

INTRODUCTION

Competing Claims to Religious Authority

I climb out from under a load of heavy quilts and pull on my *şalvar*, brightly colored baggy trousers made from cloth I bought in an open market in Manisa, sewn by a friend in the village. I tie my headscarf tightly around my face, knotting it on the top of my head. This way, my hair is protected from the dust and flies but more importantly, I show respect for women's Islamic clothing. I feel in context, ready to spend the day sitting on the floors of village homes, on layers of kilims woven for dowries decades ago or from machine-made textiles bought more recently. I spend my days in conversation with women over glasses of tea. They persuade me to add sugar as they tell me about the discipline of prayer, the cost of a sheep for the sacrifice holiday, their memories of Mecca while on pilgrimage, the rigors of the fast during Ramazan, and their children attending Qur'an schools. *Ezan*, the call to prayer, rings out from the mosque loudspeaker. We can hear the call in the next village faintly echo ours. They pause. Young women turn down the sound on the television. The older ones, who have no TV or simply are not immersed in it, fall silent. They listen. When the call is over, they whisper a prayer, wiping their hands down their faces, sighing deeply.

The mountainous Yuntdağ region in western Turkey is close to the big city of Manisa, only an hour away by bus, but far in spirit from the bustling urban world. In the city, open markets are a draw; students dominate the streets in their uniforms, mothers clothed in urban-style *mantos*,¹ or enveloping rain-

coats, and polyester headscarves watch over their children in playgrounds; tea gardens are filled with youths who spend hours flirting, playing with their cell phones; and Ottoman mosque complexes punctuate the landscape. Men sit outside the grand mosques, waiting for the call to prayer. Villagers enjoy these sights and activities of the city, which for them is a place to shop for weddings, a place where one attends high school, a destination for migration, and where the doctors are. In contrast, the village is where one is born and buried, wherever one dies. It is one's *memleket*, homeland. But, as villagers remind me, this—all the pleasures, pains, sources of boredom, and consternation—is an illusion, *yalan dünya*, literally, a world of lies. The real life is the next one, where we go after we die. This life is merely a prelude, a world filled with chores and tasks, which must be completed in preparation for that other world, the real one. I'm not sure I understand *yalan dünya*: "What does it mean?" I ask Çevriye, the woman I live with. She says, "It's like that person who said this or that, the thing I desire, what I want. This life, all our tears and things we find funny, it will all be gone."

What is Islam? For villagers, Islam is a path to the next world. This book is about how villagers in the western Anatolian region of the Yuntdağ prepare for this other world by "working for God" in this one. Though Islam is the path to the next world, the exact route is uncertain. No one knows, because only God can. Meanings are hidden, embedded in the Qur'an, and therefore require study and effort to be understood. As one man pointed out, "All the answers to every question are in the Qur'an, but it is not so easy to read or understand." And for this reason, there are debates about what is orthodox. What is the correct path and the procedures for following that path?

Villagers consider these debates through their practices, deriving from three sources: what I call cultural Islamic traditions, the state version of Islam delivered by the Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, or the Diyanet (as it will be referred to), and Islamic brotherhoods and communities. The mixture of sources for Sunni Islam shows that Islam itself is in a state of flux, open to interpretation and transformation. The multiple sources for Islamic practice create a contradiction in that people expect there to be one form of Islam. Despite the expectation that Islam should be fixed, religious tradition is living. Furthermore, Sunni Islam is under state control and meant to follow state-mandated rules. This is referred to as laicism. Thus, Islam, which is intended to address eternal questions, is contained within a secular one, a state, which has a temporal beginning and end. The state control of Sunni Islam cre-

ates a contradiction because Islam is meant to be the word of God and therefore timeless, perfect, and not tampered with by humans.

While villagers are careful to express their support for the state, they subtly critique state control of Islam by recounting memories of radical secularization policies of the early Republic, which thereby demonstrates how people tampered with Islam. Furthermore, by becoming involved with religious communities and brotherhoods, which work outside the Diyanet's control, they show that there are alternative sources for Islamic leadership, not only that created by the government.

In one regard, then, Islam, as it is considered within the context of worldly power, has multiple sources, is living, and is in a state of constant transformation because people are concerned about locating the true path. But from another perspective, Islam addresses questions which supersede this world. In this regard, men and women strive for a spiritual life, infused with meaning, relating to a temporal trajectory which stretches beyond that of the nation, this world, and addresses eternity. But because one's individual salvation is measured by the deeds one commits in this world, villagers strive to be attentive: caring for others, assisting the poor, guiding children, worrying about the fate of other Muslims, and more generally, showing interest in global humanity. Thus, Islam is both directed toward a reality superseding this life and deeply embedded within it. In managing this intersection between this world and the next, deeds are regarded as both spiritual and political acts because they change the world and affect one's standing in the next. While this orientation toward reality is simultaneously political and spiritual, none of the rural people discussed here is a member of an Islamist association (*dernek*), a brotherhood (*tarikât*), community (*cemaat*), or party. Thus, their interest in the politics of Islam or Islamist movements is different from people who are members of these groups. Due to the fact that villagers combine sources for Islamic practice from the state, cultural memory, and movements—they straddle a line between private piety as mandated by the state, collective traditional spirituality as remembered locally, and public religion, as formulated through the deprivatization of Islam in movements, in communities, and in brotherhoods. Because they do not belong to a distinct political or ideological group, but mix practices from different sources, their reflections on Islam and the competing array of Islamic brotherhoods, communities, and parties are more open-ended and thoughtful than rehearsed ideological statements by those who work to further the goals of their particular constituency.

Though thoughtful, their reflections on state power and the control of Islam, the work of communities and brotherhoods, Islamically based political parties, and the uncertain status of religious tradition are marked by anxiety. This anxiety points to their relationship to state power and their uncertainty about the path to the next world. They are fearful that words or deeds that critique the state will be interpreted as being against the state. Furthermore, because they engage with alternative Islamist groups, they are fearful that this will be regarded as an expression of resistance to state orthodoxy. Finally, because local Islamic traditions are built on imperfect and partial memories, people worry that these practices are not Islamic or are maybe even heretical. In fact, both the state representatives of Sunni Islam locally, that is, their imams, and the leaders of Islamic communities, such as female *hocas* from the Süleymanci community, are critical of traditional Islamic practices.² Thus, villagers express uncertainty about whether they are on the correct path and how God will judge them. As one elderly woman explained, “We say our prayers, but who knows what will happen? I am afraid.”

I ask, “Afraid of what?”

She replies, “Of going to hell!”

“But,” I respond, “you have done everything: prayers, fasting, charity, sacrifice . . .”

“But we will not know until we read the door of our tomb if God will forgive us.”

What she is afraid of are her sins, of having committed, perhaps without realizing, heretical acts. Villagers work to increase the numbers of good deeds they perform for others and God so they can outweigh their sins, as these will be assessed on the Judgment Day. The accumulation of good deeds requires constant effort. Though one man said when I asked him what they do during the month of Ramazan, “We work for God,” I found that villagers spend most moments paying attention to God’s interests. These require not only the five daily prayers, a month of fasting, correct physical comportment, attention to structures of authority, and efforts to read the Qur’an, but innumerable verbal expressions which show that human action is ordered by a framework based on God’s will. They thereby cultivate a state of constant attention to God’s authority in shaping every imaginable thing. Nothing can be done, for example, without evoking God’s will, *inşallah*. While sitting with an elderly man, I mentioned that I would go to Manisa the next day. He quickly corrected me, lifting his finger in instruction, “Inşallah!”

While God wields the ultimate authority in shaping whether one will be able to act, others do as well. Power is structured hierarchically among people in this world: male over female, age over youth, state over the citizen, and God over all. While one invokes God's will when framing the desire for action, one asks for permission, *izin*, from those senior to oneself when seeking the right to do something. That is, the authority to take action on an individual level is not understood as a rational claim. And those who act individualistically are critiqued for their hubris, as I was when I announced my intention to go somewhere on my own without requiring anyone's permission, not even God's will. Even if one conforms to these layers of authority, one is never entirely certain that one will be able to act or if one's actions are undergirded by the "right" (*hak*) to act.

Despite the insistence that Islam is about exact laws governing behavior, structuring authority, making everything possible, as three men urged me to accept and thereby see the peculiar discrepancies in Christianity, there is always some uncertainty about these rules, rights, and authorities who legitimize them. Achieving an understanding of what is correct requires study; ultimately, if one perseveres, knowledge is possible. For this reason, villagers praise individuals who *pek biliyor*, know a lot. But not everyone, as a middle-aged man expressed to me, can take the time or has the patience and resolve to study Arabic and read the texts. A lack of understanding, then, is due to human limitations, the concealed messages in the Qur'an, and the uncertainty about the legitimacy of those who claim authority from God to structure their power controlling others' actions.

As I trace in this book, anxieties about the correctness of practice, orthopraxy, underline the configurations of power, which are used to confine and categorize Islamic practices as correct or incorrect, orthodox or heterodox, religious or irrelevant. As such, the discourses of power and authority which underscore rural anxieties gesture to Asad's insistence that it is "not the mind that moved spontaneously to religious truth, but power that created the conditions for experiencing that truth."³ The study of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, in other words, has to be ethnographic, not limited to textual analysis of doctrine. Though a heretical statement from the perspective of the people in this book, I argue that orthodoxy is created through dialogue, practice, and engagement with cultural memory, as well as through state power and God's plan.

Villagers and townspeople described here do not experience "religion" as an abstract set of principles that they "believe," but as a complex of practices and activities expressing domains of power in which they engage. I do not pretend

to define or explain all aspects of what can be thought of as Islamic, but only a selection of those activities I could observe and that villagers would discuss. Any misunderstandings about the veracity of practice are entirely my own.

Often, rural people such as those in this book are treated by urban Islamists as an underclass of traditionally pious or religiously unconscious, uneducated Muslims. The people in this study are in part traditionally pious, meaning that many of their Islamic practices are deeply rooted locally. Because debates about orthodoxy inform many decisions about local practice, I use the phrase *cultural rituals* to describe practices unconnected to Islam, such as wedding music and dance, while *culturally Islamic rituals* is the phrase used for such practices as the Mevlut, a prayer service commemorating Muhammed's birth and showing the hair of the Prophet (Sakal-ı Şerif); these practices are connected to Islam but are contested by purifying movements which eschew veneration of the Prophet's body. Though I employ the idea of tradition, I do not use it with the understanding that it relates to a fixed set of practices from the past, but to local practices, many of which have changed, some of which are relatively new, but all of which are treated as not as serious or important as those which involve the Qur'an as a foundation of doctrinal knowledge and ritual action. Cultural Islamic traditions often are led by women, which tends to further discredit their spiritual efficacy in the eyes of others.

Cultural traditions in the sense I just described are visible and public but are not the expression of a re-Islamization of society, or as Jose Casanova describes, a deprivatization of religion.⁴ The deprivatization of religion refers to how religion has shifted from being private and personal as ideally shaped through secularization policies, to becoming, once again, public and a meaningful basis for shaping social roles, duties, and action. Though many activists would like religion to return to an (imagined) condition prior to secularization as the lived, collective, legal foundation of the social world, it is now employed politically and deliberately, self-conscious of the intrinsic power of its evocation.⁵

Depending on how they are defined, cultural Islamic rituals are not typically regarded as a demonstration of the self-conscious Islamicization of society, but Islamic scholarship and training is. Imams trained by the state or by other religious communities come from this region and become leaders of their own congregations in villages, towns, and cities, in Turkey and abroad. Furthermore, men and women strive to improve their standards of Islamic knowledge by learning to read the Qur'an, often with local imams, official and unofficial. An additional demonstration of the deliberate and self-conscious reconfiguration

of Islam locally is in how, since the 1960s, villagers have been making judgments about cultural traditions and replacing them with Islamic cultural practices. These actions are signs of an attempt to purify practices, and they come from local religious authorities, rather than from a group, as Kristen Ghodsee describes for a town in Bulgaria.⁶ Thus villagers are part of the purifying movements that have reshaped Sunni Islam into a more standardized global practice.

A number of ethnographers explore the implications and effects of Islamist movements in different parts of the world—Ghodsee in Bulgaria; Samuli Schielke,⁷ Saba Mahmood,⁸ and Amira Mittermaier in Egypt;⁹ Mandana Limbert in Oman;¹⁰ and Dorothea Schultz in Mali.¹¹ In this book, I focus on the transnational connections between Turkey and Germany because this is where my research took me. In this regard Berna Turam,¹² as well as Ahmet Yükleyn,¹³ demonstrate the importance of further international connections between pious Sunni Turks in central Asia and western Europe.

In addition to involvement with the state formulation of Sunni Islam and local cultural Islamic traditions, villagers are engaged with religious communities or brotherhoods, also called neo-tarikats, which have raised their level of conscious involvement in Islam. These groups are engaged in a deprivatization of Islam, the result of the rise of public Islam, that is, politically motivated Islamist movements that counter elite Kemalism, the ideological movement that legitimizes the nation of Turkey and its republic, founded in 1923.

As well as describing religious life in villages and transnational connections to Germany, I discuss villagers' decisions to migrate. Many of the young people I knew in the early phases of my fieldwork in 2000–2001, later decided to move and settle in Manisa or Izmir. By considering their lives in these new places, I show that they understand the stakes of involvement with secularism, the deprivatization of Islam, and Islamist movements, in a way unusual for their relatives in the villages. Because Islam was never made private in the rural world, through state-mandated secularization policies, and therefore has not undergone a deprivatization process, villagers who migrate experience a different social geography of piety. When they move, they often make choices about whether to take on a public Islamist stance or a secularist one in which Islam becomes a personal and private practice. Thus, the movement from village to city often involves existential questions confronting the nature of secularity and Islam. This causes those who make this move to make choices about their own worldview.

By demonstrating the social geography of piety, this book challenges the rural-urban distinction in categorizing religious practice and critiques the easy

dismissal of rural Muslims by urban Islamists, secularists, and scholars who overlook how Sunni Islam is experienced by people living in different areas of the country. As Asef Bayat suggests,¹⁴ there is something urban about Islamist movements, but I would add that there is something rural about them as well. Olivier Roy, Dale Eickelman, and James Piscatori all argue that people become involved in purifying movements after they migrate because migration has created a sense of cultural alienation, which purified religion addresses.¹⁵ Here, I describe how rural people are involved in purifying movements in their home regions, whether they migrate or not. I am not arguing against Roy, Eickelman, and Piscatori's important insights into global Islamic movements, but pointing out that villages are not isolated from Islamic cultural transformations.

The distance which Islamists often emphasize between their purified practices and those in villages demonstrates their efforts to create a layer of social distinction between rural and urban piety. This distinction draws upon temporal associations between cities and villages, in that villages are widely dismissed as "backward," living in a different era, whereas cities are modern, engaged with the present and shaping the future. This distinction resembles the one made between Islamists and Kemalists (often confusingly referred to as secularists). Muslims involved in purified Islamic movements and politicized Islamists align themselves against Kemalists in a counterhegemonic political movement in cities. But Kemalists often charge that Muslims, regardless of their ideological stripes, are backward and are working to drag Turkey out of modernity and into the dark ages. Islamists, then, to gain greater prestige, work to strip any association with rural Islam. They work to match the westernizing, secularizing, and modernizing claims of Kemalists with purified Islam, demonstrating its engagement with modernity, religious freedom, and human rights. These categories of time and cultural progress are ideological weapons in a political battle for state power and economic domination.

It is important to make a distinction between this battleground and the meaning of rural spirituality. In a kin-based rural community, with a collective sense of the past, Islam, as we find in Reinhold Loeffler's work on an Iranian village,¹⁶ and in Magnus Marsden's on a town in Pakistan,¹⁷ is a living and evolving body of practice. I am primarily interested in learning to interpret the traces of history in the patterns of everyday life. In this regard, this book adds a historical dimension to studies of rural Islam to show that rural people are engaged with social change, the state, and political configurations of power. I have been especially influenced by Erik Mueggler's work on a village in China,¹⁸ and

by Margaret Paxson's on a village in Russia.¹⁹ Both have expanded my understanding of rural experiences of social change caused by state policies. Turkey, like Russia and China, experienced major cultural revolutions during the twentieth century. While all three countries enforced policies of rapid economic change, modernization, and secularization, Turkey did not eliminate religion. Instead, early policies of the Republic attempted to contain and control Islam and thereby create a private space of individual belief and practice.

While the Turkish state implemented policies of radical secularization, modernization, and westernization in the early twentieth century, after the 1980 coup, religion became a useful source in new policies for reformulating an ethnic and sectarian national identity, that of being a Sunni Turk. These later state policies, therefore, invested in the wealth of cultural memory to create a sense of national unity. Not surprisingly, religion has played an important role in China and Russia in re-creating a sense of national identity based in cultural memory. Thereby, after secularization or policies of state atheism were adjusted, religion was reappropriated for cultural and moral ends.²⁰ In Turkey, the state deprivatization of Islam in the 1980s facilitated the establishment or the reemergence of numerous Islamically oriented foundations and associations, creating a gray zone in laicism. Though these groups were registered legally, they were not under the control of the Diyanet. Villagers have not yet caught up with the fact that groups, which were once illegal, have entered into the gray zone of legality in the post-1980-coup era. It is for this reason that many are uncertain about them.²¹ Villagers react to these groups, the state, and their own local cultural practices as they reflect on their spiritual lives. Their involvement with Sunni Islam is not, therefore, a private and personal matter or even a matter of tradition, but it is inflected with local and national history, political ideologies, camps of power and control, and domains of influence, some local, others national, and many global.

THE RURAL YUNTDAG

Lifting a branch wedged into the wire gate, I pushed it open and stumbled onto the path leading to Ayşe *nene's* (grandmother's) house. Walking past the stone fireplace where we fried dough as a good deed (*hayır*) for the week of her husband's mourning ten years ago, and stepping onto the spot where her son had cut the throat of the sheep she sacrificed for Kurban Bayramı, the Sacrifice holiday, that year, I continued to the staircase leading to her tiny house, a single room

with a small anteroom. The doves in the fig tree cooed, in the distance a donkey brayed, a cow lowed in reply, somewhere a cat screeched, and a van zipped around the bend in the curve of the road from the neighboring village of Yeniyurt. Ezan, the call to prayer, started with an unpleasant electronic noise, as the broadcast system from the central mosque in Manisa made its connection. The professional tones of “Allahu Akbar” began as I stuck my head into the low doorway, slipping off my sandals. When I called out, “Hello,” Ayşe replied from inside her house. My bare feet pressed the cool stone floor, past her spinning wheel. The neat balls of finely spun yarn showed the fruits of her recent labors. With a hand on the carved wooden door painted green, I entered the room.

She was sitting cross-legged on layers of floor cushions and blankets by the windowsill, her prayer beads beside her, listening to religious hymns on the radio. Ayşe nene greeted me and said we would have tea, but first she needed to pray. I sat on one of the low cushions, adjusting my şalvar, and pulled out my notebooks to reflect on the conversations I had had that day as she got up to perform the *aptes*, or ritual wash before prayer. Water trickled from the spigot into the low stone platform in the anteroom. Ayşe nene returned, her headscarf flipped up, showing wet skin. Running a towel around her neck, she dried herself and retied her cotton scarf. Praying in the room where I sat, her whispered prayers and creaking joints were punctuated by the loud ticking of the clock hung on a nail from one of the beams forming the ceiling of the room.

Afterward, Ayşe made tea and we talked about heaven and hell, the need for prayer, and the impossibility of knowing one’s fate. She reflected on her son, the former director of the carpet-weaving cooperative, who had died five years earlier from cancer. “Why,” she asked, “did she continue, elderly and tired, making do each day, when he had been young and vibrant?” For the elderly, reflections on life often lead to discussions about the need to perform duties, questions of one’s fate, and the incomprehensible mystery of life itself. She had performed the pilgrimage to Mecca decades earlier with her husband, their trip funded by their son’s success. Reflecting on her life, she suddenly announced that she would “burn in hell,” because she could read neither the old nor new alphabets. Startled, I made some noises of assurance, which she waved away. She felt that the radically secular state policies of her childhood, under the İnönü regime (1938–50), had damned her.

Sitting with Ayşe nene, I thought, not only about the everyday importance of piety and practice, but about the stakes involved, and about her family and the range of experiences she and all the people discussed in this book have as

Sunni Muslims. Though her children and grandchildren shared her thoughts on fate, they looked to their futures differently, seeking spiritual legitimacy in diverse ways. The neoliberal context of the post-1980 military coup d'état and the development of public forms of Islam had changed the playing field. One son argued that state control of religion was essential to prevent terrorists from organizing in divergent and secretive groups. In a similar vein, a granddaughter showed me the stamp the Diyanet put on all its Qur'ans, so that one would know, she said, that it is "real." A grandson was studying at an Imam Hatip school in Manisa, a public school combining a secular curriculum with Qur'anic study. There was hope he might become an imam.

Yet, support of the state version of Islam and laicism is not the only path they followed. One of Ayşe nene's granddaughters and I attended a festival outside the village of Reçepi, to venerate a holy man, a newly minted saint, Muhammed Zühdü,²² who, she said, had turned into a bird each day to fly to Mecca for the morning prayer and returned afterward to his village. She described how Muhammed Zühdü communicated with people from his grave, one of the reasons why people visited his tomb each year to participate in a communal prayer service with a feast for the community. The Diyanet administers neither the tomb nor the mosque; the organization is registered as an association, and is thereby a civic organization with a spiritual bent. But for villagers in the region, it is a holy site that allows them to express fellowship and practice venerating a local and very new Sunni saint. Two years earlier, with one of Ayşe's daughters, a woman in her sixties, I attended a women's celebration for the holy man associated with the neighboring village's mountaintop. We enjoyed the Mevlut, a prayer service commemorating the Prophet's birth, under the shade of a massive oak tree. The women read sonorously in Ottoman from texts they had preserved from their ancestors, and we gathered a bagful of sweets from the event to share with people in Kayalarca. This event also had no ties to state Islam. In fact, women are often involved in practices that are dismissed as heterodox by those who follow official Islam and as heretical by those involved in objectifying Islamist movements and brotherhoods. But they are meaningful spiritually and locally, invoking cultural memory and religious doctrine in texts.

In addition to involvement with culturally Islamic practice, legally tolerated religious brotherhoods also played a role in Ayşe's family. A grandson had married a quiet woman who had studied the Qur'an and basic principles of Islamic ritual and morality for a year with the Süleymancı community at a boarding school in a provincial town near Manisa. They had celebrated the engagement

and wedding rituals with sermons delivered by a female *hoca* (meaning a teacher or preacher). Both the boarding school and the work of the female preacher fall outside the state definition of Islamic authority and knowledge. The grandson made it clear that he thought of music and dance as sinful, and thus he expressed an opinion common among Islamists, who believe these experiences diminish self-control and therefore lead to sin. In contrast to this view, there are those who dabble in a form of secularism that places worship in the private sphere and allows youth a margin of freedom from the rigors of devout practice. Though still too young to know for sure what path she would take, this man's sister wanted me to photograph her in her secular high school uniform in coquettish poses. In the distance, a man observing the event mirthfully called out, "Are those pictures for your boyfriend!?" In the process of making representations of herself in a secular high school uniform, worn in a government school in the city, her head uncovered, and physically demonstrating a flirtatious attitude, she resembled a number of other village girls. As many elderly people critically noted, all these girls who achieved a high school education married outside the village and assumed a secular lifestyle. Education, then, is an important focus of this book because it inculcates a secular or Islamist worldview.

This brief look at a few members of Aysel's family demonstrates the diversity in approaches to religious authority and dimensions of spiritual transformation, including reverence for the Ottoman past, evident in rural Turkey today. While some support laicism, others sustain Islamic traditions from the past. Some prefer the cleansed and objectified practices from religious communities, while others seek a secular world, in which Islamic practice is a private, individual affair, separated from the more public aspects of life. People combine approaches and experiment, depending on their spiritual needs and stages in their lives. They are not expressing narrowly defined ideological positions, as one might conclude is the case among people in Turkey because of the prevailing discourse of bifurcated identities, secular and Islamic, about which one can be lectured in towns and cities in the most casual of settings.

How did I find myself in the Yuntdağ region, a mountainous area north of Manisa, conducting ethnographic fieldwork? As a doctoral student, I had studied the DOBAG (Doğal Boya Araştırma ve Geliştirme Projesi, or the Natural Dye Research and Development) project. Harald Böhmer and Josephine Powell, two expatriates living in Istanbul, who founded the project during the 1980s, introduced me to Kayalarca village. As I wrote on the cooperative and the transformations in rural life relating to it, however, I repeatedly was dis-

tracted by Islamic practice, which I had experienced in the village from 1998 to 2001. Before entering the fray of the job market, I was able to make return visits in 2002, 2003, and 2004. Upon finding a job at Buffalo State College in 2007, I began studying Islamic practice during the summer of 2008, and, with support from my institution and some grants, I extended this research from July to December 2009. I returned in 2010 for a month. My inquiries into Islam were informed by my interests in cultural transformation, memory, and systems of social categorization. I did not inquire into theological debates or particular doctrines, but considered the role of Turkish laicism in relation to rural spiritual practices and the possibility that both local memory and political transformation had informed the manner in which rural people create a pious space separate from secular worldviews and Islamist ones associated with urban life. While, during my early research, I found the villagers to be slightly uninterested in discussing the cooperative—especially because they were flooded with researchers, journalists, documentary filmmakers, and tourists—they were very interested in discussing Islam. In fieldwork, I settled on a system of writing quick notes while discussing topics with people. I found people to dislike tape recorders, and for this reason my material is not in the form of transcribed conversation. I regret this because many villagers have a charmingly direct and emotive style of speech, which I am unable to fully capture. To collect information in interviews, I typically use two notebooks. One contains the questions and topics I am exploring at a particular time and the second is used for writing individual responses. I keep both open on my lap as I sit with someone in conversation, usually on the floor. My notes are written in a chaotic mixture of Turkish and English. On rare occasions, I was able to write long descriptions of events in English as they transpired. I spent each evening writing up the day's conversations, interviews, and experiences. In the morning I reviewed these and considered whom I would visit next. As I researched, I selected a topic and explored it by visiting as many people as possible until the answers I got led me to a new question. This means I asked many people the same questions, and because news of my topics of interest spread quickly, villagers often knew what I was interested in before I arrived at their houses. I generalize in the text by often describing individuals as "villagers," because responses coalesced in agreement among a large number of people. Being in a village meant I could easily visit people without making appointments. Women, the main focus of my interest, were often at home and willing to converse with me while they were doing housework or weaving. I also interviewed men, especially

those who had studied with the Süleymancis, at government Imam Hatip high schools, or had become imams. I visited them in their houses, accompanied by their wives, in mosques, or by daring to visit the coffeehouses, the domain of men. They were remarkably tolerant of my efforts to talk to them. During 2009, I worked in sets of three weeks in the villages and then returned to Istanbul to consider what I had learned and to explore these same practices in Istanbul or other cities, such as Konya, before returning to the villages for another stint of three weeks. I also regularly visited a particular town in the Balıkesir region, which I call Tepeli, where a village woman had married, thereby meeting new people to talk to, and I often visited Manisa, where many villagers had migrated. I followed the research where it took me, as far as Bamberg, Germany, where I spent two weeks on separate visits in 2009 and 2010. I have changed village place names and those of informants.

COMPETING CLAIMS TO RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

In making decisions about what kind of life to have, villagers in western Turkey explore the remembered and forgotten, state-based and transnational, and gendered sources of Islamic authority. The region where these villages are located, the Yuntdağ, north of Manisa and south of Bergama, is known among carpet dealers and textile experts for a women's carpet-weaving cooperative based in Kayalarca village. Locally, the area is regarded as a bastion of formerly nomadic, Yörük people, who maintain a residual nomadic economy, making cheese, herding on a small scale, and visiting the city of Manisa to shop in the big markets and gather goods for marriage. The Yuntdağ, in other words, is not regarded internationally or locally as a hotbed of Islamic activism.

From the perspective of Manisa, the mixtures of spiritual practices rooted in cultural, state, and new Islamic movements are unremarkable. Indeed, people in Manisa engage in similar practices—one of the reasons why so many villagers comfortably migrate to the city and commute between the two. Yet, rural places provide a different perspective on engagements with the meaning and purpose of the state's secularization program through the production of laicism. By considering villager perspectives of this process, I shift the focus of the many debates and discussions about secularism and Islam in urban Turkey to rural communities, which have their own histories and legacies of spiritual practice. Communities are not composed of people who choose piety on an individual basis, but of collectives, connected to each other, across multiple generations, with a particular

local rendition of the past, which relates to how Islam is understood and practiced. Members of these communities address and debate the meaning, goals, and purposes of laicism, the statist goal of producing a secular society, as well as newer alternatives, such as an Islamist future, in which Islam is wrested from state control, and alternative communities, brotherhoods can practice openly. They also consider cultural Islamic rituals and whether they should continue these.

All the people I met in the region identified themselves as Sunni Muslims. Americans find it surprising, when I discuss my research, that no villagers professed atheism or openly disagreed with their fellow villagers about the nature of God's interest in their lives. Though I describe many debates and discussions in this book, none involved people who refused to identify as Muslims or who would rather have joined a different religious tradition. Rather, the most significant disagreement was about who was the better, more devout, more knowledgeable Sunni Muslim. Turkish people often ask me about the ethnic and sectarian makeup of the villages. Though all the villagers I studied present themselves as Sunni Muslim Turks, there is evidence of greater mixture, of Kurds, Alevi, Yörüks, and Greeks who lived in the region in the past. These are details which often are unmentioned because people identify as Turks.

In both villages, Yeniyurt and Kayalarca, exploration of forms of Sunni Islam gives rise to debates on state authority, spiritual efficacy, the nature of orthodoxy, and the role of culture and memory. Through an examination of these diverse legitimations to practice, I argue that women and men are involved in distinctly different forms of Islam because the Diyanet mediates their orientation toward the state and its interest and ability in providing spiritual resources for them. State productions of orthodoxy are gendered and skewed toward men's needs. Men find the mosque and thereby the state's official Islam a home for their practice; but women, who avoid the mosque, locate spirituality in places and times outside the mosque—the Ottoman past in Yeniyurt or neo-Islamist future in Kayalarca—and thereby outside the state control of Islam.

The social geography and coherency of rural communities creates a different field of vision for the future, past, and present. The ideological machine of progressive modernity, discussed in the next chapter, implemented through state policies, weighs less heavily on rural people. In part this is due to the late arrival of public education in the region, the villagers' ability to live without full engagement with wage labor and the monetized economy, and the ideological construction of rural spaces as premodern. The state project of modernization, secularization, and westernization was implicit ideologically and explicit geo-

graphically as urban in design.²³ While cities were made according to plan, villages were mostly ignored because state officials—secularist elites—imagined modernity as an urban project. Geographically, then, villages are constructed to be and actually are a bit distant from centers of power and authority.

Being a villager has become an existential question, rather than a fact of existence. Leaving is a choice, but staying is as well. Those on the fence debate the benefits of living in rural areas where spaces are encoded as “domestic” and shared among villagers who are “the same” (i.e., homogeneous, that is, Sunni Turks, not Alevi or Kurdish). Rural spaces are more relaxed because villagers assume everyone is engaged in the same pious and moral project. This assumption has distinct benefits for women, who can walk from village to village, visit freely, and move about without needing to fully cover (i.e., wear a manto). They always, however, wear headscarves. In addition, many men and women note that in the cities, relationships are negotiated through money, whereas in the rural regions it is possible to live without full-time employment. Though socioeconomic differences exist in rural areas, villagers promote ideals of social egalitarianism. They expect fellow villagers to have the same material resources and opportunities, though this is not in fact the case. High ideals of social egalitarianism contrast with their experiences of city life and city people, whether secularist or Islamist, as devoted to self-promotion through an engagement with fashionable commodities and professions.

Though some argue that rural life has distinct benefits, others point to drawbacks. Young parents argue that Manisa, the nearest city, has jobs for men, markets, schools, and health care resources. These are reasons for leaving. By making migration a choice not only of where to live but who to be, villagers face existential questions about themselves, their identities and their futures, as well as about the lenses through which they choose to view and interpret the past. Rather than coherent and isolated socially and geographically, villages are more fluid, ideologically constructed spaces. They are also, however, imagined by many villagers and urban people to be insulated, morally, socially, and geographically. Thus, rural life is not always regarded positively.

KAYALARCA - YENIYURT DIALECTIC

Yeniyurt and Kayalarca villages, a mere kilometer apart, differ significantly in forms of Islamic practice. The difference relates to how each village locates spiritual legitimacy and authority temporally. Over Yeniyurt looms Kaplandağı,

a mountaintop where a holy man from the Ottoman era once lived. Not to be outdone, Kayalarca village's crown of rock cliffs is also associated with a holy man, one who has largely been forgotten. That villagers in Yeniyurt would continue to remember their holy man while those in Kayalarca would have forgotten theirs is no accident. The villagers in Yeniyurt deliberately sustain old and traditional practices, taking pride in their active memories. Kayalarca villagers scorn this attitude, saying it is backward-minded. In Kayalarca, people work to erase the past and forget cultural traditions.

The two villages represent two paths to modernization and secularization available to Sunni villages and peoples within the ethno-national narrative of the Turkish state. One path, Yeniyurt's, includes a sustained cultural connection to the Ottoman Empire, Islamic devotion, and disciplined study, features which translate well to achievement in secular education and the professions, including that of being an imam. The other path, Kayalarca's, focuses on innovation—in both the economic and spiritual spheres. The female villagers have allowed neo-tarikats, especially the Süleymancı community, to influence their spiritual activities, and women have been instrumental in economic development and the commercialization of a heritage product, carpets, for the international market in a cooperative. Men in Kayalarca, like those in Yeniyurt, abide by the state's construction of Islam as located in the mosque, but few of them at the time of this study, in comparison to village men in Yeniyurt, have achieved success in the professions, such as imam.

Yeniyurt is the larger of the two villages, with a population of about five hundred. Kayalarca's population is in decline, as more families migrate to Manisa, but there are still about three hundred people in the village. The people of Yeniyurt recall where they had once lived on two different *yaylas* (pastures) during the Ottoman Empire. That is, the village is composed of two migrating groups, probably clans or descent groups of different Yörük and Türkmen tribes, which merged together and moved further upslope. The name of the village underscores its newness because *yeni* means new. Some claim that Greeks once inhabited their village. Looking at the surface effects of the village, there are no material indications that Greek Christians lived in Yeniyurt. The old houses are similar to those in Kayalarca, simple stone constructions with flat earthen roofs or newly tiled ones, which resemble solidified tents in their interior use of space. Though precise evidence of former Greek occupation is hard to come by, one supporting indication is the remarkable grapes cultivated in tiny vineyards by both villages. An older man from Kayalarca claimed that

Greeks had once made wine from the grapes they now use to make *pekmez*, grape molasses. The historical records, written in Ottoman and located in Ankara, have been out of my reach,²⁴ but it would not be surprising if the Ottoman government had encouraged or required nomads to occupy a permanent place, as the imperial government settled migrating groups and moved them to control taxation and conscription.²⁵

The villagers from Yeniyurt refer to themselves as “Yörük.” As Halil Inalcık writes, the term *yörük* has a complex origin. “. . . ‘Yörük’ was originally an administrative word commonly used for nomads of various origins who arrived in Ottoman controlled lands during the 14th and 15th centuries and who over time had appropriated this name for themselves.”²⁶ The term does not indicate a coherent ethnic, linguistic, or religious group, but a subsistence strategy, nomadic pastoralism. The term is often confused with an ethnic one, as Kasaba argues,²⁷ and in some ways, the villagers interpret it as such because those in Kayalarca deny being Yörük, saying, rather, that they are “Turks”—an expression of patriotic allegiance to the state.

In Yeniyurt, memories connecting people to the past are active. For example, material culture demonstrates a sustained link in the form of small shepherds’ bags called *torba* and flat weaves, overwarp reverse tapestry, *cicims*, referred to as *kilims* throughout the villages. While a few elderly women in Yeniyurt make kilims for the cooperative, it is notable that none in Kayalarca do; instead they make carpets. Due to the technical differences between *cicims* and carpets, the former involve the reproduction of traditional designs while the latter provide a freer surface for the innovation of patterns—and also their simplification. Though cooperative dealers regard both carpets and kilims as cultural heritage, the structure of kilims transmits cultural memory through the exact reproduction of designs, whereas carpets do not. Thus, in the material culture, the weavers in Yeniyurt actively pass on the skills needed to create *torba* and kilims. Those in Kayalarca have ceased to make these designs and produce carpets on order by dealers, experimenting more freely with design. Comparing the cultural value of these two kinds of textiles, furthermore, shows how deep the different orientations to the past are in the villages. Yeniyurt weavers value the traditional kilim patterns and pass them down to the next generation relatively intact, whereas because the production of traditional material culture is not valued in Kayalarca in the same way, the skills to create kilims have not been passed down. Instead weavers pursue innovation, especially pleasing to customers, such as the addition of small pictures like cats or looms in carpet patterns.