic non-Turks, such as Kurds) that had long been a trademark of Turkish politics (Nefes

2012, 2013). Labeling itself conservative-democrat, supposedly akin to European center right Christian democrat parties, AKP has dominated three consecutive national and two local elections since 2002, thanks to the success of its economic program.

Very rapidly AKP gained popular support in northeastern Turkey, including Trabzon. AKP-elect deputies from this region participated in three cabinets, including PM Erdogan, whose family comes from Rize, Trabzon's neighboring province to the east. From my first days in Maçka in 2009, the petit-bureaucrat Şakir, for instance, was an enthusiastic supporter of AKP and the party's pragmatic attack to the nationalist block's paranoia toward non-Turks and non-Muslims—best exemplified, as we have seen, with the persecution of the book, *Pontic Culture*.⁷⁰ Şakir not only saw the entrepreneurial potential of this new mode of moderate Islamic government, but also praised (now president) PM Erdogan, saying, “may god not let him[PM Erdogan] forsake us.”

AKP's motivation to resolve historically charged political controversies with an entrepreneurial and market-oriented approach had already found a voice in Trabzon. With the first AKP administration in 2002, a wave of social opening started towards the two foundational groups in Turkey, namely the non-Muslims and non-Turks (Kurds). This policy, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, was carried out in Maçka with the restoration of the Virgin Mary (Panagia Soumela, in Greek) monastery and the

⁷⁰ Bureaucracy and the military stood as the guardians of the strictly secular republic, which had long alienated and disenfranchised the self-identified Muslims who inhabited small towns and became the engine of small to middle size enterprises. AKP, with its motto of “the voice of the voiceless,” managed to represent the once ostracized middle-class Muslims and help them integrate into the wider economy and politics. For a detailed study discussing political Islam's integration into market-oriented democracy, see Cihan Tugal, 2009.

permission granted to the Ecumenical Orthodox Church to hold the first mass since 1924—all championed by the government as indirect investments in the tourism potential of the province.

As Şakir's above statement demonstrates, AKP's political agenda and its entrepreneurial development policies have been well received in Trabzon, perhaps even ahead of their time, as exemplified by Şakir and Okan's hiking project. The route, which would have followed Xenophon's mercenaries, so irked a military officer that he rejected their proposal by explaining that this seemingly innocent project might stir Pontic Greek plots and separatist Kurdish agendas. It is this bureaucratic-military conspiricist paranoia of the secular state that market-oriented conservatism of AKP has prevailed over.

As Chapter Two delineates, for the Maçkali like Şakir, who have sided with AKP politically and economically, the remnants of Christian Orthodox churches and monasteries, and the ostensible Turkishness or Greekness of Kalandar have not evolved into purely transparent marketable historical and cultural artifacts. My presence as a Kalandar researcher, for instance, has always been opaque: carving out the truth about Kalandar, and possibly the local past, cannot remain innocent knowledge; my work might stir some evil intentions that are long believed to lurk behind anything related to Trabzon (Greek) folklore and its history with Orthodox Christianity. Despite the nationalist military-bureaucratic complex's paranoia about the non-Turkish other, the Trabzonlu have not given up on entrepreneurial options that consider the cosmopolitan local past; nor has their conspiracy theorizing mimicked AKP's descent into paranoid conspiracies. But why do the Trabzonlu regard the remnants of the cosmopolitan past as materials of

opaque and suspicious knowledge yet also profitable items for tourism purposes? It is plausible to argue that the Tabzonlu have been ahead in the sovereign play of knowing, suspicion and deciding what could be profitable and what not. But how is this a sovereign play? Answers to this question, I believe, are glimpsed when engagement with secretive powers of the other are expressed in the form of other-worldly creatures (Karakoncoloz) and ethnic and religious difference (past and present Christians and Christian sites). How does this engagement intersect with and diverge from the state's conspiratorial other—the holder of illegitimate power?

2) Back in Maçka

My short visit back to Maçka in the summer of 2013 was an utter failure: Okan was out of town for a wedding, Isak had temporarily moved to Istanbul and his uncle, Ilyas Karagöz, was at the hospital awaiting his last breath. A sense of fury and defeat, thanks to the government's paranoiac reaction to Gezi Park protests, had already shattered my hopes that were raised when the nation-wide demonstrations first began. In the central Maçka city tea lodge, I was checking the latest news on my phone in order to try to connect remotely with the protests. I then saw familiar men across the street gathered around the cab drivers' shack. When I strolled down towards the shack, Zekeriya, the cab driver ever-suspicious of Karagöz's works and visitors, recognized me right away and asked whether my research was still continuing. No, it was not, I was just visiting to see friends. Was I following what had been happening in Istanbul and other cities? Was I really aware of what *really* was happening? Of course I was not. Zekeriya

heard that the park was an Armenian cemetery before the latter had been demolished to build the Ottoman army barrack, which was commissioned for its rebuilding today, yet this time to function as a shopping mall. Armenians, therefore, had incited the protests, a piece of truth that we all should have seen, Zekeriya told me grinning, tapping his temple.

Here we see once more the elasticity of conspiratorial thinking that is always dissatisfied with parochial truth. According to AKP, the truth beneath the Gezi Park protests is straightforward and lucid: global capitalism (in particular an *interest rate lobby*, *faiz lobisi* in Turkish), and its beneficiaries (Western Media, the EU, etc.) could not tolerate Turkey's economic prosperity. For conspiratorial thinkers like Zekeriya, however, a simple economic explanation, or explanation of any sort, would fall short because a glimpse of truth has to be out of reach, perhaps buried, such as the dead Armenians buried under the park ground. At face-value, Zekeriya's Armenian conspiracy seems to explain the out-of-sight cause of the Gezi Park protests, but note that, as with the Greek conspiracies in Trabzon, revelations of this sort always bring further uncertainty and secrecy (dead Armenians under the ground, or the Orthodox priests hiding in the woods in Rize). In contrast, the government's explanation of the protests as conspiracy asserts an absolute and truthful exposure of the hidden facts. A YouTube video exemplifies this stark difference between civilian and stately conspiracy theorizing.

AKP attempts to expose the Gezi Park conspiracy in the form of a documentary film. Produced by the Turkish government during the protests, *Büyük Oyun* (The Big Plot)⁷¹ allegedly uncovers the truth (*gercekler*, as used in Turkish through out the documentary) behind the unexpected social turmoil. However, here appears a bond

⁷¹ Büyük Oyun, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0zHnTC6n-Q>

between civilian and stately conspiracy theories. The term *oyun* in the video's title has a connotation somewhat akin to its English equivalent, plot. *Oyun*, besides play and game, has an indirect meaning of magic—reminiscent of Metin And's theories of play and magic, as discussed in Chapter One. Similarly, according to AKP, *Büyük Oyun* implies that the park protests, which later escalated to national riots, have been directed and staged by a powerful actor acting almost like a puppeteer or magician. Despite its proclamation of Gezi Park as a conspiracy *play*, AKP has not given up its solemn and constant paranoid stance of being under attack, hence of being victimized. But how could a government claiming to be powerful with its politics (and in its ability to expose the full truth) be a victim,⁷² too? AKP owes this tactical move, with the help of *Büyük Oyun*, to the quintessence of conspiratorial thinking, which renders its theorist both a victim and knowing subject. Yet, at the state level, conspiratorial thinking differs from its civilian variant, which, instead of claiming to touch the full truth, signals our inability to do so. Therefore, positing oneself in this mindset of victim cannot be fully attained, since the locus of the conspiring other constantly draws in new agents—as we have seen in Trabzon conspiracies, which include not only Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds, but also folklorists and historians, and, even the incompetent state forces. Civilian conspiracy theories may therefore involve the elements of threat and fear as much as they yield empowerment and sometimes playful moments, as Trabzon conspiracy theories have demonstrated.

⁷² AKP's major political motto, "to be the voice of the voiceless," is also the reiteration of the victimization (*mazlumlar*) of Muslims by the secular regime.

Akin to AKP's paranoiac reduction of conspiracy theorizing to a singular explanation, media sources in Turkey seem to have sought single explanations regarding AKP's into conspiratorial thinking. In response to *Büyük Oyun* and AKP's relentless propagating of conspiracy theories, news outlets⁷³ have investigated whether the AKP's claim that the foreign "interest rate lobby" (*faiz lobisi*) and the west have conspired against Turkey's "rising economy and progressing democracy" (*Büyük Oyun*'s argument) are indications of an Islamic resurgence⁷⁴. In a similar fashion, Turkish media has relied on the self-explanatory canon, "authoritative tendencies" (*otoriter egilimler*), which echoes less essentialism in comparison to western mainstream media's perspective that labels Islam as inherently prone to conspiricist thinking.

Instead of attributing conspiracy theory to unified singular causes, whether religion, paranoia (Hofstadter 1979), authoritarianism (Lipset & Raab 1970), or failed modernization (Graf et al 2010), one should consider the moments of perceived impasse conditioned by the heterogeneity and plurality of historical and social causes, and to conspiracy theory as its response. A polysemic referential apparatus, conspiracy theory is bound to assume the guise of an attempted explanation "for every problem... [without] factual evidence" (Groetzel 1994). I hypothesize that such an anti-factual, "monological" representational regime, as Groetzel calls conspiracy theory, has enjoyed a resurgence

⁷³ "Erdoğan's Chief Adviser Knows What's Behind Turkey's Protests – telekinesis," *Guardian*, July 13 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/13/erdogan-turkey-protests-telekinesis-conspiracy-theories?INTCMP=SRCH>; "Investor Nervous: Erdogan's Witch Hunt Endangers Economy," *Spiegel Online*, August 20 2013. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/erdogan-endangering-economy-with-financial-sector-witch-hunt-a-917370.html>

⁷⁴ AKP's founding leadership functioned as active deputies and mayors of the Islamist Virtue Party (FP, in Turkish). After the FP's political ban by the Constitutional Court, the party's reformist wing established AKP and announced their abandonment of the Islamist rhetoric of FP. AKP's maneuvering towards a centralist and market economy oriented democratic agenda is believed to have inspired the reformist movement among the Muslim Brotherhoods all around the Middle East.

whenever a political community's (be that a village, a province, or a political party) foundational dualities rise to the surface: Greek or Turkish, Muslim or Christian, bandit or exemplary citizens are some of these dualities for Trabzon. For AKP, an executor of political power, these dualities can be enlisted as secularism and Islam, or being a party of the marginalized Muslims and of the rising bourgeoisie.

A similar technique of “monologically” referencing heterogeneous realities has long been observed in the anthropological studies of magic and witchcraft, as Chapter Two unfolds. For such beliefs are by nature “transferential,” to use a psychoanalytical term—and to repeat Mauss's characterization of the paradox of magical practice, that is, a magician who is skeptical of the efficacy of their own magic still believes in that of the other (Mauss 2002). As such, magical truths exceed all measures of factual validation, whose basis is the empiricity of not one's own, but someone/something else's magical powers. We have seen how a similar other-dependency in conspiratorial thinking has been working in Trabzon and particularly in Maçka. The Trabzonlu's engagement with the conspiratorial other, as testimonies by Şakir in Maçka and Yusuf in Tonya demonstrate, appear to be also an engagement with one's own unexpressed heterogeneity and uncertain background, particularly related to ethnic/religious identity and the local past. This impossibility of expressing what is non-homogenous can be glimpsed in the Trabzonlu's embodiment of the folkloric evil Karakoncoloz and at their naming of conspiratorial evils—non-Muslims and non-Turks. We have seen how AKP has tried to portray the evil as an interest rate lobby in the documentary film, but how has the party named its inner-Greek?

3) AKP's Witches and the Parallel Structure

Another political crisis enabled AKP's "naming of the witch" in Siegel's terms. On December 17 2014, four of AKP ministers' sons were arrested with charges of corruption, and later, up until December 25, one tape after another was leaked revealing the Prime Minister himself talking with his son about the cash that they had to make disappear. Not only the Turkish media, but also international news outlets were pressing the allegations. Who could have this much power and audacity to reveal the government's secrets? A "parallel structure," (paralel yapı) was Prime Minister Erdogan and the AKP's media response. Implied here was the existence of a powerful and malign group within the state, yet working against it—at the same level with the state, but not overlapping with it, hence parallel to the state's monopoly of the judiciary and security.

Secular groups, including the bureaucratic-military complex, had long been suspicious of former Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen⁷⁵ and his movement, accusing them of secretly controlling the AKP and police force and working to seize the bureaucracy and military. AKP denied these allegations and publicly announced the immaturity and irrationality of this conspiratorial thinking. Yet, with the leaked tapes, the Gulen movement's potential was proven. Gulen affiliated police and state attorneys had

⁷⁵ Fethullah Gulen had long provided conspiracy theory stock for secular groups in Turkey. Once a simple mosque preacher, he became the leader of a dervish lounge and changed its structure to a global education and business network. Children from poor families were helped to succeed at university entrance tests and later pursued graduate education in US universities. This Gulenist generation was later argued to become, to put it in Gramscian terms, the organic intellectuals behind the AKP administrations' political and economic success. Critics of the Gulen movement during the 1990s accused him of working to gain control of the military, the police force, and the judiciary; a stigmatization that is believed to have sent Gulen into a self-exile in the USA. Yet his immigration has fueled further conspiracies that his plot is in harmony with the US. Gulen is also known as a spokesperson for NATO and US allies in Turkey, having close bonds with Israel and being a strong supporter of Turkey's membership to the EU.

wired the entire cabinet and waited to hit AKP when a conflict of interest rose between the party and the movement. Moreover, for the Prime Minister the appearance of this parallel state⁷⁶ was also evidence of the Gezi Park conspiracy—both were the efforts of the same malign force aiming to topple his government. The nature of this allegedly parallel structure was not limited to its being parallel to state’s sovereignty.

Even as it was imagined to reside at the hearth of the state’s sovereign rule of the judiciary and security, this parallel state was also located “out there” (literally and metaphorically, since Gulen lives in the US) as its malicious character required. In PM Erdogan’s words: “It’s been public that our struggle with the parallel structure might turn into a witch hunt. If discharging them [police officers and state attorneys] is a witch hunt, then so be it... this is not an ordinary struggle.” This parallel structure, a “dirty alliance,” has to “be pecked to shreds in its lair...in order to undo the plot.”⁷⁷ As hinted by Western news sources during the Gezi protests, a government’s fight against a conspiratorial power took the shape of a witch hunt—now the witches are believed to operate like a state (parallel to the true state), acting in an alliance (arguably with those who incited the Gezi protests), and with animal-like characteristics (hiding in a lair) that must be dismembered like animals (pecked to shreds). All of these were the “structure” of Gulen’s movement. How did the AKP government know this much about the secrecy and the plotting forces of this movement?

⁷⁶ Parallel State and Parallel Structure have been used interchangeably since the beginning of the corruption probes.

⁷⁷ http://www.zaman.com.tr/politika_erdogandan-cad%C4%B1-ay%C4%B1-itirafi_2216630.html
<http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/12/22/bu-oyunu-bozup-inlerine-girecegiz>. Khatchadourian, R. (2014, May 29) Ghosts of Gezi, New Yorker
<http://www.newyorker.com/sandbox/portfolio/gezi/>

Perhaps since the beginning AKP leadership has intuited the efficacy of the Gulenist cadres in their joint march to political power. As we have seen in Chapter Two, citing Mauss, magic is always ready to believe in the efficacy of the other's magic. Trabzon conspiracy theorizing unravels this at its purest with the suspicion of their very own Greekness. Similarly, AKP, as the above quote by the prime minister shows, has always had a strange proximity to Gulenists, a group in politics but never part of the political party directly, always residing in what AKP called a parallel, witch and animal-like powerful agent. The legitimate power of the state, as the prime minister's above statement hints, therefore is not radically different from this malicious power: the state's power too strikes in animal-like fashion—pecks to shreds what is equivalent, or parallel, to itself.

AKP's initial incapacity to name what they believed to be a conspiring yet proximate other has never bothered the Trabzonlu, for the latter have long mastered the naming, and even re-enacting of their own witches. Karakoncoloz in Kalandar folklore has been part of this re-enactment, and when its ambiguity, as to whether it is a Greek or Turkish tradition, was in jeopardy with the Greeks' presence at Kalandar, Greek conspiracy theories have been counter-posed in response to this Greek reclamation of folklore. Have the Trabzonlu conceived of the conspiratorial other as something parallel to themselves? In contrast to AKP's rendering of what it sees as a single parallel structure, I believe the Trabzonlu see their socio-political realm via a multitude of potent parallel structures. Ilyas Karagöz, for example, regards his fellow villagers as "bi-ped wolves" who devour the Greek past and ruins; the Liverans in return treat Karagöz, as

one of their own out of respect, but also ostracize him because of his enthusiasm for the Greek past of the region. The Trabzonlu, as Chapter Three unfolds, have long viewed the centralist power of the state as parallel vis-à-vis their local networks of sovereignty. We have seen how this clash of sovereignties engulfs masculinity through relations of marriage and kinship, and how female seclusion survives despite the modern state's control of the domain of civil law. Why and how then do these parallels exist? What so agitates the modern state when powers parallel to its reign become perceptible? How does the civilian perspective of power dwell in a multitude of parallels when the modern state attempts to reduce this multitude to its absolutist monadism?

Parallel, anthropologically speaking, has represented a kinship bond of filiation, such as in parallel cousins. From the Amazonian perspective, however, as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro delineates, parallelism is based on “difference rather than identity,” difference here as the principle of relationality (2004: 18). Viveiros de Castro uses the example of “brother” in the Euro-American context as the representation of unity related to a genitor. This unity, Viveiros de Castro writes, “means that siblings occupy the same [filial] point of view onto an exterior world,” that is, they are “in *parallel relationship* to everything else” (emphasis mine) (18). Amerindian perspective, on the other hand, differs radically. In contrast to the western perspective that conceives of the idea of a “relation that has terms as something in common,” as brotherhood signifies a “common humanity” (2011: 11), Amerindian conceptions “suppose a spiritual unity and a corporeal diversity (Viveiros de Castro 2004: 6),” hence one culture and multiple natures.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Contra to “brotherly parallelism” (Viveiros de Castro’s term), Viveiros de Castro exemplifies this uniculturalist and multinaturalist perspectivism with the Cashinahua Indian’s kin term *taxia*, which may be

What are the implications of this Amerindian perspectivism for Trabzon folklore that comprises Kalandar-like winter plays and conspiracy theories? Believing in the existence of Karakoncoloz-like evil beings has long been abandoned in northeast Turkey; however, as snapshots of folkloric memory show in Chapter One, a creature from a different nature was once part of winter life in the past. This view of different worlds (Karakoncoloz rows its boat from the other side of the sea), seems to share a commonality with the Amerindian perspective: in Viveiros de Castro's terms, the multitude of natures, or parallels, is located in the "bodily differences between species (2004: 6)," as we have seen in Karagöz's metaphor of biped wolves, or the Kalandar players' conviction that having creaturely intention is adequate to play Karakoncoloz, regardless of the costume.

Chapter Four aims to demonstrate another aspect of the Trabzonlu's sense of social and political difference: Trabzon men's view of kin cannot be reduced to filial relation; for being kin relies on one's capacity to build alliances and affinities through bride kidnapping and alliance-based sovereignty against the state's claim to absolute power, which does not tolerate a parallelism among brother-in-laws, let alone brothers. Despite these cleaving between unitary parallelism of the state and the intensified alliance perspective of civilians, and between the civilian conspiratorial suspicion and state's paranoia, we should still not conceive of an absolute split between the Trabzonlu and the absolutism of the state.

translated as "brother-in-law," that is: "a friendly vocative to speak to non-Cashinahua outsiders, the implication is that the latter are kinds of affines. ...one does not need to be a friend to be *txai*. It suffices to be an outsider, or even—and even better—an enemy. Thus, the Inca in Cashinahua mythology are at once monstrous cannibals and archetypical *txai* with whom...one should not or indeed cannot marry (17)."

Note that Michael Meeker has coined the term state-society because the socio-politics (or the sense of community) the Trabzonlu have created (in medieval, pre-modern, and modern times) fit in neither of the so-called separate concepts, state and society. Exemplified within the Ottoman context, this communal creation is the outcome of the dual transformation of both the state and the society: The Ottomanization of Trabzon and its conceptual twin, The Trabzonization of the Ottomans. Meeker thus pictures a history of sovereignty, and modernity in particular, that has cross-cut both political inclusion and exclusion. Similarly Mamis, Karagöz's son, remarked: they, the Trabzonlu, have become the exemplary citizens (even able to suppress the Kurds); the old times when the state deemed them as bandits-to-kill has ended.

AKP's rise to political power and then being thrown into conspiratorial paranoia should be read from this state-society framework. Not only Trabzon, but also the entire northeastern Black Sea region has been the home of AKP's loyal voters. Exceptions were the mayors of Trabzon City and Maçka City, both from opposition parties. However, following the Gezi Park and later parallel structure conspiracy theories, AKP dominantly won the local elections in these two cities as well. Perhaps, once again the Trabzonlu had sensed the direction stately sovereignty was about to take and consented to the recent conspiratorial leaning of AKP, almost as a sign of recognizing the party's will to execute sovereign power.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Immediately after the Gezi Park protests, the AKP government held mass gatherings called "Respect for the National Will" (Milli Iradeye Saygi), implying that the Gezi protests aimed to topple a legitimately elected government. Similarly, after the corruption probes, the conspiracy was named "parallel structure coup," a civilian coup d'état targeting the government.

4) Death is the Beginning

For me, everything, from Kalandar to the ghosts of Greeks, to conspiracies and the stories of men and their alliances against the state, began after meeting Ilyas Karagöz, and everything related to Kalandar now takes a new direction in the wake of his death in the summer of 2013. After receiving a call from Isak saying his uncle was hospitalized in Trabzon city, I decided to pay him what would, most likely be, a final visit. Karagöz was at the final stage of his lethal lung cancer that had already metastasized onto his neck and brain. He could barely breathe, but could follow our conversation and caught my lie telling him that everything would be fine. Grinning in his signature cynical manner, he disapproved, saying that now it was his turn to “mix into the ground” (*toprağa karışma vaktim geldi*), “come visit the village even when I am gone,” he continued, “after all this is a beginning, right” he asked rhetorically.

Neither him, nor his son, Mamis, in the room with us were grim. When I asked Mamis about his father’s burial place, he answered that Karagöz wanted to be buried by his house in order to stay close to his books and the cobble-stone path left behind by the Greeks—the path that he long fought to preserve. “He says this is his obligation to his village and its people,” Mamis explained. I did not want to ask what Karagöz meant by “people” exactly, but I could sense that they were not only the present day Trabzonlu, who, as of 2014, has surprisingly started doing Kalandar all around in their province, where the event is now funded by the AKP elect mayor. Perhaps, this New Year’s Eve play’s exclusivity for Maçka is about to end.

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