

Armenian Schools in Contemporary Turkey: Governmentality, Community, Resilience

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Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this dissertation, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.

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Abstract

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In the grip of central examination systems, the marketization and privatization of schooling, regulations of a nation state which maintains its emphasis on its Turko-Islamic tenets, and the escalation of competition among students as an outcome of an endeavor to be incorporated into global job markets, the Armenian schools struggle to breed a nurturing soil for Armenian cultural sustainability. The main objective of this research is to analyze to what extent the Armenian schools serve as places of cultural empowerment in spite of the external constraints that the educational system in Turkey breeds and the political targeting Armenian community experiences today. Although the schools are places of acculturation in which the wishes of the nation state almost always prevail, this does not mean that latitude in education is fully encompassed by precepts of national education. There is a possibility for the schools to function as spaces for cultural self-realization as opposed to the political targeting and marginalization they are subjected to. The aim of this study is to unpack the broader educational field encapsulating the Armenian schools, and to paint a comprehensive picture which summarizes bureaucratic functioning, quotidian practices, daily predicaments, the network of relationships interwoven around the schools or any pattern that delineate their overall milieu, so that it could be possible to understand how self-meaning is produced in the schools.

115,000 words

Özet

Modern Türkiye’de Ermeni Okulları: Yönetimsellik, Toplum, Dayanıklılık

Hülya Delihüseyinođlu, Doktora Adayı, 2023

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü

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Merkezi sınav sistemleri, okulların özelleştirilmesi ve piyasalaşması, Türk-İslam doktrini üzerindeki vurgusunu devam ettiren ulus devlet yönetmelikleri ve küresel iş piyasalarına eklenme çabalarının sonucu olarak öğrenciler arasında artan rekabet dinamiklerinin kısıcında, Ermeni okulları kültürel devamlılığı sağlayabilecek koşulları beslemek için mücadelesini sürdürüyor. Bu araştırmanın temel amacı, Türkiye’deki eğitim sisteminden kaynaklanan dış etkenlere ve Ermeni toplumunun bugün deneyimlemek zorunda olduğu siyasal hedef gösterilmeye rağmen Ermeni okullarının kültürel güçlenmeyi sağlayabilecek alanları ne derece sürdürebildiğini tartışmak. Her ne kadar Ermeni okulları ulus devletin taleplerinin neredeyse her zaman galip geldiği kültürel baskı alanları olsa da, bu durum eğitimdeki serbestlik alanının ulus devletin hükümleri tarafından tamamen kuşatıldığı anlamına gelmiyor. Siyasi olarak hedef gösterilmelerine ve ötekileştirilmelerine rağmen okulların kültürel farkındalık alanları olarak işleme mümkün. Bu çalışma, Ermeni okullarını çerçeveleyen eğitim alanını geniş ölçekte çözümleyerek ve okulların bürokratik işleyişini, gündelik açmazlarını, etraflarında ördükleri ilişkiler ağını ya da genel durumlarını resmeden örüntüleri özetleyen kapsamlı bir resim çizerek okullarda anlam şemalarının nasıl şekillendiğini anlama gayesi taşıyor.

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Glossary of Non-English Terms

Amira	The upper class and notables of the Armenian community
Alliance Israélite Universelle	Universal Israelite Alliance
Արարատյան Ընկերությունն Յայոց [Araradyan Ingerutyun Hayots]	The Araratyan Armenian Association
Azınlıklar Tali Komisyonu	The Secondary Commission of Minorities
Ազգանուէր Յայուհյաց Ընկերությունը [Azkanver Hayuhyats Ingerutyuni]	The Armenian Patriotic Women Association
Ազգային Կեդրոնական Վարժարան [Azkayin Getronagan Varjaran]	(National) Getronagan High School
Ազգային Սահմանադրութիւնն Յայոց [Azkayin Sahmanatrutyun Hayots]	Armenian National Constitution
Պատրիարքութիւնն Յայոց [Badriarkutyun Hayots]	Armenian Patriarchate
Պէյօղլու Սուրբ Երրորդութիւն Եկեղեցի [Beyoğlu Surp Yerrortutyun Yegeğetsi]	Beyoğlu Surp Holy Trinity Church
Bolsahays	Istanbulite Armenians
Daimi Meclis-i Maarif	The Permanent Council of Education
Dar-ül Fünun	Western style higher education institution, university

Dar-ül Muallimin	Male teacher training school
Ermeni Malları Müşterek İdaresi Komitesi	The Committee of Collective Management of Armenian Properties
Էսայան Դպրոց եւ Վարժարան [Esayan Tbrots yev Varjaran]	Esayan School and High School
Կիլիկյան Ընկերություն [Giligyan Ingerutyun]	The Giligyan Association
hokicaş	Memorial dinner
Islahat Fermanı	Reform edict
imam	Muslim religious leader
İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti	The Committee of Union and Progress
ծայիս [Jbid]	Smile
Kadıköy Asliye Hukuk Mahkemesi	Kadıköy Civil Court of General Jurisdiction
Գրաբար [Krapar]	Classical Armenian
Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti	The Ministry of Public Education
Maarif Komisyonu	The Council of National Education
Maarif Nizamnamesi	The Regulation for National Education
madağ	Celebratory endowment dinner

Meclis-i Maarif-i Umumiye	The Council of Public Education
Meclis-i Muhtelit-i Maarif	The Council of Mixed Education
mekatib-i hususiye	Private schools
mekatib-i umumiyye	Public schools
Meclis-i Umur-ı Nafia	The Office of Public Works
medrese	Islamic theological colleges
Mekatib-i Ecnebiye ve Gayrimüslim Müfettişliği	The Inspection Office for Foreign and Non-Muslim Schools
Mekatib-i Hususiye Talimatnamesi	The Regulation on Private Schools
Mekatib-i Rüşdiye Nezareti	The Office of Junior High Schools
Mekatib-i Umumiye Nezareti	The Office of Public Schools
Միացյալ Ընկերութիւնս Հայոց [Miatsyal Ingerutyun Hayots]	The Union of Armenian Associations
millet system	Religious community system
Muvakkat Meclis-i Maarif	The Temporary Council of Education
müfettiş-i mahsusa	A special group of inspectors
Mülhak Vakıflar	Appendant foundations (foundations that were established before the adoption of the civil code)

Նոր Թերականութիւն [Nor Keraganutyun]	New Grammar
Բանկալթի Մխիթարեան Վարժարան [Pangalti Mkhitaryan Varjaran]	Pangalti Mkhitaryan School
Բառգիրք Յայկագեան լեզուի [Parkirk Haygazyan Lezui]	Dictionary of the Armenian language
rüşdiye okulları	Junior high schools
Սանասարեան վարժարան [Sanasaryan Varjaran]	Sanasaryan College
Սեմերճեան ճեմարան Վարժարան [Semercyan Cemaran Varjaran]	Semercyan Cemaran school
sıbyan mektepleri	Primary schools, local neighborhood schools
Սուրբ Կարապետ Եկեղեցի [Surp Garabed Yegeğetsi]	Surp Garabed Church
Սուրբ Խաչ Դպրեվանք Վարժարան [Surp Haç Tbrevank Varjaran]	Surp Haç Tibrevank High School
Սուրբ Ստեփանոս Եկեղեցի [Surp Sdepanos Yegeğetsi]	Surp Istepanos Church
Şura-yı Ümmet	The National Assembly
Takvim-i Vekayi	Calendar of Events
Թանգարան [Tankaran]	Museum
Tanzimat Fermanı	Imperial rescript
Դպրոցասիրաց-արևելյան Ընկերություն [Tbrotsasirats-arevelyan Ingerutyun]	The Eastern Pro-school Association

Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu

The law on the unification of education

Türk Ermeni Azınlık Okulları Öğretmenleri Yardımlaşma Vakfı

The Turkish Armenian Minority Schools' Teachers Solidarity Foundation

Վարդապետ [Vartabed]

Wandering teachers

Vilâyat-ı Şâhane Maarif Müdürlerinin Vezâifin-i Mübeyyin Talimat

Set of instructions explaining the standards that the inspectors needed to follow

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABCFM	American Board Commissioners of Foreign Mission
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
ECHR	The European Court of Human Rights
ÖSYM	Ölçme, Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi (Centre for Assessment, Selection and Replacement)
TEAOV	Türk Ermeni Azınlık Okulları Öğretmenleri Vakfı (Turkish Armenian Minority Schools' Teachers Solidarity Foundation)
The CUP	The Committee of Union and Progress
VADİP	Vakıflararası Dayanışma ve İletişim Platformu (Inter-foundational Solidarity and Communication Platform)
YÖK	Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu (The Council of Higher Education)

A Note on Transliteration

In the main text of this dissertation, Armenian names and terms were transliterated in accordance with the ALA-LC (American Library Association and Library of Congress) Armenian (western) romanization table, available at <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsol/romanization/armenian.pdf>, with the exception of the Armenian letters ղ, ղ, Լ – rendered in the text as ı, ğ, v and the Armenian letter ԵԼ – rendered in the text as yu when at the end of a word.

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NOTE: The in-house editor of the Atatürk Institute has made detailed recommendations with regard to the format, grammar, spelling, usage, syntax, and style of this dissertation.

Introduction

Discussing the positioning of Armenian women in the field of education in her commentary, Kouyoumdjian ruminates the role of education in sustaining Armenian cultural heritage, and inquires about the frameworks to decide what should be maintained, modified or created so that Armenian cultural scenery can be kept alive when at the same time educational institutions can meet the needs emanating from exigencies and contingencies of the era (2000, p. 291). After 22 years her piece was written, now the principal of the renowned Getronagan High School for over 40 years, Kouyoumdjian's concerns still address currents of the educational dilemmas of the Armenian community. Today, it is even more necessary to ask these questions to capture the dilemmas intrinsic to the educational sphere of the Armenian community in Turkey.

In the grip of central examination systems, the marketization and privatization of schooling, regulations of a nation state which maintains its emphasis on its Turko-Islamic tenets or the escalation of competition among students as an outcome of an endeavor to be incorporated into global job markets, the Armenian schools struggle not only to stand as cultural symbols of Armenian cultural heritage, but also to breed a nurturing soil for Armenian cultural sustainability by offering venues and opportunities in their power. In the affluence of factors impacting their day-to-day functioning, the schools often find themselves at an impasse

in deciding their priorities. I argue that the state of the Armenian schools indicates a paradox: although they are places of acculturation in which the wishes of the nation state almost always prevail; this does not *ipso facto* mean that latitude in education is fully encompassed by precepts of national education. I maintain that there is a possibility for the schools to function as spaces for cultural self-realization as opposed to the political targeting or marginalization they are subjected to. Altering themselves to fulfill educational expectations of their students and parents in a climate in which cultural sustainability is intimidated by global identities or educational trends of the new global era, the schools sometimes have to relinquish their role as cultural bearers; even so, they manage to redress the balance in those situations and maintain their exclusive place in the community. Therefore, throughout the text I contend that as the schools are reactive to how power performs at different levels, the processes of cultural empowerment are not so straightforward.

Maintaining their deep-seated educational traditions, appertaining to catholic and apostolic Armenian communities combined, today there are a total of 16 Armenian schools in Istanbul. As these schools undertake the responsibility to provide educational needs of Armenian pupils studying in all K-12 levels, with their 2,828 students registered in the 2022-2023 education year they also serve as the social and cultural centers in which Armenian culture and language can be sustained in a communal venue. The aim of my study and research is to unpack the broader educational field encapsulating all these 16 Armenian schools, and to paint a comprehensive picture which summarize their bureaucratic functioning, quotidian practices, daily predicaments, the network of relationships interwoven around them or any pattern that delineate their overall milieu, so that it could be possible to understand how self-meaning is produced in the schools. In other words, the main objective of this research is to analyze to what extent the Armenian schools serve as places of cultural empowerment in spite of the political targeting Armenian community experiences today as well as of the external constraints that the educational system in Turkey breeds. This attempt aims to unfold how the Armenian schools contribute to cultural empowerment of the community as they

endure as communal venues bringing the community together and purvey certain means for cultural sustainability, whereas on the other hand their communal characteristics reproduce them as spaces of exclusion since they are positioned at the periphery of the mainstream education system and subtly monitored by the Ministry of National Education. Although the way I argue it the anomaly inherent to the course of the Armenian schools appears like a duality, I do not intend to present these puzzles as binary oppositions of the resilience of Armenian culture against the domination by a nation state. Rather, throughout chapters I aspire to unveil these processes in a continuum as they are intertwined in a diversity of ways that sometimes even consolidate each other.

I put forward two main arguments in this study. I argue that, first, despite the nationalist discourse and constraints of the educational system, the Armenian schools are significant sites for cultural sustainability of the Armenian community. I conceptualize the schools as safe spaces in which cultural belonging, collective practices and imaginations prevail. Second, they perform in interaction with both communal and societal power dynamics and their operations are very well integrated into these power dynamics. Analyzing the conditions and dynamics of the educational context engulfing the Armenian schools, this study captures their current atmosphere altering as a response to socio-economic shifts and concomitant changes in relationships, perceptions or expectations these shifts entail. As regards, the framework I contend to bring by this study does not see Armenian culture as a residue of the past whose existence is recurrently threatened or compromised by a nation state equipped with Turko-Islamic tenets, but rather focus on it as a contemporary and transforming compound shaped by the totality of current developments especially with the impact of the neoliberal shift in the educational realm. Unpacking the present-day milieu of the Armenian educational field, I offer lenses to discuss how the sustainability of certain Armenian cultural constituents in the Armenian schools could ensure a space of empowerment, whereas the educational environment is already compromised by new forms of governmentality and exigencies of the neoliberal era shaping and molding new subjectivities conducive to this socio-economic shift.

The novelty of this study comes from the fact that it does not portray an Armenian culture or *modus vivendi* wedged in a distant past. I rather analyze the educational field engulfing all Armenian schools, now only left in Istanbul, from a broader perspective including networks of relationships interwoven around these schools and revisit Armenian cultural and social life with current conundrums emanating from the concomitant shifts of neoliberalism in Turkey and thereby reproducing the larger edifice and patterns inherent to the functioning and sustainability of the schools. Throughout the chapters, I will show that the educational field where the Armenian schools reside is rife with precariousness, and the impact of the state as an entity on the Armenian schools is not so straightforward, however multilayered and circuitous. Unraveling the tenuous domain of everyday life and nuances in practice, I argue that the perspective I bring to the table carve out a new space to frame Armenian studies in contemporary Turkey.

In addition to addressing precarious and complex domains in the conduct of the schools, a more evident contribution of this study is to give room to discuss the Armenian schools in their particular context instead of explaining them within the broader category of minority schools. Although community schools of Jewish, Rum, Armenian and Assyrian communities are regulated by the same legal framework, particulars and currents of these communities bring about variations in practice. Population sizes, additional international agreements, their financial resources or socio-economic characteristics influence the ways these communities maintain and operate their schools. Considering the fact that distinctive needs, concerns and dynamics of the communities mainly stem from their earlier experiences, I argue that it is significant to analyze these schools in their particular environment with reference to specific events that mold the perception of people. Unpacking the distinct atmosphere of the Armenian schools, another contribution of this study is to reinstate Armenian cultural and social life in its place in the present day and make it more perceptible to the reader. This study has the intention of reminding the reader that Armenian schools are not museums displaying Armenian cultural heritage as an artifact, but very much robust reacting to

their surrounding conditions. Therefore, this research goes beyond historical debates about the schools and includes a great deal of socio-political analysis that influence their current state. Instead of settling with an understanding that sees Armenian identity and culture as a constant and essentialized entity, this study attempts to uncover its fragments, dilemmas and priorities thereby the role of the Armenian schools in Armenian social and culture life can be deciphered in a fluid atmosphere altering in response to the exigencies and contingencies of its era. This study takes up a challenge to open a door to discuss despite its fragments how the schools maintain a role in the sustainability of what we call Armenian culture today.

§ 1.1 Context

Due to the expansiveness of the subject, this study touches upon variegated areas and revisits different theoretical and daily discussions to duly present the milieu of the schools. With the purpose of setting the stage, throughout the chapters I spell out the general atmosphere, currents and predominant tendencies in Turkey. Nevertheless, I believe that it is also imperative here to foreground the overall atmosphere of Turkey for the Armenian community to be able to elaborate on the discussion explaining the need for this study as a part of the introduction.

Ruminating the patterns of silence and denial in everyday life, Zerubavel addresses the gap between the awareness of an open secret and the reluctance to express it publicly and he conceptualizes this phenomenon as “silent witnessing” (2008, p. 3). With the objective of grasping the motives of collective denial, he accentuates a tension between knowledge and acknowledgement, personal awareness and public discourse (2008, p. 3). Particularly in the last decade, we see various studies addressing the tension Zerubavel pinpoints. While examining the links between knowledge and acknowledgement of the past in the context of Turkey, these studies contemplate how the aspects of silent witnessing predominate in the social life in Turkey. Focusing on the formative years of Turkish nationalism or the Turkish nation state, a considerable part of these

studies discusses strategies of state actors to breed the conditions in which privileges of Turkishness thrive. Centering on the state's role in denial, Bora (2009) draws attention to the general tendency of the state and governments to unlearn and wash away past events especially after the establishment of the Republic. In order to foreground the extent of denialism in the political and social edifice of Turkey, Ünlü (2012) uses the term of "the Turkishness Contract" to scrutinize the historical formation and contemporary functioning of Turkishness as a social contract. He emphasizes that a significant part of this ideological belonging stems from a collective conspiracy and act of reticence and obliviousness (Ünlü, 2012). With certain laws and means of violence stonewalling the generation and dissemination of knowledge about the past, "the Turkishness Contract" embraces denialism as an important segment of the political and social system (Ünlü, 2012).

In the affluence of circumstances that promotes obliviousness towards Armenian presence and cultural heritage, Bilal contends that the impact of social interactions covered by silence and the ramifications of this social structure entail Armenian culture to appear as totalized, ahistorical, homogeneous and spaceless (2007, p. 89). Accentuating continuities between the late Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic, Suciyan's illuminating work contemplates that denialism becomes so intrinsic and common to social as well as legal domains as various forms of violence towards Armenians are normalized (2015). Her account examines the ways Armenians manage to maintain their socio-political existence in the denialist structures and spaces of post-genocide Turkey (2015). In order to show the ways denial and silencing of collective violence against Armenians persist across time and that they encompass a much larger span from 1789 to the present, in her seminal book *Göçek* (2015) contends that the historical construction of denial varies in accordance with the interaction of structural and affective elements and the interaction of state and society (p. 4). Thereby, she stresses personal, communal and structural factors in determining the parameters of collective emotions (2015, p. 33). Studying the denial of collective violence multilayered across time for more than two centuries, she foregrounds the promotion of the state's

own institutional agenda in setting up the emotional habitus of its citizens as the state continually emphasizes the need for national security concerns in the psyche of its citizens (2015, p. 33). In such a context, the denial of violence and silencing of the past does not only become a significant component of the common narrative through which the presence of the Armenian population of Turkey is marginalized as an ahistorical representation, but obliviousness waxes in quotidian practices and veils the public visibility and presence of Armenian social and cultural life.

In their book focusing on actors' and institutions' role in generating a social structure and a common narrative based on the denial of past atrocities towards Armenians, Turan and Öztan (2018) unpack the ways this habitus of denial is produced and reproduced in the official discourse with the state apparatus interacting with various actors and institutions during these processes. While they address denialism as a form of social amnesia, they decipher the obliviousness towards past atrocities and cultural obliteration of 1915 and towards the Armenian presence in Anatolia and cultural heritage as an integral part of the incessantly reproduced founding agreement of the Turkish Republic (Turan and Öztan, 2018, p. 34-36). Since both the new regime and a considerable part of the Muslim population benefited from the displacement of the Armenian population and the liquidation of their derelicts, the basic tenets of the emerging political and social structure were shaped around the denial of the past atrocities (Turan and Öztan, 2018, p. 14). In building the social edifice of the new Republic, ethnic cleansing and homogenization projects of the late 19th century and early 20th century did not only result in a demographic change, but also paved the way for the following policies of cultural eradication and assimilation to spring up as the habitus of denial became so intrinsic to common narratives of the political and social life of Turkey (Turan and Öztan, 2018, p. 14). That is why they contend that even in the best scenario the Armenian population is often portrayed as a folkloric richness disconnected from its historical and political existence (Turan and Öztan, 2018, p. 34).

In order to demystify the patterns of oblivion towards Armenian cultural heritage and existence so ingrained in our daily practices and schemas of thought, following the lead of the existing scholarship on this particular subject (Göçek, 2015; Suciyan, 2016) it is imperative to pay regards to history in terms of its continuities from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. The continuities from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic are reflected well in the fact that the processes of Muslimification and Turkification continued after the establishment of the republic as the rate of the non-Muslim population in Turkey plunged considerably in the overall population throughout the years (Parla, 2019, p. 18). In order to grasp social, economic, and political power reproducing the current edifice and the ways we read and understand history, Parla suggests to pay attention to critical scholarship of the late Ottoman and early republican period that foregrounds continuities, unlike the prevailing wisdom focusing on an absolute rupture (2019, p. 39). Within a story of rupture with radical reforms of Mustafa Kemal, Fortna explains the mainstream historiography often rendering a disparity between an outmoded Ottoman past and the self-conscious modernity of a nation state as this historiography accentuates the newness of the Republic (2012, p. 21). Similarly, in their seminal work *Kandiyoti* and *Saktanber* reject arguments seeing society as a constant variable which follows a straight line of development from traditional and rural characteristics to a more modern, industrialized and urban structure (*Kandiyoti*, 2003, p. 16). Fortna further remarks that the received wisdom of mainstream historiography results from the Republican agenda itself, since the new republic generates narratives promoting the stark contrast with the *ancien regime* even at times when the degree of continuity is quite palpable (2012, p. 21). As Kasaba draws attention well before, this idea also resonates in readings of modernization which portray a disciplined and by no means ambiguous world and overlook irregularities in social transformation (1997, p. 23).

As the objective of my research is to paint a comprehensive picture of the Armenian schools in Turkey, understanding the educational field of the Armenian community entails me to pay regards to continuities as

well as ruptures. Since the schools were founded as community schools in the Ottoman period and preserved by the warranty of international agreements in the new republic as minority schools, analyzing this field demands deciphering events, motives and puzzles in a larger time span and the continuance of certain aspects of social and political configurations.

§ 1.2 Notes of a researcher

I started to conduct the research of this study officially in November 2018 with a pilot study mainly based on the interviews with the people that I could reach as my first contact persons or people in my friend/family circle. However, the preparation of this research and its incipient stages go far back to 2013 when I first started to schedule interviews for my MA thesis on the comparative study of variegated aspects of the understandings of justice of Kurdish and Armenian communities in Istanbul. In this sense, the research I will present in five chapters is the outcome of my observations, experiences and research extending in a time period of almost ten years. A decade of interest, network of relations I built in different settings, family and friend circles, and institutions I was affiliated with made the research of this dissertation study possible and attainable. It was the support of the people I came across with, which rendered the thorny conditions of a research smoother in a socio-political climate that evoked diffidence and precariousness among people when expressing themselves.

As an outsider, a non-Armenian researcher, I felt a great deal of apprehension about missing out the nuances, overlooking dissident voices or more importantly perturbing people in a communal setting to where I was welcomed as a guest. That is why when conducting my research and later writing my dissertation I cared very much to refrain from trite or stereotyped representations and images of Armenians. I narrated practices and events in a way to be able to give a rather candid portrayal of the actors involved. As an academic researcher it goes without saying that

my main objective was to grasp every phenomena pertaining to the Armenian schools and to unravel some lurking nuances that could help the reader to see the broader picture. My other significant responsibility was to care for my participants and not to interrupt the integrity of the spaces I entered in any way causing some future stress. With that in mind, faithful to my academic integrity I preferred to leave certain topics and discussions out of this study and choose my wording accordingly. Particularly when writing the chapters, the possibility of erroneously presenting experiences, stories or perspectives of people who welcomed me to their classrooms, homes or workplaces agitated me sometimes too much. I suppose the uneasiness stemming from not doing justice to the veracity of those stories was one of the key reasons why it took so long for me to complete writing. However, I remembered that the best way overcoming these concerns was once again to adhere to academic research and methodology. Suffice to say that, my aspiration for precision caused me to be uptight, timid or skittish at some instances and times. Despite the fact that as much as every author I would like to have a seamless text as an outcome, considering the nature of the work done I acknowledge that there will always be room for improvement in this text. As I take the full responsibility of everything written here, I hope the discussions or facts I let slip unwittingly encourage more people with different backgrounds to talk about the Armenian schools or present conditions and predicaments of the Armenian community in Turkey.

This study does not promise to deliver stories which are not already known by students, teachers, alumni or administrators of the schools. It does not claim to cover everything taking place in and around the schools. However, I insist that the composition I put together to tell the story of the Armenian schools is veritably original. The narrative I employ to illustrate the anecdotes my participants shared with me uniquely places them in a larger picture. As I put all these stories into an extensive perspective, this study equips the reader with a looking glass to interpret and analyze the totality of the big picture portraying the Armenian schools in temporality and relationality. Framing the comprehensive

story of the educational field from different perspectives, this study contributes to the literature as it pays regards to the schools not as passive recipients of state regulations trying to monitor communal spaces, but rather more vigorous and resilient terrains in which Armenian culture is preserved in variegated ways and occasions. On this rare occasion, in unfolding these liminal areas at the intersection of exclusion and communal empowerment, my externality, resulting from my position and identity, emerges as my strong suit. A great deal of practice, motives or patterns taken for granted by insiders surface as matters that are needed to be explicated in my study. I suggest that grasping the connections, formations and everyday practice without bearing any former bias or experience helps a great deal analyze the edifice of the educational field surrounding the Armenian schools today.

§ 1.3 Methodology

Inasmuch as I argue that elucidating the everyday functioning of the educational field and the communal space that greatly impinge upon the schools is necessary to unravel the current milieu of the Armenian schools, I contend that the suitable methodology to discuss the course of solidarity and empowerment in this educational field is ethnography and interviews. Considering recent discussions in the scholarship that foreground the need to look beyond the limits of institutional rules and regulations, demystifying public, communal or private spaces in which cultural practices embody relations of power engulfing the Armenian schools constitutes a great deal of this study. This research serves the aim of delineating the quotidian domain of the Armenian schools in the terrain of a whirlwind of political changes in governance emerging predominantly from the neoliberal shift in Turkey. With the objective of unfolding the Armenian schools with respect to their tenuous domain of everyday practices and accentuating established practices and ambiguities in governing the schools, the methodology of this research is based on an interview-based ethnography. Although I acquired the data enabling this study and analysis from my ethnographic fieldwork, I used additional

sources of information to have a complete picture of events and stories. In order to compensate for the gaps, discontinuities or hiatus in stories, events and narratives, I fact-checked my fieldwork data in reference to newspaper articles, laws, regulations, circular letters or other various legal documents. I sometimes even rectified mistakes of fact, when needed, to promote the veracity and correctness of my writing. However, these corrections or validations did not in any way disrupt the authenticity of the story or experience told by my participants. My sole purpose by using these additional written documents was to present a clearer picture to the reader or to support the accuracy of statements with facts.

In order to comprehensively collect data from different perspectives, I visited six of the total 16 Armenian schools in Turkey; three high schools and three elementary and middle schools. All of the schools I visited belong to the Apostolic Armenian community.¹ As I conducted my fieldwork in these schools by attending classes, participating in school events as an observer, and spending time in teachers' lounges while interviewing students, teachers, and school administrators. Besides the ethnographic study conducted in these six schools, I additionally talked to other students, teachers and administrators affiliated with the other schools that I could not visit because of different reasons ranging from lack of contact, reluctance of the administrators or I did not visit simply because I

¹ Three of 16 Armenian schools and their school foundations responsible for monitoring their affairs belong to the Catholic Armenian community. With the schools and their foundations owing allegiance to the spiritual leadership of Armenian Catholic Patriarchate, the schools also accept Armenian students regardless of their religious sect. The reason why I exclusively preferred to visit Apostolic Armenian schools is to portray the communal space surrounding them, while locating them in a multiplicity of factors that have an impact on their operation and sustainability. I argue that with different factors influencing their operation, the story of the Catholic Armenian schools deserves to be told separately. Since Catholic Armenian schools emerged from a different set of aspects and sometimes stand apart from certain communal dynamics, patterns and practices that I have described throughout my chapters applying to Apostolic Armenian schools are not always meaningful and influential in their operation. Although both Catholic and Apostolic Armenian schools have similar concerns and problems in their functioning and sustainability, they are not identical or always experienced in the same way.

did not expect to receive any novel information after spending considerable time in the other schools I conducted my research.

Getting accepted as a researcher to the schools was the most difficult part of this research. Although a lot of masters and doctoral students trying to complete their research as a requirement of their studies have conducted research in the schools before, not all of them were the best guests. Therefore, my first task was to introduce myself in a way to show that I wanted to truly understand the predicaments of the schools not only with respect to the regulations and practice of the Ministry of National Education, but in a broader sense capturing the overall atmosphere, root causes, interactions among actors including the disagreements and dilemmas in the communal space. Having these priorities about my fieldwork, instead of filing a permit to warrant my entrance to the schools with the authorization of the Ministry of National Education but without consulting the school principals, I started my fieldwork with a pilot study through which I presented my research and objectives to people who could be my gatekeepers. After I explained the objectives of my research and my position as a researcher, further opportunities opened up to me to be involved in variegated conversations and settings. I can only hope that I did not perturb any teacher or student or give them a wrong impression about what I was doing. I care about peace in the places I visited the most and would not prioritize my research over tranquility in those spaces for ethical reasons. As I know the political and social context of Turkey very well in that it makes people timid and agitated when expressing their experiences and thoughts on the matter, I did not compel people to get satisfactory answers to my inquiries as this might ruffle someone's feathers, although there were times that I wanted to say more than I did.

With the objective of developing a panoramic understanding, in addition to the ethnographic research and interviews with teachers, students and administrators I also interviewed people involved in the schools in different ways, such as board members of school foundations, lawyers, legal experts on minority foundations, scholars, journalists, for-

mer teachers and graduates. Depending on my proximity with the interviewee, I was invited to different venues so that we could have a comfortable and peaceful conversation; to their offices, homes, workplaces, cafes, or communal spaces, and when meeting face-to-face was not an option teleconferencing, video-calling and emailing became an alternative. Thereby, I conducted more than 120 interviews. Since the duration and format of interviews altered according to circumstances, it became unattainable for me to give an exact number. Some of these interviews were held one-to-one in a private atmosphere within safe boundaries of homes or offices, some others were conducted with a focus-group format in teachers' lounges when it was not possible for me to headcount to have an exact number of my interviewees. I had some interviews during recession times between classes standing up and trying to squeeze as many questions as possible into 10 minutes, while for some others I had more than three hours as my participants had the time to express the way they felt and perceived circumstances unfolding around them.

Of these more than 120 interviewees, students take the smallest share. I could only talk in-depth to 7 students who were high school students at the time of our meetings. As I expressed my interest to hear opinions of students on the overall functioning of the schools, predicaments pertaining to the educational field as well as their opinions about the limitations and possibilities of Armenian cultural sustainability, the students whom I talked to depicted the predominant tendency among students by an apathy towards the course of the sustainability and resilience of Armenian culture and their reluctance to be involved in such matters. Thereby, one of the limitations of this study is the paucity of access to students to talk in-depth about quotidian challenges or dilemmas they have and the inability to unpack these topics from their lenses in a context in which concerns stemming from preparing for central exams, finding better educational opportunities to land on and developing competitive skills for future job prospects prevail.

In order to have rather more sincere conversations and delve into the details of people's experiences, I did not use any recording device during my fieldwork or interviews. Therefore, it was not always possible

to reflect the nuances in the discourse or wording of my participants into the text. I did not note full names of my participants, did not ask them to sign any kind of form. I only verbally explained my study and subjects I was interested to learn further. Some of the people I contacted refused to talk to me either because they felt uncomfortable talking to me or because they had other personal matters going on. Since the educational field of the Armenian community is such a restricted space and people know each other, throughout the text I refrained from using descriptions about my participants in order to conceal their identity. For the same reasons, I also did not see any point adopting pseudo names. Although some of my participants had no problems with having their names published, for the consistency of my text and not to point out other people I only gave little information regarding the identity of my participants.

Another limitation of this study has to do with my Armenian language skills. Before my fieldwork, I took Armenian language classes for a year. These classes introduced me a basic knowledge of Armenian and schemas of thought to grasp the overall framework of conversations held in Armenian, keep track of names of the books, places, literary works mentioned during my fieldwork in their original language, and read and write names in the Armenian alphabet. Yet during the fieldwork I was unable to fully comprehend or follow conversations in Armenian. With that reason, all the interviews were conducted in Turkish. I acknowledge the constraints my limited knowledge of Armenian created. Only after the fieldwork, I improved my Armenian language skills when I continued my Armenian language education and took language classes for two years.

By design, the study exclusively focuses on the Armenian schools. Therefore, it does not explain or discuss perspectives, preferences or mindset of parents or teachers who choose to register their children to other public or private schools or who work in those schools. In that sense, it does not present a comparative perspective. Since the aim of this study is to explain the Armenian schools as a space, it does not delve into a discussion on educational materials knowing that it requires a different kind of research. It does not center on educational materials and therefore does not give a detailed analysis of curricula, schoolbooks, other

complementary materials or changes in them. But it acknowledges that there are already extended works written on educational materials that provide insights and analysis on the matter.

§ 1.4 Theoretical Framework

Unraveling a space where exclusion, domination, inclusion, solidarity, empowerment or combinations of these processes take place, it is necessary to address various subjects to decode the historical, political and social context of the Armenian schools so that the complexity embodied in the educational field of the Armenian community could be examined. With these concerns, as much as discussing the legal framework of the Armenian schools, this study centers around the relations of power that have an impact on the operation of the schools in different ways. Therefore, a great deal of this study focuses on the practices, the assembly of which can construe the ways how the processes of empowerment might be possible in a historically exclusionary context. In a way, this research aims to find an answer to the question Bourdieu asks; how solidarity could be possible in a social structure where hierarchy and conflict are predominating, albeit in different circumstances than Bourdieu focuses on (Swartz, 1997, p. 73).

Explaining the rules of sociological method, if we want to understand how the society design itself and the world encircling it, Durkheim argues to scrutinize the nature of society instead of individuals (2010, p. 19). In this design the condensation of certain patterns of behavior and thinking emerge as a *sui generis* reality; while the collective order of things surfaces in continuous performances, it subsists in patterns reproduced by word-of-mouth, education or writing (Durkheim, 2012, p. 33). That is why in understanding how the collectivities perform, we need to pay attention to their reality which surfaces in small details of social and everyday life. Seminal works written to unpack collective order (Bourdieu, 1977; Clifford, 1986; de Certeau, 1988; Hall, 1993; Bhabha, 1994) foreground the significance of understanding the play of patterns, reproductions and repetitions in social activity and interactions. However, with cultural

flows and global consumerism creating the possibilities of shared identities, postmodern societies ceased to be defined by having fixed, essential or permanent identities (Hall, 1992). As Featherstone contends that with the intensification of cultural goods and images it becomes more challenging to read culture and to attribute fixed meanings and relationships between cultural signs and social attributes of people who consume them (1995, p. 5). Whereas this study follows the lead of earlier scholarship in examining the patterns in social activity to unravel the collective order of things, it also takes up the challenge Featherstone (1995) mentions to understand the performance of a collectivity in a neoliberal age, in which cultural identities are compromised by the global marketing of lifestyles (Harvey, 1989; Hall, 1987, 1992; Laclau, 1990).

Furthermore, following the lead of scholarship which underscore the ways power performs in different areas of social life in the context of Turkey (Kandiyoti and Saktanber, 2002; Erol *et al.*, 2016), this research argues that explaining the current state of the Armenian schools in reference to a nation state and its bureaucratic practices does not suffice to present a comprehensive framework. It was not likely at all to understand the tide that the schools are in by merely looking at the laws and regulations applying them or their bureaucratic practice, because they are not exempt from the insecurities and ambiguities of the social and cultural life around them. In his conceptualization of the theory of structuration, Giddens sees the basic domain of study of the social sciences as social practices ordered across space and time (1986, p. 2). Individuals are regarded as agents who reproduce the conditions that make their activities possible (1986, p. 2). It is the day-to-day activity of social actors which reproduces structural features of social systems that are both constraining and enabling (Giddens, 1986, p. 24-25). In this sense, Giddens put an emphasis on the routine as the basic element of social activity and argues that structural features of social systems emerge as long as forms of social conduct are recurrently reproduced across time and space (p. xxi-xxiii). As the repetitiveness of social life engenders the structural properties of collectivities, the structuration of institutions can only be understood

with reference to social activities expanding across time and space (Giddens, 1986, p. xxi). Unpacking social practices and patterns taking place in the Armenian schools is crucial, because repetition in social conduct signals structural features of the system that the Armenian schools reside in. That is why I am concerned with incorporating quotidian practices and everyday order of things into the analysis. I argue that the parameters forming the milieu of the Armenian schools can be found beyond the limits of public institutions governing the schools. Capturing the constitution of social identity within the Armenian schools as a form of solidarity or cultural empowerment requires looking into practices and patterns that are embedded in different areas of social life. Such an analysis demands looking into people's strategies, belonging, and how they hear, talk, behave or understand things in a certain way. That is why when analyzing the Armenian schools in Turkey, my account discusses the Armenian schools as the educational *habitus* of the Armenian community which reflect the aggregation of social practices pertaining to the realm of the schools.

Bourdieu pithily explains "habitus" as a sense which has a capacity to almost tell future moves in a given situation (1998, p. 25). While the future of subjects is inscribed in the present state, they are endowed with a "practical sense" that connotes the assemblage of preferences, principles of vision and division as well as cognitive structures constituted by the internalization of objective structures (Bourdieu, 1998b, p. 25). Habitus represents the marriage of multiplicity of factors; it refers to the basis of practice which reproduces the entire system of differences engendering the social order (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 3). Conceptualizing habitus as a body of dispositions shaping human behavior in a given society, Bourdieu accentuates that neither mechanical imposition of structures nor the free intentional pursuit of individuals brings about the social practices (Navarro, 2006, p. 16). Objective structures do not unilaterally determine social practice; rather it is generated by the "mutual solicitation of position and disposition" (Wacquant, 1996, p. xvi). As the history of the group to which the individual belongs is inherent to the habitus, the field individuals land on limits the range of their actions and options (Harker *et al.*,

1990, p. 203-204). Individual agents receive and internalize structures inherited from the previous generations, and preserve them by reproducing in future generations (Robbins, 2000, p. 61). Individual choices and social practice do not straightforwardly conclude from rules, norms, patterns or constraints that monitor social life but also embody ambiguities and uncertainties (Swartz, 1997, p. 100). In order to make a thorough analysis of the society, practical cognition of individuals needs also be regarded as a significant part of the dissection; an analysis of the objective constraints of the structure does not suffice to grasp social strategies, unless assayed in consideration with the subjective intentions of the agent as well (Wacquant, 1996, p. xvi). An analysis of the society needs to regard the coexistence of the genesis of social structures and the disposition of the habitus of the agents who exist in these social structures (Harker *et al.*, 1990, p. 4). In that regard, individual and society are not formulated as two separate beings, but regarded as two dimensions of the same social reality coexisting relationally (Swartz, 1997, p. 96). This line of thinking allows us to decipher the creative, active, generative capacity of individuals in social life as we ponder the course of intention and inventiveness in practice (Harker *et al.*, 1990, p. 35).

Based on the framework Bourdieu presents, Giroux explains that schooling represents a major social site for the construction of subjectivities and dispositions (1983, p. 78). He further argues that either objectivist or subjectivist approaches are inadequate to develop a theory of schooling since they fail to go beyond one-sided approaches (Giroux, 1983, p. 75). However, in explaining the schooling, habitus can allow us to discuss the cultural field of the schools as a mediating force within the complex interplay of reproduction and resistance and to ruminate how people tackle the existing social order (Giroux, 1983, p. 86). In the opening pages of Bourdieu's one of major works, *the State Nobility*, Wacquant accentuates the dissection of practical taxonomies and activities through which teachers and students collectively produce everyday reality (1996, p. xvi). With this perspective in mind, the habitus of education allows me to analyze the communal field surrounding the schools through which processes of socialization can be captured to explain the complexity of

social practices. I argue that in explaining the liminal characteristics of the schools, habitus becomes a significant concept to show the social order encircling the schools. I present the assemblage of factors pertaining to the Armenian schools through habitus, because it refers to a link between structures, social practice and reproduction of the social order (Giroux, 1983, p. 89). It equips us with the lenses to examine how the cultural field of the schools breeds a soil for both reproduction and resistance as the schools maneuvered the existing social order unraveling around them.

Whereas the schools perform according to the constraints of a particular habitus and the perception towards their circumstances are filtered through the same habitus, they are also reactive to the change of their surrounding conditions (Harker *et al.*, 1990, p. 102). Habitus results from processes of socialization and that is why changes under certain circumstances and long periods of time in order to fit the surrounding social world where it evolves (Navarro, 2006, p. 16). Due to the fact that the communal organization gradually established in the Ottoman period still maintains its effective role in the operation of the schools, historically developed dispositions exert substantial influence on the behavior of people in the educational field. The interviews I conducted are designed in a way to unfold how certain communal edifices in governing the schools are maintained throughout time. On the other hand, the schools struggle to fit in their new surroundings. Perceptions burgeoning in the neoliberal era are also highly determinative in the habitus of education. Unpacking the social practices within and around the schools, the altering external conditions of the schools is a significant part of the study. Thereby, another novelty of this study derives from adopting a theory of habitus that carves out an indispensable space for studying the Armenian schools in a context in which they react to external conditions and incorporate ambiguities through time and space. This research aims to illuminate particulars and currents of the Armenian schools in their present condition. Thus, it becomes attainable to deduce causes and effects from the big picture as patterns resulting from the political atmosphere become more apparent to track down.

As much as the temporality of factors resulting in the current milieu of the Armenian schools, I also see a need to challenge Turkish and Armenian studies which analyze minorities and the minority schools in Turkey exclusively with reference to the state and its regulations. Adopting the theoretical framework that Bourdieu suggests offers manifold lenses to discuss the Armenian schools in the sense that unlike former studies explaining the operation of the minority schools within the limits of an all-encompassing Turkish state or with reference to a durable structure meticulously governing the schools, the theory of habitus opens up possibilities to see how exclusion, inclusion, solidarity, diversity unpack in the social life encircling the schools. It forms a basis through which the discussion of communal culture and practices, the way people interact with each other, the production of social identity, individual intentions in participating in the administration of the schools or the history of Armenians that generate the everyday reality of the Armenian schools becomes a possibility. This line of thinking warrants us to go beyond arguments regarding educational institutions as the vessels through which the state inscribes its ideology from top-down processes.

In the context of Turkey, through studies focusing on various aspects of daily life we already see the relevance of this perspective in comprehending the complexity of social life. Contesting former conventional studies center on the state apparatus or institutions in their analyses, Kandiyoti and Saktanber (2002) carve out a new space for cultural analysis to probe the complexity of social edifice. In a different discussion capturing how the politics and symbolism of secularism find new venues and justifications in private spaces, Özyürek (2007) highlights the resilience of the state in the context of Turkey by borrowing Steinmetz' take on the issue (1999), and argues that despite its diminishing sway, the state is still a significant actor in various areas, only in different forms (Steinmetz, 1999, p. 37). In a similar manner, in his attempt to remedy the deficiencies of the scholarship framing the state as all-encompassing in the Ottoman period, Fortna (2005)'s study becomes meaningful in spelling out the educational field of the Armenian community. He denounces arguments explaining schools as prisons of a mechanical and

brutal state or as spaces of domination crushing individuality. He argues that these arguments not only undermine the reading of the nuances of the transfiguring educational apparatus, but also hinder to see how power infiltrates into local contexts and quotidian practices (2005, p. 43). Referring to Certeau's "everyday resistance" and Bakhtin's "answerability" concepts, Fortna instead looks at the ways how everyday life works in schooling (2005).

Based on the framework these studies offer, I design my study in a way to tell the story of the Armenian schools from different angles covering everyday practices of cultural and educational life. Nevertheless, in doing so I do not underestimate the impact of state institutions as a sovereign power governing the minority schools. Acknowledging the interrupted attempts of state institutions to preserve the image of the state as an all-encompassing entity based on Turko-Islamic precepts, I suggest finding new governing mechanisms outside the limits of the state. With this perspective, this study aims to understand whether cultural empowerment and solidarity could be attainable in a context², which is historically molded by the Turko-Islamic principles of a nation state as the conflict it promotes in everyday lives of its non-Muslim citizens incessantly shape societal edifice of communal venues.

As I explain throughout this study, with such a perspective people who are involved in the operation of the schools either as students, teachers, parents or administrators cannot be regarded as passive recipients or simple outcomes of a structure. Rather, since operations of Armenian schools are more complex, the educational field of the Armenian commu-

² Here, I employ the word of solidarity to refer to ties that bind people together in a group by a psychological sense of unity as the members of this group share some form of awareness of shared interests or common responsibilities. In that regard, the way I use it, solidarity in this context is reminiscent of Durkheim's mechanical solidarity (1933/1997) that sees cohesion or integration in rather homogenous small scale societies. In this account, by cultural empowerment, on the other hand, I connote all attempts and efforts of self-determination with the purpose of undermining asymmetries or cultural divisions to ensure a culture of belonging and culture of awareness for its constituents.

nity harbors a variety of reasons, intentions or power plays that incessantly motivate dispositions of people who play a role in the reproduction of the educational system. I argue that if we want to understand whether and how solidarity or cultural empowerment that maintains the social and cultural life of the Armenian community could be attainable, bearing in mind the network of relationships is equally significant. Since one of the objectives of the concept of habitus is to suggest the individual as the “socialized body”, it demurs to see the individual in opposition to society (Swartz, 1997, p. 96). This perspective, I contend, brings in a newness to the literature as it goes beyond depictions of the schools and the Armenian community as passive victims to whom certain things happen. Although I acknowledge that the latitude of the schools is encircled by laws, regulations, curricula, central examinations or values defined by the market, I emphasize the fact that the processes governing the schools are not so straightforward. The actors who have a part in the schools are not role followers or norm-obeyers; rather, they are strategic improvisers who reply to circumstances (Swartz, 1997, p. 100). As regards, the distinctiveness of this study is to show the processes of how people react to opportunities and constraints they live in.

§ 1.5 Chapters

With the objective of unpacking the role and operation of the Armenian schools, the chapters of this study are designed to introduce the themes in an order that gradually peels layers and addresses discussions at different levels of analysis. In order to set the stage and pithily explain the historical backdrop of the schools, Chapter 2 tells the story of the schools from their establishment to their present day and examines the ways the ambiguous status of the Armenian schools developed over time. Planned as a descriptive chapter, this chapter aims to equip the reader with basic concepts, the interaction of actors involved and communal affairs in the field of education particularly at the incipient stages of the schools. Visiting the extended history of the schools from the Ottoman period to the present day Turkish Republic, I also review the transformation of the

schools in the grip of the modernization process and the responsibilities, predicaments or discussions unraveling around their transformation, so that the reader can have a grasp of how the surrounding economic, political and social atmosphere have an impact on the milieu of the schools. In this sense, instead of fixed or ahistorical entities the schools are portrayed with respect to educational trends recurrently refashioning their location in the centralized education system. In order to explain the current situation of the schools, the chapter concludes with a description of their bureaucratic functioning, educational regulations and other latest developments.

In Chapter 3, I ruminate how the Armenian schools are governed in the present day Turkey and unpack the legal domain of the schools in the terrain of a whirlwind of political changes in governance emerging predominantly from the neoliberal shift of Turkey. Instead of studies that explain the operation of the schools with respect to an evil *raison d'état*, this chapter focuses on the quotidian domain of legality in governing the Armenian schools. In this sense, the chapter brings a new perspective to the table in that it offers lenses to see the governing of the Armenian schools not as a straightforward relationship exercising influence from an all-encompassing nation state towards its minorities. Rather, it addresses the schools with respect to their tenuous domain of everyday practices and accentuates legal ambiguity in governing the schools. I conceptualize the Turkish state as a meandering state to argue as both forms of sovereign power and governmentality, precision and ambiguity, continuity and rupture prevail in governing the schools. As this chapter revisits the schools with respect to the neoliberal shift in education, it illustrates how new forms of governing perform within the schools along with established precepts of the nation state.

In Chapter 4, I delve into communal aspects of the schools and delineate the configuration of social interactions which renders solidarity in this particular context attainable. Depicting the network of relations engulfing the schools by an allegory of familial culture, the chapter unravels empowering networks which may help Armenian culture and identity

endure throughout the years. In doing so, the examples, events, narratives that the chapter articulates also manifest complex relations that take place in a family setting. As I discuss the relations unfolding in a familial culture, I also incorporate how different actors stimulate change in the operation of the schools. Exhibiting the ways the private sphere overlaps with the communal sphere, another contribution of this chapter to the overall narrative is to contend that the dynamics regarding the private sphere of the family also have an influence on the edifice of the Armenian community when overseeing the school affairs.

Chapter 5 furthers the discussions initially started in previous chapters and gives some thought to the impact of communal politics on the operation of the schools. Disclosing some nuances pertaining to the educational field of the Armenian community, in this chapter I elucidate the influence on the educational field of the foundation boards or certain notables who have a say in the operation of the schools. The objective of this chapter is to address the ways power performs within an educational field in which decisions are molded by the communal edifice and relations unfolding in it. Thereby, this chapter makes a great contribution in understanding the operation of the Armenian schools in the sense that at odds with the prevailing understanding which sees those who are involved in the administration of the schools as a monolithic and homogeneous group, I focus on fractions and disagreements in educational as well as communal affairs in order to pinpoint the elaborateness of this habitus.

Finally in Chapter 6, I talk about the perceptions and discussions around the sustainability of Armenian cultural life that I mention throughout the other chapters in bits and pieces but never articulate clearly. The chapter aims to unpack the impact of the Armenian schools on the Armenian identity and its diverse forms of re-articulation with respect to the altering socio-political context surrounding the schools. By this objective, I not only intend to revisit the prevailing contemporary take on the conceptualization of the Armenian identity at intra-communal and individual levels, but also to display tacit processes of self-meaning formation. I argue that unveiling these processes help us comprehend

the perceived identities, cultures or histories that reflect the currents of the Armenian schools.

At the end, I conclude these chapters by a short commentary on which terms and to what extent we refer to solidarity, cooperation, cultural sustainability, empowerment or any other process that might help Armenian culture and identity sustain to this very day in the context of the Armenian schools as opposed to conflicts unraveling around them and to the fact they stand in a precarious state. The discussion of these subjects is not so straightforward or for that matter, as much as their surrounding context, the processes pertaining to the Armenian schools are by no means stable or fixed. Nevertheless, I argue that unpacking this educational habitus allows us to take on the lenses to grasp the possibilities for the tenacity and resilience of Armenian culture with respect to its socio-political climate.

Reviewing Past and Present of the Armenian Schools

The main objective of this second chapter is to tell the extended story of the Armenian schools in Turkey and to introduce their current structure and characteristics. In order to paint an elaborative picture describing the Armenian schools, the chapter is based on a framework that centers socio-political developments of the modernization process in particular and takes cognizance of the educational reforms and regulations. Considering that the formation of the Armenian schools goes back to the Ottoman Empire, the chapter introduces certain developments pertaining to the educational sphere of the Ottoman Empire as well as some dynamics shaping the empire's socio-cultural context.

The modernization process, which carried its weight chiefly with the reforms in the 19th century, entailed concomitant shifts for the educational sphere in the Ottoman Empire; thereby, altered the surrounding conditions of the Armenian schools among other schools. In order to be able to give a meaningful context to the developments centering the Armenian schools, I will briefly visit the literature on the modernization of education in the Ottoman Empire, and pinpoint some developments that exigencies and contingencies of the era elicited in the sphere of education in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. With reference to these discussions, I plan to give a comprehensive context to the transfig-

uration of the Armenian schools as they veered from religious to Westernized education, which eventually furnished the current edifice of the schools. Although my main purpose with visiting the literature on the backdrop of the historical formation of the Armenian schools is to show how the currents of the schools were shaped initially by the reform period in the Ottoman Empire and later by socio-political developments in the Republic of Turkey, I argue that recapitulating their historical background will also provide us the perspective to discuss root causes of current predicaments of the minority schools.

Explaining the reasons of the transformation from the community schools in the Ottoman Empire to the minority schools in the Republic of Turkey, Somel (2013) divides the history of the community schools into seven subcategories: from 1774 to 1856 the period of decentralized administration when the Sublime Porte did not have a systematic policy toward the community schools, from 1856 to 1878 the period of harmonization when the Sublime Porte desired to tune the community schools into an overarching legal framework in line with its Ottomanism ideology, from 1876 to 1908 the period of auditing when the regime of Abdulhamid II perceived the community schools as a threat and wanted to control them, from 1908 to 1912 the period of quest when in the relatively liberal atmosphere of the incipient stages of the Young Turk revolution democratic harmonization was sought, from 1912 to 1918 the period of elimination when the unionist dictatorship endeavored to eliminate non-Muslim community schools in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars and Ottoman *coup d'état*, from 1918 to 1923 the period of armistice when multilateralism prevailed, and finally from 1923 to 1925 the period of the unification of education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat*) when the “minority” rights introduced by the Lausanne Treaty were ruled out by series of regulations and laws including the law on the unification of education. Somel’s framework offers a powerful vantage point to comprehend the socio-political changes engulfing the community schools as he meticulously maps out the transfiguration of the educational sphere cognizant of the altering dynamics.

It goes without saying that Somel’s analysis (2013) is also richly suggestive here to grasp the particular history of the Armenian schools as

his periodization captures the whirlwind of changes with respect to the non-Muslim schools. However, for the purposes of this research and to exclusively focus on the Armenian schools, I prefer to keep the historical background rather simple and elucidate their milieu under three main subtitles by liberally paying attention to historical periodization. The narrative that I put together in this chapter by visiting various seminal works written on the history of education in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey is rife with palpable events and details pertaining to the Armenian schools to spell out specific regulations and practices applying to them. However, the historical formation, expansion and transformation of the Armenian schools as I present in this chapter is not all-inclusive. My intention is not to give a comprehensive list of the schools or educational associations founded so far. Rather, I purport to pinpoint some prominent and salient examples to such an extent that they can depict the overall atmosphere and milieu of the era carving out a new space for the Armenian schools.

On that note, I will start with explaining some characteristics of the Armenian community and the administration of communal matters including religious education in the Ottoman Empire. In the second section, in order to paint a picture of the context I will unpack the ways the modernization process in the Ottoman Empire elicited a concomitant shift in the sphere of education. As I elucidate the restructuring of the Armenian schools with reference to the exigencies and contingencies of the era, I will also spell out the ramifications of the educational regulations for the community schools. Finally in the third section, I will delineate the steps taken by the Turkish state to centralize the education system, and describe the present milieu of the Armenian schools in reference to my field notes. Thereby, this chapter will provide a descriptive basis for the following chapters to build on.

Although as aforementioned the initial aim of this chapter is to give a context to today's Armenian schools in Turkey, it is not my sole purpose for writing this chapter. By unpacking the backdrop of their historical formation and transfiguration, my secondary but perhaps more significant objective is to accentuate the ways the ambiguous status of the Armenian

schools developed over time and to show that the reasons for their amorphous manifestations lie in their past. Today, the schools are regarded as an exception or anomaly to the modern Turkish education system. Unraveling the history of the Armenian schools from the times of the Ottoman Empire, when they were established for religious education of their communities, to their modernization and secularization, this chapter aims to show how their externality is constructed over the years. In this sense, I contend that looking at the historicity of the Armenian schools is conducive to demystifying their marginality in the current Turkish education system. Capturing the historical development of the schools does not only help us probe the historical roots of their current structure but also more importantly to unpack aspects engendering these schools categorically different today.

Having said that, unpacking the questionable representation of the minority schools' particularity can also provide us the perspective to be able to challenge the image of the Turkish modernization reclaiming itself in the sphere of education as well-disciplined, distinct and certain. Despite its image to be all comprehensive and standard, tracking down the history of the Armenian schools proves to us that the Turkish education system holds onto the legacy of its precedents while blending this legacy with global trends.

On a similar note, I argue that focusing solely on the historical heritage of the Armenian schools breeds a nurturing soil to portray them as archaic and out of context as if the precepts of the era do not apply to them. The paucity of analysis on the current situation of the Armenian schools contributes to the establishment of this perspective. I believe that is why my day-to-day conversations regarding my fieldwork startled many people who were not very familiar with the functioning of the Armenian schools. Surprisingly enough, these people were not conventionally accustomed to associate the Armenian schools with the central examination system or the ramifications of the neoliberalization of education. Rather, the schools are believed to belong solely to a historical realm. This approach often impedes capturing the educational bottle-

necks of the schools in the era of neoliberalism and disregards their current predicaments. That is why I suggest looking at their historical reality in a way to complement their present and to unriddle their retrospective representation. I argue that connecting the past of the schools to their currents will eliminate this representation and open up a more eloquent space to scrutinize their setting. In that sense, although I refer to former regulations and laws to explain the present structure of the schools in this chapter, I will accentuate that the underlying causes of their current situation also reside in the present.

§ 2.1 Armenian Community and Religious Education

The administration of different communities and the durability of the larger structure in the Ottoman Empire can only be grasped cognizant of its *millet* system. Karpas (1973) describes this system allowing the coexistence of different communities as a religious-communal organization, which distinguished various groups within the population with respect to their ethno-religious affiliations (1973, p. i). According to this administrative structure, the non-Muslim communities could practice their religion and culture by a *dhimmi*¹ status unlike the Muslims within the Empire who were ruled by the Islamic law (Bayır, 2017, p. 36). Although this administrative structure allowed certain communities to be ruled with respect to their religious preferences outside the realm of the Islamic law, Bayır advises not to see this legal pluralism through a Muslim versus non-Muslim dichotomy (2017, p. 33). She foregrounds the fact that in spite of the significance of religious preferences in this communal organization and their preponderance, religion was not taken into consideration as the only criterion. Rather, the system was designed in a way that took account of variegated aspects of the population including their cultural, ethnic, economic, linguistic, regional or other differences (Bayır, 2017, p. 33). In

¹ Kevorkian interprets this term as “protected nonbelievers” and further explains that communities with the *dhimmi* status pay a special tax and follow collective limitations in return to openly practicing their religion (1969, p. 25).

that sense, the social configuration generated by the *millet* system was not an institutional structure with its well-defined, explicit boundaries; instead, it was the sum of a series of regulations altering across time or space, varying from context to context (Koçunyan, 2016, p. 73; Braude, 1982). Moreover, it also meant that the administrative system was not central; rather, it was based on legal pluralism which was conducive to specific characteristics of the communities to be the determinative factors in their ruling (Bayır, 2017, p. 34). Each of these communities was autonomous in the administration of their civil matters that traditionally fell into the realm of religion such as marriage, divorce, inheritance or education (Somel, 2005a, p. 254).

In their comprehensive work focusing on the Armenian socio-cultural life in the Ottoman Empire before 1915, Kevorkian and Paboudjian foregrounds the Islamic law as the political and societal mechanism generating the authority of the state in a religious garb, and further depicts the Armenian Patriarchate as an extension of this authority established with this exact objective (2012, p. 12). The Armenian Patriarchate² was the representative authority in the community that bridged the community to the sultanate, and regulated civil matters in his name. Furthermore, having religion as the main reference point of civil matters, if not the only one, the clergy of communities was assigned as the authority over civil matters as well as ecclesiastical issues. As long as the respective clergy held the administration in Christian communities, it connoted the predominance of the church over communal matters (Somel, 2005a, p. 254).

Education was also an extension of this authority. Like other communal matters in non-Muslim communities, the administration of seminary schools was subjected to the jurisdiction of their governing clergy (Somel, 2005a, p. 254). Communal educational networks corresponded with the requests of clerical clusters (Somel, 2005a, p. 270). Due to the weight of the clergy, education was substantially religious education which was essentially designed to teach reading the Bible and other similar supplementary religious texts. However, the equation was not so

² Պատրիարքութիւն Յայոց

straightforward. The impact of the *amiras*, the upper class and notables of the Armenian community, was also noteworthy in communal affairs. As they played a significant role in finance, they identified themselves in good measure with the Ottoman bureaucracy (Karpas, 1973, p. 89). Their proximity to Ottoman bureaucracy and more importantly their wealth procured the means for their involvement in the educational affairs as they became benevolent figures of the community and increasingly consolidated their place through their financial support. In such a context, until the secularization of the schools, the teachers in the Armenian community schools were mostly priests and the schools were funded by the *amiras* (Somel, 2005b, p. 93). Acknowledging the power play in communal affairs which colossally influenced the schools, I meticulously discuss this subject and revisit the role of the *amiras* thoroughly in the following chapters and explain the intra-community dynamics.

In order to further describe the religious education in non-Muslim schools, Somel accentuates the similarity of the instruction at non-Muslim schools to Muslim Quranic schools as both of which were dominated by the instruction of religious subjects with the purpose of inculcating the youth with religious values (2005a, p. 254). Just like the Islamic education, the education in the Armenian community was not standardized or structured. Although the Armenian community had an ancient community structure that thrived over many centuries, it was bereft of any functioning educational network up until the nineteenth century when finally with the modernization of education certain communal institutions were introduced to regulate the realm of education (Somel, 2005a, p. 265). Education connoted religious education offered by irregular local seminaries, first of which was believed to be introduced by a personal initiative of a priest in Istanbul at the end of the 15th century (Özdoğan *et al.*, 2009, p. 182). Before this date the education was tantamount to a few sporadically founded monastery schools nearby churches or the instruction offered by teachers wandering around in the Empire, widely known as *vartabeds* [վարդապետ] (Somel, 2005a, p. 265).

In addition to irregular classrooms for religious instruction, with the development of a curriculum the 18th century also witnessed the establishment of new schools. The 18th century marked the restructuring of Armenian education as irregular instruction left its place to relatively institutionalized education in the seminaries. Tekeli and İlkin point out the 18th century as a noteworthy step in communal education when a new school structure was introduced in the Armenian educational sphere and the number of the Armenian schools started to accelerate by the developments (1993, p. 35). Despite the lack of a comprehensive chronological list of the schools established in the era, the existing scholarship on the history of the Armenian schools offers some insights about the schools founded under the orbit of churches. Looking at some of these schools gives us an idea about the education during that period and about their smooth transformation into more structured teaching methods.

For instance, the historical monastery school Amlorti (Amrdolu) in the Bitlis region advanced its education methods in 1710 and incorporated natural sciences classes into its curriculum alongside its religious education (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 35). In 1715 in the Üsküdar neighborhood of Istanbul, a school with theology and philosophy classes in its curriculum was opened for the education of clergy candidates (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 35). In 1720 again in Istanbul, this time with the initiative of Patriarch Hovhannes IX Golod of Bitlis³, another school was founded in one of the additional buildings of the Surp Garabed Church⁴, and later within the compass of the same church site a monastery was built for the visiting ecclesiastics to Istanbul (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 116, 117).⁵ In

³ Պատրիարք Յովհաննես Թ. Կոլոս Բաղիշեցի

⁴ Սուրբ Կարապետ Եկեղեցի

⁵ After its restoration and rebuild in different periods, in 1938 in the Republic of Turkey, the monastery became the famous Cemarane School (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 116, 117). In the 1999-2000 education year, due to its inadequate number of students the school was merged with the Kalfayan elementary school, which still continues its education with the name 'Kalfayan Elementary and Middle School'.

1741, a Patriarchate Academy and a girl school were also opened in Istanbul (Somel, 2013, p. 39). In 1752, an Armenian middle school was founded in the Kumkapı neighborhood of Istanbul (Somel, 2013, p. 39).

Despite this progress, the actual milestone of Armenian communal education was planted by the education reform of Selim III. In 1789, Selim III granted his non-Muslim subjects the right to establish their own community schools apart from the seminaries functioning under the auspices of the churches. With the new educational regulation, the first known official Armenian community school was established by *Amira* Mgrdich Miricanyan⁶ in 1790 in the Kumkapı neighborhood of Istanbul (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 35). This initiative was followed by the establishment of schools for boys and girls in Pera neighborhood of Istanbul by Takvaz and Serope Minasyan, Surp Lusavoriç Church School in the Langa neighborhood of Istanbul, Surp Hrltagabet Church School in the Balat neighborhood of Istanbul, some other church schools in the Ortaköy, Kuruçeşme, Samatya, Üsküdar neighborhoods of Istanbul and the Mesropyan School in the Izmir province (Somel, 2013, p. 41). This new regulation not only rendered the blossoming of community schools possible but it also swiftly multiplied the number of all kinds of schools both in Istanbul and Anatolia (Melson, 1982, p. 504).

The expansion of the community schools in Istanbul and Anatolia was procured by the financial sponsorship of *amiras* and endorsed by their involvement (Somel, 2013, p. 39). In the 1803-1812 period Armenian community schools started to offer free education in all neighborhoods of Istanbul (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 35). In later years in Istanbul, in 1818 the first modern divinity school, in 1820 the first vocational industry school for girls, in 1828 the first nursery, in 1821 Samatya Girls' School followed this wind (Somel, 2013, p. 41). Furthermore, in 1824, by a circular letter Patriarch Garabet III of Balat⁷ asked the Armenian community in Anatolia to establish schools in their communities (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 35). By

⁶ Մկրտիչ Միրիջանյան (Շնորհք ամիրան)

⁷ Պատրիարք Կարապետ Գ. Պալատեցի

the acceleration of this impetus, the Armenian community schools increasingly emerged all over Anatolia. Church schools opened in 1834 in the provinces of Adapazarı, Izmit, Merzifon, Manisa, Bafra, Kayseri, Eğin, Erzurum could also be recalled in that regard (Somel, 2013, p. 41). According to the records of the Patriarchate in 1834 the number of Armenian schools reached 120 in Anatolia (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 106). Slightly different from the educational structures of church schools, modern education methods only slowly penetrated into community schools and became part of their education. One of the examples of these schools was the Semerciyan Cemaran School⁸, which was established in 1838 in the Üsküdar neighborhood of Istanbul as the first boarding academy. The founder of the school, *Amira* Bezciyan, unconventionally banned beating in the school which was a common practice in the pre-modern education and accentuated the importance of speaking Armenian at all times (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 106).

Despite the refashioning of the edifice of the educational sphere, the religious texture of the community schools did not alter colossally. Rather, the education was designed to persist undergirding the precepts of the Apostolic Church. As the authority of the Apostolic church was threatened by the missionary activities of the Catholic and Protestant churches in the Ottoman Empire, the community schools serving under the auspices of the Apostolic church were equipped with the task of forging the doctrines of the Apostolic church to inhibit the expansion of secular impact of the Enlightenment ideas as well as missionary activities (Somel, 1993, p. 41). Thereby, at the beginning of the 19th century, the Armenian educational network was still relatively in the grip of the Patriarchate and the *amiras* because of the religious authority of the former and the financial superiority of the latter.

However, at the beginning of the 19th century the condensation of this coalition over education was about to fall apart. Regardless of the ardent involvement of the church in communal affairs, the exigencies and con-

⁸ ՄԵՄԷՐՃԵԱՆ ՃԵՄԱՐԱՆ ՎԱՐԺԱՐԱՆ

tingencies of the era led to the burgeoning of a new socio-political standing in the Armenian community and begot an indelible transformation for communal affairs. Armenian intellectuals who were inspired by the Western science and democratic values challenged the coalition of the clergy and *amiras* and waged a war against the legitimacy of *amiras* until their resignation in 1841 (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 12). When the aforementioned educational reforms of Selim III were introduced, these reforms bolstered the restructuring of the educational sphere which was on the verge of a metamorphosis as a result of the increasing momentum of the Armenian renaissance. The flourishing of cultural activities coupled with the introduction of community schools, and this led to a new educational edifice to emerge.

The developments of the 19th century bred a nurturing soil for the Armenian community to undergo an enhancement in its economic status, regrowth in its political assertiveness and blossoming in cultural activities; which was later called as the renaissance of the Armenian community (Melson, 1982, p. 503). Along with its variegated aspects resulting in economic, political or cultural ramifications, the Armenian renaissance brought about a substantial advancement of literacy in Armenian, elaboration of the press, and multiplication of literary works in the vernacular Armenian (Melson, 1982, p. 504). Foregrounded as the literary language of the community, the vernacular rebuffed the precedence of the classical Armenian (գրաբար [krapar]), which was traditionally associated with the clergy. Moreover, it carved a new space for the growth of national consciousness. While the Armenian cultural revival eventually resulted in the production of a national history and geography as well as the revival of memories of Armenian dynasties, newly emerging literary works proliferated by the printing of textbooks and expansion of an Armenian school system (Libaridian, 2011, p. 97). The awakening of national consciousness found its place in literary movements, pervaded the Empire with the establishment of schools, and manifested itself in the emergence of associations promoting national awareness (Hovannisian, 1967, p. 1).

The flourishing of the Armenian press in the 18th century Ottoman Empire was one of the buttressing factors that engendered this renaissance (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 77). The spring of the Armenian press was mainly initiated by the Mekhitarists⁹, an Armenian catholic congregation which was founded by an Armenian priest from the Sivas province, Mkhitar Sepasdatsi¹⁰. In 1715, when the Mekhitarist Order fled from the Ottoman Empire and moved to Venice, the priests started to catalyze the conditions for the Armenian awakening. The Roman church fostered scholarly ventures of Armenians of the Ottoman Empire (Stone, 1984, p. 12). The establishment of the Mekhitarist Order in 1717 in the San Lazzaro Island near Venice bolstered the emergence of the Armenian press (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 77). While the Mekhitarist Order kept its status under the patronage of the Latin Church, it became the center of where significant scientific scholarship of Europe was translated into Armenian, published and distributed to the Armenian world (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 35). With its two bases in Venice and Vienna, this movement vigorously contributed to the Armenian national consciousness by their translations from European languages to Armenian, reprints of former Armenian literary works and numerous important publications among which the renowned dictionary of Armenian language (Բառգիրք Հայկազեան Լեզուի [Parkirk Haygazyan Lezui]) can be mentioned here (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 35).

Since the printing press was not allowed in the Ottoman lands, the Mekhitarists were not alone in their attempts to generate alternative ways to publish and distribute books in Armenian. Due to the prohibition of the printing press, approximately for two hundred years, the printing bases of the Armenian clergy were installed in various cities such as Venice, Livorno, Marseille, Amsterdam or other trade centers (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 77). Their numerous publications could reach Minor Asia and Armenian-populated areas and made a great contribution to the development of schooling (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 77). By all

⁹ Մխիթարեաններ

¹⁰ Մխիթար Սեբաստացի

means, the schooling was based on religious education trying to put forward the Christian faith and Armenian identity in a predominantly Muslim geography; however, these attempts also granted easier access to publications, guidebooks and maps which promoted nationalism ideas and introduced new perspectives for the newly emerging commerce bourgeoisie (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 77).

At the end of the 18th century, education reforms of Selim III provided the appropriate conditions for the Mekhitarists to be able to amplify their contribution to Armenian intellectual life and education. With the momentum initiated by the Mekhitarists and the involvement of intellectuals from Istanbul, the first modern schools were founded in the Ottoman Empire and they increasingly replaced religious schools over time (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 77). Today, the Pangaltı Mkhitaryan School¹¹ which continues to offer education at preschool, elementary, middle and high school levels, was founded with this spirit for male students in 1825 (Tekeli and Ilkin, 1993, p. 35). The wind that the Mekhitarists started with their contribution to the Armenian press did not only accelerate the establishment of Catholic schools or even undermine the monopoly of the Patriarchate but it also ignited a broader impact on the society by introducing secular ideologies of the West to the Armenian community.

As I aforementioned, the secularization and modernization of Armenian education was mainly considered with respect to the indelible impact of the introduction and adoption of European Enlightenment ideas on Armenian intellectuals. In order to accentuate the reasons why the modernization of education was rapidly embraced by the public, Ortaylı (1983/2018) additionally underscores the socio-economic boiling points of the era. Despite the demur of the ecclesiastics to a transition to secular education, with the intensification of relations with Europe and commerce networks the newly emerging bourgeoisie called for a transfiguration in the educational sphere (Ortaylı, 1983/2018 p. 196). Religious education came to be regarded as not responsive enough in meeting the

¹¹ Բանկալթի Մխիթարեան Վարժարան

needs emanating from the modernizing world. On the other hand, the consolidation of the new bourgeoisie class did not only transform the realm of education by generating demand for Westernized education, but also their increasing wealth and clout gave them the perfect opportunity to ask for a say in the communal affairs. Beginning mainly with the 1830s, Armenian artisans and craftsmen started to seek the ways to claim their share in the administration of the community (Somel, 2013, p. 42). Instead of *amiras* and religious authorities, Armenian artisans and craftsmen got involved to financially support the community schools (Somel, 2005b, p. 93). Their involvement and increasing influence would further accelerate the modernization process of the administration of the community and secularization of the community schools in the following years.

When the European Enlightenment values penetrated into the public and national consciousness became more widespread among non-Muslim intellectuals, the political significance of community schools soared proportionally (Somel, 2005a, p. 255). In order to meet the new educational standards and advance the quality of education students from the Armenian community were sent for their education to Paris in 1810, to Moscow in 1816, to Tbilisi in 1823 and to other European cultural capitals (Vahapoğlu, 1990, p. 10). The impact of the intellectuals who were educated in Western universities and influenced by democratic values later paved the way for the consolidation of modern educational institutions (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 12). The inner structure and curricula of the schools were progressively altered and the number of the schools escalated dramatically (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 186). However, up until the 19th century we could talk about the emergence and existence of Armenian schools almost exclusively in Istanbul; only in later years, with the push factors of missionary activities the community schools expanded to the cities of Anatolia where the number of the Armenian population predominated (Somel, 2005b, p. 93). As a part of the Yankee pietism, the missionary schools increasingly entailed Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches to amplify their educational efforts in order to compete with missionary schools (Stone, 1984, p. 70). With the expansion of missionary schools in the Balkans, Anatolia

and in Arab-speaking provinces, enlightenment ideas infiltrated into non-Muslim populations which eventually increased the number of the schools in those regions (Somel, 2005a, p. 255). Threatened by the secular and Westernized education of the missionary schools, the establishment of modern and national Christian and Jewish community schools which would be equipped with modern curricula including foreign language education appeared as the solution to emulate missionary schools that were eager to receive students from those communities (Ortaylı, 1983/2018, p. 196). The long term and diverse contacts that the Armenian community built with the West enhanced their educational situation in the course of time as opposed to the other subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire (Stone, 1984, p. 39).¹² The missionary movement led to the establishment of the Academy at the Armenian Patriarchate in 1827 in order to train clergy, which would plant the seeds of the Armenian Evangelical Church in the following years (Arpee, 1936, p. 150).

In a nutshell, in addition to the global context unraveling around them two important complementary factors propelled the Armenian community to refine its education system; the values that largely American Protestant missionary schools promoted and the political competition within the Armenian community that resulted in the leverage of a new class over communal affairs (Somel, 2005a, p. 265). Evidently, this process went hand-in-hand with the modernization reforms of the Ottoman Empire snowballing mainly after the Imperial Rescript of 1839 and proliferating into different realms of political, social and cultural life of the empire. While the edifice of the Armenian community began its irrevocable restructuring, the Ottoman state was about to introduce momentous regulations that would result in the incorporation of the Western

¹² In fact, in his notes on the history of the missions of the American Board of Commissioners Foreign Mission (ABCFM) published in 1872 the American minister Rufus Anderson described the educational situation of the Armenian community in the 1830s as “The Armenians were found to be well supplied with spelling books, reading books, arithmetic and grammars in the modern languages, also with works on geometry and trigonometry. There was, therefore, much less preparatory work to be done for them in the way of education than was supposed.” (p. 101).

standards into the education system. In order to paint a picture of the Ottoman context when the Armenian educational infrastructure was consolidated with the adoption of regulatory institutions and the increase of the school numbers, in what follows I will pithily mention certain reforms and regulations regarding the modernization of education in the Ottoman Empire. The reforms regulating the realm of education in the Ottoman Empire did not only alter the conditions for the education of Muslim populations. As they were designed with an Ottomanist ideology to bring various constituents of the Empire to a shared denominator, they also intended to regulate and audit the community schools with the objective of promoting this ideology. Therefore, I suggest that reviewing reforms which refashioned the surrounding conditions around the community schools can help us grasp the ways the educational networks of the community were built and sustained.

§ 2.2 Reform Period and the Modernization of Education

In this section, a dispute about the prior discovery on the history of the modernization or secularization of education in the Ottoman Empire is not my intention. Such a large objective would be beyond my research interests. There are already many comprehensive works written on this subject (Cevat, 1922; Atuf, 1931; Ergin, 1939; Ünat, 1964; Koçer, 1970; Kodaman, 1980; Tekeli and İlkin, 1993; Deringil, 1998; Fortna, 2002; Sakaoğlu, 2003; Somel, 2019) including some work focusing particularly on the history of non-Muslim community schools (Vahapoğlu, 1990; Ertuğrul, 1998; Deri, 2009; Young, 2001). Considering the broadness of the subject, I also do not purport to summarize these works to explain the Ottoman context of the Armenian schools. Rather, I will pinpoint some of the important events that mark a noteworthy change in the administration of the Armenian schools and regulate their affairs. As much as looking at the influences of altering intra-community dynamics on educational affairs, this section aims to pay regard to the configuration of educational institutions and networks that brought about new measures for the community schools in the Ottoman Empire.

At the turn of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was still a force to be reckoned with that could not be pushed aside, and at the time same it was the 'sick man of Europe' in financial crises resulted from the penetration of Western interests and that was why whose demise was expected any moment (Deringil, 1998, p. 3). As the Ottomans had been aware of the new winds started by the Western European ideas since the French Revolution, Europe became a source of emulation for the enlightened autocracy whose values should be transplanted into the empire starting with the *Tanzimat* reforms (Deringil, 1998, p. 20). When the 1839 imperial rescript *Tanzimat Fermanı* was declared with the purpose of the reorganization of the administrative realm, the modern state, as we understand it today, was started to be constituted with the introduction of mass schooling, a postal service, railways, lighthouses, clock towers, lifeboats, museums, censuses, birth certificates, passports, armies or bureaucracies (Deringil, 1998, p. 9). Later, the proclamation of reform edict *Islahat Fermanı* became a key step towards the implementation of the *Tanzimat* Edict, as it promised equality for non-Muslim communities as long as they owed allegiance to their Ottoman identity (Mardin, 1992/2005, p. 87). The *Islahat* Edict demystified the *Tanzimat* Edict by introducing regulations for communal affairs of non-Muslim communities and reforms in variegated areas from education, judiciary, religion, to security. The legal equality of Muslim and non-Muslim, the rule of law and the state's assurance to protect the lives, property and honor of its subjects were a new departure from the familiar edifice of the earlier periods (Deringil, 1998, p. 9). Perhaps not so surprisingly, this new departure upset certain fragments of the communities. As much as the Muslims who interpreted these reforms as the loss of their superior status, the non-Muslim religious leaders also demurred to the legal reforms being afraid that those reforms would undermine the existing hierarchy in their respective communities and destabilize their control in communal governance (Göçek, 2015, p. 99).

The imperial rescripts resulted from a need to prevent the possible dissolution of the Empire while bringing various communities of the Empire together under an overarching Ottoman identity (Koçak, 1985, p.

486). At the beginning of the 19th century, the Ottoman bureaucracy presumed that by these series of administrative, legal and economic reforms numerous cultural subunits of the Ottoman Empire could be dissolved into an Ottoman identity (Mardin, 1992/2005, p. 12). Secularizing the *millet* system which was largely based on religious differences, this new Ottoman identity was believed to offer the means to override religious identities and create a powerful common ground to bind various constituents of the Empire together (Bayır, 2017, p. 48). One of the ways to promote this new identity was to pave the way for the involvement of laymen into communal affairs and that is why decrease, if possible eliminate, the influence of clergymen on their respective communities (Bayır, 2017, p. 47). Thereby, the secular edifice which was based on modern bureaucracy and a shared Ottoman identity could equip the Empire with novel technologies of governing. Adoption of Western values and standards not only could help the administrative structure of the Empire be secularized but also could provide the means to inculcate the youth with the patriotic fervor of the Ottomanist ideology. With this motivation, along with administrative and legal reforms the Ottoman state adopted a systematic program of education to mold its subjects with an Ottoman identity into citizens (Deringil, 1998, p. 93).

In the long run, they failed to achieve this objective. The elimination of the clerical authority resulted in unforeseen consequences and led to the adoption of secular ethnic identities, which later crystallized the boundaries among these communities even stronger than before (Somel, 2005, p. 96). However, by these reforms many Western institutions, including a new education system, were introduced to the Empire (Mardin, 1992/2005, p. 12). Although prior to the *Tanzimat* era, reformists endorsed a noteworthy educational progress to meet the pressing needs of the era, only after the *Tanzimat* reforms modern education started to burgeon (Erdoğan, 1995, p. 7). With the opinion that the power of the state could only be reinstated by educational reforms, in the Mahmood II period education started to be modernized as primary education became mandatory, schools for medicine, military and military music education were opened, students were sent to Europe for education, the medicine school

embraced French instruction, the chamber of translation was constituted, the publication of *Takvim-i Vekayi* was initiated, and junior high schools (*rüşdiye okulları*) were opened (Erdoğan, 1995, p. 7, 8). With the *Tanzimat* reforms, the modernization of the armed forces and administration carved a space for modern education to flourish in the Ottoman Empire, where religious education used to predominate separately in each community before (Ortaylı, 1983/2018, p. 190). In the course of time, dissolving the authority of the clergymen over their communities would contribute to the modern schooling to outstrip religious education in those communities and European values gradually to penetrate into the Empire, albeit on different scales.

Educational reforms introduced as a segment of the larger reorganization reforms were inspired by and even based on Western European models. However, the establishment of educational institutions did not solely depend on a straightforward appropriation of Western values and institutions. On this matter, Deringil foregrounds the misconception towards the rescripts which were accepted almost entirely as the joint outcome of Western pressure and the fervor of the grand vizier Reşid Paşa, and addresses the scholarship unraveling inner dynamics within the Ottoman ruling circles to challenge this perspective (1998, p. 45). Focusing on Abu-Manneh's work (1994), Deringil accentuates the input of the young Sultan Abdülmecid and his close circle of tutors and advisors into the background of the *Tanzimat* Edict (1998, p. 45). Thereby, he provides a more sophisticated perspective to discuss the context of the reforms, which also help us grasp the condensation of variegated factors at play in their emergence.

In this respect, it is significant to reckon that in addition to external push factors, the reforms were the outcome of various reasons and cumulative weight of the economic trends of the era. While the empire developed ways of cohabitating Western values with its conventional approaches, the paradigm shift in economic structures surfaced a larger need for the adoption of new measures and methods. The demand for a new education system also emanated from the political-economic shift in the Ottoman Empire. Particularly towards the end of the 19th century,

when the establishment of factories, railroad projects and urban infrastructure companies elicited the emergence of a new working class, new economic activities and the transformation of the class structure required new measures to be taken in the educational realm (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 57). The steps taken for the introduction of a new education system was a response to the needs of the era. These new demands initially led to the establishment of vocational schools. Therefore, the first civil modern schools in Istanbul were vocational schools, which were established in 1839 primarily with the objective of training public servants with desired qualifications to be hired in the newly emerging administrative structure (Somel, 2019, p. 45). Moreover, this drive was further accelerated, when the need for educated persons in commerce led trade notables to invest in secular education flourishing outside the domination of the religious authorities (Tekeli, 1985, p. 458).

Up until the *Tanzimat* era, there was no momentous change in the educational sphere and particularly until 1845 there was no organization to coordinate educational matters in the Empire (Erdoğan, 1995, p. 8). In order to centrally oversee the schools now extending in communities and varying in regions, the Ottoman state saw a need for the formation of a central educational council. In parallel with the modernization efforts of the *Tanzimat* era, in 1838 the Office of Public Works (*Meclis-i Umur-ı Nafia*) was established as an initial step to procure a modern structure for educational regulations (Erdoğan, 1995, p. 18). As the establishment of more schools, education materials, advancement of curricula, audit of teachers and schools increasingly became a requirement, so as structurally more sophisticated councils were needed; chronologically in 1839 the Office of Junior High Schools (*Mekatib-i Rüşdiye Nezaretî*), in 1841 the Council of Public Education (*Meclis-i Maarif-i Umumiye*), in 1845 the Temporary Council of Education (*Muvakkat Meclis-i Maarif*), in 1846 the Permanent Council of Education (*Daimi Meclis-i Maarif*), and in 1847 the Office of Public Schools (*Mekatib-i Umumiye Nezaretî*) were established (Erdoğan, 1995; Maarif Vekilliği, 1940).

Later years with the 1856 reforms, in addition to privately administered schools all communities of the Empire were granted the right to

open their own community schools under the supervision and inspection of a central education council (Büyükkaracı, 1996, p. 33). As secular education was already a part of the lives of Muslim populations since the 1839 reforms, the 1856 reforms addressed educational issues mainly for non-Muslim populations such as practices of cultural autonomy, right to establish modern community schools or access to public schools (Kodaman, 1980, p. 41). After 1856, the opening of new non-Muslim community schools was swiftly increased throughout the Empire. In response to the expansion of the schools opened by communities and missionaries, the Ottoman Empire felt the need both to keep up with those developments to modernize its education by advancing curricula and to launch a central education council to conduct administrative and educational affairs of those schools by Western standards (Erdoğdu, 1995, p. 46).

The capacity of the *Mekatib-i Umumiye Nezareti* was regarded as inadequate to surmount the new challenges of founding new schools all over the empire or monitoring their affairs (Erdoğdu, 1995, p. 46). There was a need for an advanced council to monitor newly emerging bureaucratic edifice. In 1857, the Ministry of Public Education (*Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti*) was presented with this objective. Regarded as the nucleus of the Ministry of Education later founded in the Republic of Turkey, the *Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti* was a manifestation of the state's propensity to concomitantly handle educational and cultural affairs and to abandon its so far concessive demeanor towards decentralized education (Kodaman, 1980, p. 42). In this way education had not only been acknowledged as significant in perpetuating the Ottoman existence vis-a-vis the Western powers, but educational affairs started to be regulated by modern bureaucracy (Kodaman, 1980, p. 42).

With the consolidation of the right to establish community schools, the schooling in non-Muslim communities became subjected to the regulation and audit of the state. In order to monitor this new educational sphere, the 1856 reforms saw a need to additionally incorporate another council whose members were composed of representatives from Muslim and non-Muslim communities (Somel, 2019, p. 69). Having one representative from each Muslim, Rum, Armenian, Catholic, Protestant and

Jewish communities, the Council of Mixed Education (*Meclis-i Muhtelit-i Maarif*), was founded in the same year with *Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti* and was subject to its audit to centrally monitor educational affairs in the Empire (Somel, 2019, p. 69). This council was in charge of regulating the quality of schools, developing curricula, selecting teachers or miscellaneous matters including registration or transfer of students (Akyıldız, 1993, p. 247). With the same spirit, for the promotion of an Ottoman identity, Turkish language classes became a compulsory part of the curriculum in non-Muslim schools (Ortaylı, 1983/2018, p. 119), and the selection of their teachers was left to a state-mandated commission (Büyükkarcı, 1996, p. 36).

Reshaped by the educational reforms, the schooling in the Ottoman Empire was constituted based on two main pillars; public schools (*mekatib-i umumiyye*) and private schools (*mekatib-i hususiye*). Whereas the state monitored both the management and supervision of the former, it only audited the latter and left their management and establishment to individuals or religious communities (Alkan, 2000, p. 4). Unlike public schools, private schools varied in their organization and design. There were both Muslim and non-Muslim private schools, and non-Muslim schools further differed from each other according to their founders and funders (Alkan, 2000, p. 4). The schools that were founded by communities and patriarchates, by individuals, and by foreigners composed almost all the private schools in the Empire (Alkan, 2000, p. 4).

By and large, the education system was shaped as a three-staged structure; primary schools (*sıbyan mektepleri*), junior high schools (*rüşdiyeler*), and vocational schools (Somel, 2019, p. 69). Whereas public schools were established by the state and offered education for all communities at the secondary and tertiary stages, primary education was at the disposal of religious authorities separate for each community and the instruction was in the native language of each particular community (Somel, 2019, p. 69). Thereby, albeit the variety of schools and introduction of modern ones, local neighborhood primary schools (*sıbyan mektepleri*) remained a significant aspect of education for a long while, be it in Muslim or non-Muslim communities. These local schools were an

important source of religious education because of their extensive numbers, and they were educational centers to teach religious practices and the Holy Scripture in its original language (Alkan, 2000, p. 5).¹³ As long as primary education stayed outside the jurisdiction of educational councils, the influence of *medrese* did not disappear (Kodaman, 1980, p. 37). That was why, the coexistence of religious and secular education continued for a long time in the Ottoman Empire.

In 1867, an educational reformer, French Victor Duruy advised the Sublime Porte on the matters of establishing mixed schools open to the registration of students from all communities, a university, vocational schools as well as public libraries (Somel, 2019, p. 77). After this consultation, the Regulation for National Education (*Maarif Nizamnamesi*), which would stay in effect for a long time with minor alterations, was issued in 1869 to consolidate the modern educational structure and to further append national aspects into the education system.¹⁴ Based on the Western principles and the French national education model, by this regulation the Sublime Porte integrated educational affairs into state affairs, and incorporated all educational reforms that were introduced since the start of the modernization period into one code of practice (Büyükkarçı, 1996, p. 24). The objective of this regulation was to design a rationalized and

¹³ In addition to the fact that modern schooling was often mentioned with respect to the adoption of secular Western European models in the literature that I use here, religious and modern education were not mutually exclusive in the Ottoman Empire and did not conflict with each other. Rather, education in the Ottoman Empire subsumed aspects of religious and secular teaching simultaneously for a long time. In that regard, Somel (2019) refuses to explain religious and modern education through an incompatible dichotomy, and suggests to see Islam inherent to intellectual life of the era until 1870 (2019, p. 21). Likewise, Fortna argues that disregarding the continuities in the relationship between religion and modern learning resulted in histories of the region to be narrated in a way further perpetuated the belief that Islam and modern learning were mutually exclusive (2002, p. 1).

¹⁴ Somel states that in order to regulate additional matters, the 1896 Ordinance was later issued (2019, p. 123).

centralized public education system and to take responsibility for the education of all subjects of the Empire (Fortna, 2005, p. 146).¹⁵ The administration and audit of all schools in the empire -public schools, private schools, non-Muslim community schools or missionary schools- fell under the jurisdiction of this regulation (Somel, 2019, p. 123). It was a detailed proposal to form a network of schools reaching out to every corner of the empire and to disperse the schooling to provinces (Fortna, 2005, p. 146).

The regulation made primary education compulsory. It brought standards to designate places of new schools in accordance with the population of the settlements and assigned the financial sustainability of these schools to their local communities (Ortaylı, 1983/2018, p. 194). Despite its emphasis on centralization, the state refrained from taking any financial responsibility in the realm of primary education (Ortaylı, 1983/2018, p. 194). The costs of primary schools would be covered by the local population of neighborhood and villages, and of junior high schools by education funds that were collected by the public (Ortaylı, 1983/2018, p. 194). A permanent committee of inspectors was employed to audit all of the schools, whereas the only exception to this audit mechanism would be religion classes in non-Muslim community schools (Somel, 2019, p. 120, 121). While primary education remained within the administration of communities, the curricula were substantially common to all schools, which only allowed the language of instruction and the content of religion classes to differ among schools (Somel, 2019, p. 215). The regulation also introduced certain control mechanisms over missionary teaching which required all missionary schools to submit their curricula and their teachers to be audited by public inspection, although general surmise is that these measures were not quite implemented (Deringil, 1998, p. 116). Furthermore, the regulation subsumed certain aspects to foreground a common Ottoman identity. While the instruction in public schools was

¹⁵ Fortna interprets the *Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi* as the official blueprint of educational strategy towards the 20th century, although, he says, in later years the Abdulhamid II regime effectively altered the educational strategy, substance of the schools and *raison d'être* of schooling (2005, p. 35).

designed in Turkish, in non-Muslim community schools Turkish classes and Turkish teachers became a part of the curriculum and teaching respectively (Ortaylı, 2018; 1983, p. 194). The 129th article of the regulation specifically addressed community and missionary schools as the graduation certificates of teachers to be hired in those schools, the list of the classes to be taught, and the materials to be used in classes were subjected to the approval and confirmation of the education council, *Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti* (Kocabaşoğlu, 2002, p. 90).

Introducing a new education system to answer the demands of the economic transfiguration, the reforms took its cue from Western European technologies. In such a context, establishing a network of modern schools, Western missionary schools were a strong competition for the Empire. As the 1856 Reforms granted the freedom of religion for everyone, the Ottoman state officially had allowed missionary activities and thereby Christian missionary schools to be established in the empire (Deringil, 1998, p. 91). Being the biggest challenge to the Ottoman education, the American Board Commissioners of Foreign Mission (ABCFM) provided educational institutions often far better than those the Ottoman state could ever furnish, which further undermined the stability of the government and intensified hatred towards missionaries (Deringil, 1998, p. 129). Given the extent of the international pressure, it was impossible for the Ottoman authorities to expel missionaries; instead, they did all they could do to keep track of missionary activities (Deringil, 1998, p. 127). The only thing that the Ottoman authorities could do was to compete with them by improving the quality of Muslim schools (Deringil, 1998, p. 131).

The domino effect of the missionary schools started initially within the non-Muslim communities and later expanded to Muslim populations (Fortna, 2005, p. 75). Not only did the missionaries open the first modern schools in the provinces, but they also set the standards for modern education in the Ottoman Empire (Fortna, 2005, p. 75). Intimidated by their influence over their communities and threatened by the values they promoted, as much as the Ottoman bureaucracy, Armenian clergy and ruling class viewed those schools as abrasive towards their authority and did

everything in their power to deter their communities from attending to American schools, their meetings or reading their publications particularly from 1831 to 1846 (Kocabaşoğlu, 2000, p. 55).¹⁶ However, in the progress of time secular education pervaded, secular world-views spread around, and religious communities started to dissolve (Ortaylı, 1983/2018, p. 122). Therefore, every church in the Empire was to comply with secular values and embrace a nationalist ideology that these secular values promoted (Ortaylı, 1983/2018, p. 122). As the leverage of the clergy diminished in their communities, communal assemblies constituted by secular lay members increasingly took over their place (Ortaylı, 2018; 1983, p. 189).

The reverberations of the reforms and influence of missionary schools slightly varied in the communities as the modernization of their schooling followed different paths. The reforms failed to create harmony among communities or could not prevent communities from developing different agendas throughout their progress. The standing of Muslim schools was not so bright at the beginning of the 19th century in comparison to non-Muslim schools. The large part of the problem was regarded as emanating from the lack of interest of the Ottoman wealthy and intellectual to be involved in carving out a modern educational network (Fortna, 2005, p. 100). This also might be regarded as one of the reasons why the Ottoman public schools could not attract students from non-Muslim communities. The number of non-Muslim students was limited in those public schools and multi-communality stayed restricted to higher education such as high level vocational schools or the Imperial School (Somel, 2019, p. 32).

On the other hand, the competition that American missionary schools started led the Armenian schools to advance their education. They could successfully step up their education and form educational networks. Un-

¹⁶ In a way, as a response to these circumstances, the American missionaries developed a new strategy with the help of Britain and led the establishment of the first Protestant church in 1846 in Istanbul (Kocabaşoğlu, 2000, p. 55).

dergirded by private initiatives and financial support of their own communities, like Mithat Pasha had once envisioned for the entire education system of the empire, non-Muslim education became much more extensive (Göçek, 2015, p. 104). With the decentralization of power in establishing and administering their schools up until the centralization of national education in the Ottoman Empire, non-Muslim communities could develop successful education models not only for children but also for adults (Göçek, 2015, p. 104). As the pedagogy non-Muslim schools adopted became more engaging and participatory, vast qualitative differences appeared between the schooling patterns of non-Muslim and Muslim communities (Göçek, 2015, p. 104). During the 19th century and especially during the Hamidian period, Ottoman civil servants noticed the superiority of non-Muslim community schools over public Muslim schools (Fortna, 2005, p. 100). This superiority mainly stemmed from the ability of non-Muslim communities to keep up with scientific progress in the West and their capacity to develop an educational network comprehensive enough in its magnitude, financial stability and organizational consistency, reaching out even to small villages (Fortna, 2005, p. 101).¹⁷ For that reason as non-Muslim schools were always regarded with extreme suspicion, their activities were allowed as long as they confirmed the regulations of the Ministry of Education (Deringil, 1998, p. 105).

While the schooling in the Armenian community got sophisticated throughout the years and the number of the schools increased and spread to provinces, a communal organization to monitor educational affairs appeared as a need. Until the 19th century, as the main authority of

¹⁷ The reasons why the intellectuals or notables of the Armenian community were so vigorously interested in introducing and spreading modern schooling in their community could be found in the ways they engaged with Western ideologies, intellectual movements, the authors they followed or the books they read and translated. I suggest that looking at the intellectual history of the Armenian community, the networks these intellectuals built over the years or their long term visions can reveal the nuances for us to understand why education and schooling was such an important project for Armenians. In Chapter 5, with the purpose of comparing communal dynamics now and then I further discuss how and why intellectuals of the community successfully accelerated the spread of modern education.

the community the Patriarchate was responsible for governing the communal affairs either earthly or celestial. However, with the dissolution of the power of religious authorities in the 19th century, the administration of civil matters was increasingly pulled away from the monopoly of the Patriarchate. Following the constitution of a council of notables to assist the Patriarchate in 1841, in 1847 the administration of communal affairs was split between the jurisdiction of two assemblies; one for civil and the other for ecclesiastical matters of the community (Karpas, 1973, p. 89). Thereby, the structure of the Patriarchate became two-fold consisting of an ecumenical synod and a corporeal council, when combined composed the mixed council (Bebiroğlu, 2008, p. 133). An education council was also a part of this corporeal council and with its numerous supervisors and members it was equipped with responsibilities of selecting educational materials and textbooks, preparing curricula of community schools, hiring teachers, administering the schools and opening new ones with the budget approved by the mixed council (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 81).

As I explained earlier in this chapter, with the increasing involvement of artisans and craftsmen and the contribution of intellectuals influenced by the Western values, democratic principles and nationalist thoughts, the authority of the religious class and notables over education faded out. Aware of the fact that their community administrations were stagnant, corrupt and nondemocratic, the new generation of Armenians who were imbued with Enlightenment ideas and Western values and still members of their community challenged religious institutions (Somel, 2005a, p. 256). Their involvement in communal affairs triggered a change in the status quo. This change became substantially visible with the introduction of a communal educational council. In 1853 when the Council of National Education (*Maarif Komisyonu*) was founded in line with the bureaucratic developments in the Ottoman Empire, community schools were officially released from the control of notables and patriarchate, and put under a relatively secular and centralized control in accordance with communal standards and measures (Özdoğan *et al.*, 2009, p. 186). This step consolidated the progress of modern education as it permanently

incorporated classes of Western science and foreign language education in curricula and installed a secular mechanism to perform the standards centrally stipulated by the bureaucratic reforms. With these developments, the curricula of modern schools would be designed in such a way that included classes of history, geography, mathematics, natural sciences, law, business knowledge, health sciences, political economy, philosophy and language classes of Armenian, Ottoman Turkish and French.

After this date, Armenian schooling entered into a new phase as the school numbers in provinces of the Empire soared fast. In addition to the strategy of the education council to expand the education network, Armenian cultural awakening also contributed to this end. In that regard, Somel accentuates the impact of nationalist tendencies on the growth of the schooling networks as in the rural parts of the Empire these attempts were bolstered by local populations (2013, p. 47). Another momentous factor that paved the way for the abrupt increase in the school numbers in provinces was the setting that the Armenian constitution groomed. The power gap that the 1856 reforms created by the dissolution of church oligarchies over Christian communities allowed the communities to prepare their own charters between the years of 1862 and 1865 (Somel, 2005b, p. 90). While these charters accelerated the role of secular members of communities to be involved in the administration of their communities, their main objective was to submit a code of conduct in writing for communal affairs. With this objective, after a couple of drafts, finally in 1863 the Armenian national constitution¹⁸ was approved by the Sublime Porte.

The novelty of this set of code of conduct was its analogous nature to Western legal standards. It was based on an explicit framework of separation of powers in governing community affairs and consolidated the secular edifice in every aspect of community administration (Koçunyan, 2016, p. 76). The constitution divided the settlements into church districts according to their population where the members of the local community

¹⁸ In Armenian: Ազգային Սահմանադրութիւն Զայոց [Azkayin Sahmanatrutyun Hayots]; in Ottoman Turkish: Nizâmname-i Millet-i Ermeniyân, نظامنامه ملت ارمنیان

were responsible to take care of local communal affairs, govern churches and schools, aid the poor, facilitate disagreements, aggrandize churches, put effort to establish new schools and lend a hand to families in need (Bebiroğlu, 2008, p. 151). The pious foundations that were founded and sustained by financial contributions of the public became the authorized institutions to administer communal affairs including quotidian needs of churches, schools or cemeteries. The majority of community schools would be established by these pious foundations and administered by them. Since latest developments laid further stress on educational affairs, the constitution also replaced the former education council with a larger one (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 81). Introducing a new regulation, this educational council attempted to standardize the schooling and prepared a common program to be followed in all Armenian schools in Istanbul and Anatolia particularly after 1893 (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993, p. 107).

By the ratification of the constitution, the secularization process of administrative, educational and legal affairs was completed and they were considerably disassociated from individual and religious influences. Expectably, these developments led to disparity and even certain skirmishes between *amiras* and the public, and divided the public between supporters of the status quo versus of reforms (Bebiroğlu, 2008, p. 124). In that regard, Göçek underscores the unequal distribution of emerging benefits of modernity within the Armenian community and argues that modernity resulted in intra-Armenian polarization as the religious-secular and the urban-rural divides became increasingly crystallized (2015, p. 122). In sharpening of these divides, the impact of educational matters and the schooling rates was momentous. With the ratification of the constitution, the schooling rate in provinces was further increased albeit the rather slower progress rates in the Armenian Highlands (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 81). This led the urban-rural divide to become even more distinct in the progress of time.

As the constitution prompted alternative ways for the communal administration to be systematically conducted by secular constituents of

the community, emerging civil organizations became a noteworthy feature of the expansion of the schooling attempts that were significant also in contributing to Armenian cultural awakening. In 1876 the Araratyan Armenian Association (Արարատյան Ընկերություն Ջայոց [Araradyan Ingerutyun Hayots]), in 1878 the Eastern Pro-school Association (Դպրոցասիրաց-արևելյան Ընկերություն [Tbrotsasirats-arevelyan Ingerutyun]), and in 1879 the Giligyan Association (Կիլիկյան Ընկերություն [Giligyan Ingerutyun]) were founded with the aim of establishing schools and spreading enlightenment ideas within Armenian-populated settlements. In 1880, by the merge of the Araratyan Armenian Association, the Eastern Pro-school Association and the Giligyan Association, the Union of Armenian Associations (Միացյալ Ընկերություն Ջայոց [Miatsyal Ingerutyun Hayots]) was constituted. The objective of the union was to centrally collect donations, standardize the curriculum of the Armenian schools and specify minimum education standards for qualified education (Somel, 2005a, p. 266). During their active years, these associations contributed to the establishment of modern Armenian schools in the Empire and made a considerable effort to spread schooling to Armenian-populated rural places.

In 1879, the Armenian Patriotic Women Association (Ազգասուեր Ջայուհյաց Ընկերությունը [Azkanver Hayuhyats Ingerutyuni]) was founded by Zabel Sibil Asadour¹⁹ particularly for the education of girls.²⁰ The main

¹⁹ Չապել Սիպիլ Ասատուր

²⁰ As women opened up new spaces and started to partake in the public sphere with the developments of the era, the socio-political transfiguration supported by the reforms led to the establishment of educational institutions for women. The education of women in the Armenian community walked a similar path to the overall atmosphere in the Ottoman Empire. The quality of education for women was advanced throughout the 19th century. The emergence of primary level educational institutions for women was followed by the adoption of teacher training institutions (Kurnaz, 1999). In that sense, the establishment of a women's teacher-training college (Dar-ül Muallimat) in 1879 was a significant step in educational history (Akyüz, 1999). Considering the fact that the education of women remained limited with the private tutoring of upper-class women and

purpose of the Association was to recruit and train women as teachers while raising their consciousness as Armenians (Kaprielian-Churchill, 1995, p. 102). In that sense, 19th century developments marked an important step in creating access to education for women. It was a renaissance period also for women through which intellectual and professional women claimed their place and visibility in the community, and even further reinforced their positions as a result of the establishment of modern educational institutions and the schooling of Armenian girls (Özdoğan *et al.*, 2009, p. 379). From the 1860s onwards modern education elicited a new Armenian female intelligentsia to flourish (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 11). As these women were shaped by the nationalism's inherently gendered reasoning, they started a press, opened schools and built associations to reproduce women as scientific homemakers, patriotic mothers and educated wives of the nation (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 11). Even so, they could reclaim their representational rights in return for their contribution to the national project and establish charitable organizations, educational institutions, girls' schools and teacher training schools which would leave a feminist legacy for women activists of the coming years (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 11, 54) However, the unfulfillment of the emancipation of women never ceased to be one of the main problems despite all the struggle given in this specific area (Özdoğan *et al.*, 2009, p. 379).

In 1878, in order to train teachers for new schools and advance the quality of education in already established schools, in the Van province a teacher training school was launched; however, it could only last for 3 years and shut down in 1881 (Somel, 2013, p. 47). In 1886, the Central Armenian College, which is today's Getronagan High School²¹, was founded

foreign governesses or with barest rudiments of religious education with no further future prospects until the late 19th century, these advancements were momentous steps (Kandiyoti, 1991, p. 28). Later years, the increasing number of female students in the education system and the escalation of their educational level up to high school would pave the way for the emergence of a new occupational group of women teachers (Ortaylı, 1983/2018, p. 257).

²¹ Ազգային Կեդրոնական Վարժարան

in the Karaköy neighborhood of Istanbul. In 1895, in the Beyoğlu neighborhood of Istanbul the Esayan School²² was established as a junior high school, which also continues its education today at different levels from preschool to high school. In later years, these schools would become a prominent academic scene and graduate renowned Armenian intellectuals.

§ 2.3 Educational Refashioning in the Hamidian Regime

The rapid development of the Armenian intellectual awakening was about to slow down at the end of the 19th century when the Ottomanist ideology adopted more Islamic nuances with the ascent of Abdülhamid II to the throne. In Deringil's words, different from the end of the 19th century when the Ottoman statesmen increasingly endorsed an imperial supranationalism in the form of Ottomanism, during the reign of Abdülhamid II the Ottomanist ideology underwent a shift to foreground more Islamic aspects of this identity as opposed to ostensibly supra-religious tone of the *Tanzimat* reforms (1998, p. 46). However, while Abdülhamid II attempted to imbue his subjects with Islamic values, he at the same time adopted the Western style, a bureaucratic system, an advanced military organization and an educational system (Mardin, 1992/2005, p. 15). The objective of Ottoman higher educational institutions established in that period was to train a loyal and competent state elite who would be inculcated with the values of the center (Deringil, 1998, p. 96). In that regard, the Islamism of the Abdülhamid period was inherently modern because it was an attempt to fuse the pre-existing values with new energy while favoring modern methods (Deringil, 1998, p. 66; Ocak, 1994, p. 123). Despite the conservative tone of the directives of the period, Deringil accentuates the realistic perspective of the curriculum as it had practical considerations from primary schools to higher education while including

²² Էսայան Դպրոց եւ Վարժարան

courses such as cosmography, general and Ottoman geography, economics, geometry or agricultural science in addition to the preponderance of Qur'an reading or superiority of religious studies (1998, p. 98).

In addition to the attempts to promote Islamic values in the form of the Ottomanist identity and keep educational affairs more in tone with Islamic nuances, the methods and mechanisms that the Abdülhamid reign embraced came to standardize the education system in a manner that education would be referred with respect to surveillance, audit and inspection. During his reign, a twofold inspection system in the educational sphere, which is also an integral part of the national education today, was designed. The first group of inspectors was liable to make provisions against the type of materials or demeanors that might menace the adherence to political and moral principles that the Abdülhamid II regime would like to aggrandize in public schools, whereas the second group was responsible to audit the schools administered either by non-Muslim communities or by foreigners (Fortna, 2005, p. 127). Emphasizing the fact that non-Muslim schools were not inspected by the state before, the Ministry of Education foregrounded the fact that the Ottoman state did not know what was going on in non-Muslim community schools (Fortna, 2005, p. 127). The state was oblivious of the curricula, education materials, moral values or behaviors of the teachers in non-Muslim and foreign schools, and this indifference could be detrimental for the integrity of the state (Fortna, 2005, p. 127). Thereby, an institutionalized inspection mechanism was presented as an answer to these predicaments. In 1886, non-Muslim community schools, which so far stayed outside the zone of the state intervention or inspection, were audited for the first time by a special group of inspectors (*müfettiş-i mahsusa*) (Kodaman, 1980, p. 96).²³ The inspection visits to non-Muslim community schools initially started as limited to the Istanbul province (Fortna, 2005, p. 127). In later years, as the benefits of these inspection visits were concurred with

²³ The Minister of Education Münif Paşa issued a memorandum on the requirement for the inspection for non-Muslim and foreign schools (Fortna, 2005, p. 127; see İrade MM 3580, 28 Recep 1303 (2 May 1886)).

by the government, the ministry appointed inspectors for the non-Muslim and foreign schools in other provinces and rural areas (Kodaman, 1980, p. 96).

Moreover, in 1896 by a set of instructions explaining the standards that the inspectors needed to follow in provinces and rural areas (*Vilâyat-ı Şâhane Maarif Müdürlerinin Vezâifin-i Mübeyyin Talimatı*), the central government not only explained the duties of educators and responsibilities of inspectors, but did also give detailed instructions for the establishment of non-Muslim community schools (Büyükkarcı, 1996, p. 45). The instructions required the community schools to submit every detail regarding education to the Ministry and they were reminded that the rules and practices in the schools were up to the approval of the Ministry. It instructed inspectors to take notes of the names of the schools, their place, any information about their degree of education, educators and administrators, and send their curricula and programs, textbooks or graduation certificates of teachers to the Ministry for approval and audit (Büyükkarcı, 1996, p. 45). Examining the content of schoolbooks was also a significant part of the educational inspection. The Hamidian government put a great deal of stress on the preparation, arrangement, inspection and even prohibition processes of schoolbooks (Fortna, 2005, p. 266). During this period, only the content in state-approved schoolbooks was allowed to be taught in schools (Somel, 2019, p. 26). In that regard, schools lost the liberty of choosing their educational materials and became more standardized to update their curricula in accordance with new nuances that the government would like to emphasize.

These new measures to regulate the realm of education should also be considered with respect to the government's concerns to keep the population in control. As the impact of nationalist movements became more palpable in the Empire, non-Muslim community schools came to be regarded as inimical to the political aims of the Empire. In addition to portraying non-Muslim communities' endeavor and devotion to advance their educational institutions as good examples to emulate, the Ministry accentuated the need to accommodate these schools to the Ottomanist ideology (Somel, 2019, p. 132). In that regard, one of the significant steps

towards the standardization of education in the Empire was to establish local educational administration offices while intensifying measures of surveillance in places far away from the capital. In 1881, as the Ministry expressed its intention to keep a close watch on community schools, it recommended two measures to be implemented by these local offices; to finance these schools and to effectively regulate them (Somel, 2019, p. 132). Without these measures, the ministry believed that the intellectual capital that these schools had to offer would be lost (Somel, 2019, p. 133).

By the same token, the adoption of local administrative offices was not the sole means of the disciplinary mechanism in the realm of education. The unification of language through the teaching of Turkish language was also regarded as one of the primary means of blending the population (Deringil, 1998, p. 99). From approximately the 1880s onwards, the Ministry decided to appoint Turkish language teachers to non-Muslim schools whose salaries to be covered by the Ministry budget (Somel, 2013, p. 18). In 1882, since the central government regarded communal cultural associations as disruptive towards its objectives, it requested these associations to be listed and mapped out, only for later to be shut down between the years of 1895-1908 (Seropyan, 1994, p. 184). To the same end, in 1886, the Inspection Office for Foreign and Non-Muslim Schools (*Mekatib-i Ecnebiye ve Gayrimüslime Müfettişliği*) was established with the purpose of inspection of the schools, and starting in the year of 1894 Turkish language education became officially mandatory in community schools (Özdoğan *et al.*, 2009, p. 191).

Although the declaration of the 1876 constitution furnished the Armenian community with the instruments to expand the education network, during the reign of Abdülhamid II it was almost impossible to open new schools (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 84). As the activities of the Armenian education council were not welcomed by the Ottoman statesmen, actively functioning educational institutions were subjected to strict audit mechanisms and the government was not hesitant to shut down schools based on the slightest excuse it could find (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 84). The tone of the Hamidian regime was further ri-

gidified towards non-Muslim populations and their educational and cultural activities after the Congress of Berlin in 1878. The condensation of repressive precepts in governing particularly Armenians not only led to 1894-1896 massacres, but also wreaked the destruction of many educational institutions (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 82).

As Göçek describes, the first incident of violence which initiated these massacres occurred when the central state ordered the closure of some Armenian schools on the grounds that they vehemently provoked uprisings by fostering Armenian racism and keeping alive the memory of old Armenian kingdoms (2015, p. 125). The Armenian protests against the closure of schools later became a justification for violence to burst out in Armenian-populated areas. However, despite the catastrophe and economic debacle, the Armenian community found ways to replenish the cultural and educational scene. In order to shelter numerous children who lost their parents and relatives and to ardently restore the educational network, Armenians collectively opened 34 orphanages (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 82). With the leadership of the Patriarchate of Mağakya I. Ormanyan of Istanbul²⁴, a team including a few government officials appointed by the Sublime Porte created schools for 60,000 orphans and created a financial aid system for the families whose property had been looted or destroyed (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 65).

§ 2.4 Towards the End of Empire

After the dismantlement of the Abdülhamid II regime by the Young Turk revolution, the Ottoman identity his reign fostered increasingly gave way to a Turkish-Islamic discourse. The declaration of the second constitutional era resulted in momentous changes in the political structure. However, the framework applying to community schools did not quite change. The first political agenda of the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), which was published in 1908 in the official journal

²⁴ Պատրիարք Մաղաթիա Ա. Պոլսեցի Օրմանեան

of the committee *Şura-yı Ümmet*, established Turkish as the formal language and its education mandatory in public schools in order to cement national authority and consolidate national unity (Yıldız, 2001, p. 74). With the inauguration of the first Turkish parliament in 1908, when educational reforms became a part of the agenda of the new government, the government decided to allocate funds to non-Muslim schools from the budget of the Ministry of Education just like the Ministry met financial needs of public schools (Somel, 2013, p. 19). When the implementation of this decision started a year later in 1909, the Ministry stipulated that community schools must be inspected in return for these funds (Somel, 2013, p. 19). The inspection mechanism was not so different from the earlier period. As a matter of fact, it was rather mostly given to the oversight of the communities. The patriarchates would decide the curricula of the schools, send them for the approval of the ministry as long as there were changes in curricula, check the validity of graduation certificates of teachers, and inspect the schools (Somel, 2013, p. 20). This new regulation allowed community schools to hire foreign teachers only until qualified teachers were eligible to be hired (Somel, 2013, p. 20).

Within this new system, the ministry did not prevent the establishment of community schools; however, expected them to be fused with values accentuating a Turkish identity. All the themes and aspects that conflicted with this Turkish identity were sorted out and replaced by values promoting Turkishness (Yıldız, 2001, p. 80). With this spirit in 1909, the Ministry of Education had a goal of designing the schooling fully in Turkish and that is why forced all schools to adopt a Turkish curriculum (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, o. 84). Later, this plan manifested itself in community schools through the teaching of Turkish culture classes, as we would later start to refer, and expressively summed up the judgment of the government towards non-Muslim populations, which would also prevail in many ways in the Republic. In 1915, the Regulation on Private Schools (*Mekatib-i Hususiye Talimatnamesi*) was issued with a similar objective. By this regulation, literature, history and geography classes in non-Muslim schools would be entirely taught in Turkish language and by Turkish teachers who would be appointed centrally by the Ministry itself

(Büyükkarcı, 1996, p. 46). Furthermore, the regulation was also an expressive manifestation of the state's control over non-Muslim education as it limited the number of schools to be opened and non-Ottoman teachers to be hired in those schools (Ertuğrul, 1998, p. 99).

When it came to the beginning of the 20th century, while Armenian schools were incorporated to the Ottoman education system through certain mechanisms of adjustment or audit, their ubiquity in the Empire was salient. The existing literature on the Armenian schools in the Ottoman Empire points out different numbers from various resources. That is why the number that we have is a rough estimation. The documents presented to the foreign affairs of Great Britain note the number of Armenian schools in provinces excluding Istanbul as 803 in the 1901-02 education year (Toynbee *et al.*, 1979, p. 662, 663). In their comprehensive study, Kevorkian and Paboudjian give an estimation of the Armenian schools based on the documents archived by the Armenian Patriarchate (2012). According to the inventory of the Patriarchate, in 1913-14, there were 1,996 Armenian schools in provinces and 64 Armenian schools in the capital, although this inventory is also regarded as incomplete (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 272-278; Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 82). To this number, they also add 452 Protestant Armenian and 500 Catholic Armenian schools. They extrapolate from the sum of these numbers that before the Armenian genocide, there were around 3 thousand Armenian schools and 300 thousand Armenian students from every sect in the Empire.²⁵ However, the rack and ruin of the genocide would cripple the Armenian cultural

²⁵ The results of the first Ottoman census attempt in 1844 recorded the number of Armenians in Anatolia as around 2 million (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 57). In an introduction book on the Ottoman Empire in 1867, which was prepared for the Paris World Fair for advertisement purposes, the number of Armenians in Asia Minor was noted as 2 million in the Ottoman lands and in Europe as 400 thousand (Salaheddin Bey, 1867, p. 214-217). Based on the information in the 1878 Yearbook, in 1878 the Patriarchate released the number of Armenians as 3 million (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 58). According to the demographical data provided by Mağakya I. Ormanyan in 1912 Armenians living in Istanbul were 161 thousand and according to the 1914 Ottoman census this number was 84,093 (Köker, 2005, p. 129).

and intellectual life and led the number of the schools to plunge dramatically.

When in the spring of 1915 the Young Turk government targeted Ottoman Armenians by implementing several decisions which later resulted in the destruction of the Armenian existence to a great extent, what made those massacres genocidal was the fact that the abstract category of group identity was attacked in a profound way (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 165). While 2,900 Armenian settlements (villages, towns, neighborhoods) were depopulated and the majority of their inhabitants were killed, the main objective of those killings was cultural obliteration (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 165). In this sense, the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire did not only strive for their physical survival but also for their cultural existence. The elimination of the Armenian population involved ways of exterminating Armenian intellectual and cultural identity including its cultural symbols and continuous history (Balakian, 2013, p. 65). The Committee of Union of Progress (CUP) targeted Armenian intellectual and cultural leadership through which the public voice of the Armenian community would be silenced (Balakian, 2013, p. 65). That was why on 24 April 1915 when the first systematic victims of the genocide were Armenian intellectuals, the cultural existence of Armenians was in peril. On the night of 24 April which marked the start of the genocide, not only Dashnak, Hınchak or Ramgavar political activists were targeted, but also Istanbul's Armenian intellectuals including journalists, writers, lawyers, doctors, school principals, clergymen and merchants were affected by round-ups (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 251).

The incidents were culturally motivated also because they brought destruction for daily life activities and customs in Armenian-populated settlements. The quotidian practices, customs, dialects, songs and lullabies and many other little details of cultural life were buried with the thousands of people who died during the genocide or who relinquished their identities for their physical survival. When the survivors of the genocide took refuge in other countries or in silence hoping to find safer homes, social, cultural, and intellectual lives of Armenians writ large had come close to an end in the Ottoman Empire. As looting and usurpation

prevailed in Armenian-populated settlements, the schools and cultural spaces became open targets. Some of them were shut down, abandoned and eventually seized by the local population or the Turkish state.

Adopting Lemkin's conceptualization on cultural aspects of the genocide, Balakian revisits the Armenian Genocide as a continuum of political and cultural events expanding through a lengthy period of time from the mid-1890s to the approximately aftermath of the World War I and discusses cultural aspects of the destruction (2013, p. 61). He describes the violence in razing churches, torture of people with crucifixes, the mass killing of intellectuals, forced conversion practices to Islam from the 1894-1896 Hamidian massacres to the 1909 Adana massacres and to 1915 through the period of genocide as embedded in cultural destruction (Balakian, 2013, p. 61). Over two decades the Ottoman government and later continuing in various ways during its incipient stages the Turkish Republic were of the opinion that the extermination of Armenians was tied to both calculated and spontaneous processes of Armenian cultural obliteration by the systematic destruction of the art and cultural heritage as well as the confiscation of most especially communal properties (Balakian, 2013, p. 62). As an illustrative example of cultural destruction of the 1890s period, Balakian reminds us of the burning of a cathedral in the Urfa province in 1896 (Balakian, 2013, p. 68). Reminiscent of the ways used in Hamidian massacres, in addition to violence and economic catastrophe, cultural havoc was a segment also of the 1909 Adana massacres as notables were arrested, schools, churches were destroyed or people were forced to convert (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 107). Similarly, during the genocide, statistics disclose the destruction of cultural properties, intellectuals and artists, belief and value systems, historical lands and their identifications (Balakian, 2013, p. 62). All but a handful of 1,996 Armenian schools, 2,538 churches, 451 monasteries, which were documented by the census of the Armenian Patriarch Ormanyan in the 1912-1913 period, were plundered, appropriated, burnt, demolished, or razed (Balakian, 2013, p. 62).

Although the deportation decision on 30 May 1915 and the secret order issued immediately after on 10 June 1915 to give detailed information

regarding the implementation of the decision included clauses on the protection of the properties left behind or returning their net value to deported Armenians, on a later date by the temporary law of 27 September 1915 on “the abandoned properties, debts, and credits of the population who were sent elsewhere” the government actually paved the way for the confiscation of Armenian properties and exhausted the ways for their preservation (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 44, 46). The law not only legalized the plunder of properties but also regulated their transfer. The law stated that the properties of the Armenian foundations were to be registered by the Directorate of Pious Foundations; however, the bylaws for the settlement of migrants abolished this regulation by its decision to allocate Armenian properties to migrants free of charge (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 46). In addition to the 27 September law, on 8 November 1915 by a new regulation it was decided for the registration of all existing goods of the churches and the transfer of the usage rights of school and monastery materials to the Ministry of Education (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 47). Thereby, as the regulation clearly indicated the expropriation of educational means, Armenian communal properties were officially confiscated.

For example; the schools of the Erzincan’s Armenian quarter were pillaged (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 309); in Bitlis 207 Armenian schools were torn down (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 339); in Sivas the schools were confiscated by the military authorities to be used as barracks (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 430); in Trebizond one of the Armenian school buildings were burned down even before the deportation order was issued (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 468); as Adana became a site of massive seizure, its Armenian schools and churches were usurped by the authorities (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 596) and the Armenian community of Adana lost its eight churches and schools spreading a territory of 14,200 m² (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 114), and in the Ayntab and Antakya provinces all non-Turkish schools were relayed to authorities (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 607).

Later, with the order of the Interior Ministry to assign educational institutions and their materials to Turks, Armenian educational institutions were almost entirely appropriated which eventually translated into

the end of Armenian educational life in those cities (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 70). The decision was an open warrant for the seizure of all Ottoman Armenian schools and their conversion to Turkish schools as materials including school benches, blackboards, book cabinets were transferred to incoming Muslim migrants (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 70). When the genocidal destruction came in full force, the Muslim settlers were on their way for their settlement in the emptied Armenian villages (Üngör, 2011, p. 299). Right after the deportation of Armenians, Muslim migrants as well as Kurdish tribes were settled in those villages (Onaran, 2013, p. 59). On 22 June 1915 the Tribal and Immigrant Settlement Office ordered Muslim migrants be placed in the emptied settlements of Aleppo, Adana and Urfa (Onaran, 2013, p. 60). In a cipher telegram sent to the Commission of Abandoned Properties in Adana, Aleppo and Maraş, to the provinces of Adana, Erzurum, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Aleppo and Hüdavendigar and to local governors in Maraş, Kayseri, Karesi, the requirement to allocate the schools of Armenian villages to Muslim migrants was stated (Onaran, 2013, p. 60). In his well-known book, Akçam shares the below excerpt from one of the cables sent by the Tribal and Immigrant Settlement Office to local officials to describe the gravity of the situation:

“It is necessary the schools in towns and villages evacuated by the Armenians be allocated as schools for the Muslim immigrants who are to be settled there, while amount of educational tools and equipment and value that comprise [a part of] the buildings are to be recorded, along with the present value of the buildings, in registries and put separately in the general ledgers.”²⁶

Having said that, the state and the army were still the largest recipients of confiscated Armenian properties as these properties were converted into prisons, police stations, meeting halls, schools, hospitals, or many other state buildings (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 82). For instance,

²⁶ Coded telegram from the Interior Ministry’s Office of Tribal and Immigrant Settlement to the presidents of the Commissions on Abandoned Properties of Adana, Aleppo, and Marash; to the Provinces of Adana, Erzurum, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Aleppo, and Hüdavendigar; and the Provincial Districts of Marash, Kayseri, and Karesi, on 22 June 1915.

in May 1916 the Interior Ministry granted access to provincial officials to employ Armenian buildings as prisons, if there is such a need; the money collected and kept in the Commission for Abandoned Properties to be devoted to the construction of new schools (Akçam, 2012, p. 369). With the Interior Ministry's permission to choose from Armenian property buildings, various ministries benefited from this confiscation and used the buildings as their offices (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 83). In that respect, the Ministry of Education had prioritized access to regional education infrastructure to be used for the education of Turkish students (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 83). In order to expand its educational system as a means of promoting Turkish nationalism, the Ministry of Education appropriated school buildings and transferred them into Turkish public schools (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 83). Perhaps, one of the most striking examples accentuating this historical rupture which wreaked damage on Armenian cultural and educational life is the story of the renowned Sanasaryan College²⁷. Established in 1881 by Mgrdiç Sanasaryan as a higher educational institution and boarding school, Sanasaryan College continued education until its closure and confiscation in 1915. Marking the end of the empire, the school building was employed as the meeting site of the Erzurum Congress in 1919, which was regarded as the keystone of molding the national identity of the forthcoming republic.

When the armistice was signed ending the WWI, violence and usurpation of the genocide had already orphaned many Armenian children. Bereft of communal infrastructure, schools and churches, the orphans of the Armenian community were in urgent need. In 1916, there were 2,500 orphans collected from various regions while the number was increasing daily (Akçam, 2018, p. 139). Hardly unwittingly, Ottoman authorities had already been in the process of seeking solutions for the sheer number of orphans. Initiating their attempts in 1916 to open one large orphanage in Sivas, at the end the Ottoman government developed a solution to send the orphaned children to various provinces (Akçam, 2018, p. 139). By a cable sent on 9 August 1915, the allocation of Armenian orphaned children

²⁷ Սանասարեան վարժարան

to Muslim villages was ordered (Onaran, 2013, p. 205). As Istanbul was designed as a desired destination for orphans only from its surrounding provinces, ultimately children were mostly sent to orphanages in Konya, Izmit, Balıkesir, Adapazarı as well as Istanbul (Akçam, 2018, p. 139). There was no doubt, those orphanages were designed by the government in a way to assimilate Armenian women and children (Balakian, 2013, p. 71). Many Armenian orphans were settled in Turkish Muslim orphanages where they were converted to Islam and remade into Ottoman Muslims with the change of their name, religion, and language (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 34).

On the other hand, since *Bolsahays* (Istanbulite Armenians) had not experienced violence same as the rest of the population, they could immediately help those in need with the infrastructure of their churches, schools, orphanages, charitable organizations, or hospitals considerably intact (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 24). As well as putting around a total of 100,000 orphans under its care, the Armenian Patriarchate initiated a relief effort for the incoming refugees (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 759). By this relief initiative, the Committee for Orphan Relief and the Central Committee for Deportees were founded, which later together created the National Relief Mission (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 759). In 1919 as the fundraising and the costs of the relief work was standardized, the operations of these committees were covered by a monthly tax to be paid by the members of the whole community with a source of income (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 27). By this committee alone fifteen orphanages were opened in Istanbul in 1919-1920 (Kevorkian, 2011, p. 759). The orphanages in Istanbul housed about 4,000 orphans right in the aftermath of the war (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 28). Beyond providing a safe haven for orphaned children along with other orphanages in Istanbul which were established at an earlier date, these orphanages also fulfilled their mission as educational institutions for those children. Thereby, orphanages became an important segment of the educational structure of the Armenian community.

The modern education which many Armenians could take with them into exile enabled them to resettle and reestablish educational institu-

tions in places they went (Stone, 1984, p. 181). Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, the status of community schools that could live through the catastrophe of the turn of the century was reduced to minority schools (Somel, 2013, p. 4). On 17 February 1920 when the national pact was passed in the parliament, non-Muslim populations came to be mentioned officially as minorities (Bayır, 2017, p. 93). The political ideology based on a Turkic-Islamic discourse was strongly effective in the alteration of this discourse in 1920 (Somel, 2013, p. 3). From that time onwards as the Republic of Turkey agreed to keep Armenian schools through their minority status protected in the Lausanne Treaty, the history of the schools came to be told differently through a nationalist education narrative. However, the confiscation of the school buildings continued during the new republic. In 1922, the Mersin police force appropriated all seats and tables of Armenian Catholic schools and handed some of them over to the Ministry of Education (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 125). In the Adana region there were no Armenian schools left at the beginning of 1923 (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 125). In 1927, the governor ordered confiscation of all Catholic Armenian property including its educational infrastructure, churches, rectories, shops, lands and houses (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 127).

§ 2.5 Republican Period and National Education

When in 1923 the Treaty of Lausanne was signed at the end of the peace talks concluding the WWI and settled the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied powers, it marked the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and officially announced the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey. The borders of the new Republic were designated by the treaty as it instituted various issues such as the territorial setting, national sovereignty, public debts, the exchange of populations, properties and rights of populations, legal affairs or administration of justice of the new Republic. The treaty was also an acknowledgment of non-Muslim communities through their legal status as minorities. The section on the protection of minorities enclosing articles from 37 to 45

explained this status and addressed the rights of non-Muslim minorities. In the section overall, the articles use a rather general term, non-Muslim minorities. However, in practice the rights that were acknowledged by the treaty have referred to cultural rights almost exclusively of Jewish, Armenian and Rum populations of the Republic while excluding the others.

The article 37 of the treaty explicitly spells out that the stipulations described in the relevant section are acknowledged as fundamental rights by the treaty and under no circumstances can be interfered with or conflicted by legal action. The articles from 40 to 42 specifically address the aftermath of community schools, which would be called thereafter officially as minority schools. According to these articles, the Turkish state acknowledges the equal rights of non-Muslim minorities “to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein” (Article 40). In the districts where there is a considerable non-Muslim population, the minorities are eligible for the equitable share of the public funds to be used for adequate facilities that can ensure instruction in the medium of their own language (Article 41). However, the right to education is not applicable to regions where non-Muslims living spread out (Somel, 2013, p. 25). While the Turkish state grants full protection of all religious establishments, the authorization of all facilities is left to the pious foundations, religious and philanthropic institutions of non-Muslim minorities (Article 42). From that time onwards, cultural and religious establishments have been administered separately by their individual pious foundations that these establishments were hierarchically founded under.²⁸ Here, I will not go into the

²⁸ Although these pious foundations are separate legal entities, they fall into the category of *Mülhak Vakıflar* (appendant foundations) established before the adoption of the civil code, which run administratively under the tutelage of the General Directorate of Foundations (Özdoğan *et al.*, 2009, p. 229; Hatemi, 1983). The name came from the fact that in the Ottoman Empire these foundations were not founded by the Sharia law and, that

details of how the legal framework around the community foundations have been historically shaped or the precarity that the community foundations experienced. I will address this issue thoroughly in the next chapter when I talk about the ways the law and legality have been framed to govern minorities.

In other words, the Lausanne Treaty was the confirmation of certain cultural and religious rights of the minorities in the new republic. Whereas it includes some stipulations regarding communal establishments of specified minorities and the way cultural and religious rights to be monitored, it does not subsume any clause stating that the constitutions regulating intra-communal affairs be abolished (Koçunyan, 2016, p. 19). However, from that time onwards, the communal constitutions -being the 1863 Armenian Constitution one of them- *de facto* ceased to exist. Despite the articles on the protection of minorities in the treaty, cultural and educational affairs of the non-Muslim minorities have not been regulated in the domestic law. According to this new edifice, the Armenian Patriarchate has continued its role as the spiritual authority over Armenians and as a destination to be consulted on any communal matter in practice; however, it was not acknowledged as a legal entity or having any institutional capacity. The communal organizations continued to exist, however, in a form of individually administered foundations that had the authority to oversee cultural and religious affairs in their districts.²⁹ Furthermore, the arrangement in the treaty meant the minority schools to be administered and funded by their pious foundations whose board

was why, were not in the same category with pious foundations in the traditional sense of the Islamic law. They were only given this status by the edict of the sultan and accepted as such later by the law. With the perpetuation of this status by the Lausanne Treaty, their ambiguous status caused legal problems and insecurities in the long run.

²⁹ Exceptions to this rule are the Armenian national foundations whose board members are elected by the whole community instead of members of local districts. These are the pious foundations of the Surp Prgiç Hospital, Getronagan High school and Surp Krikor Lusavoriç Church, Kalfayan Primary and Secondary School, Karagözyan Primary and Secondary School, and Surp Haç Tıbrevank High School as well as Dirasular Foundation, Gümüşyan Foundation and Turkish Armenian Minority Schools' Teachers Solidarity Foundation.

members would be elected by the local population living in the pre-designated election district of the foundation and to be regulated on every educational matter by the Ministry of Education as they were now incorporated to the national education system.

Writ large highlighting its rupture from Ottoman education notwithstanding, the educational program of the republican bureaucrats did not fall far from the educational strategy of the Ottoman Empire (Fortna, 2012, p. 22). This new educational policy aspired to expand the education system largely along the lines that the Ottoman state set by the Regulation of National Education in 1869 and it was modeled on a rather secularized curriculum lavishly blended with Islamic morality and religious instruction (Fortna, 2012, p. 22). The proclivity to equip the education system with these values stemmed from a rather pressing need on the agenda of the governing elite. The reformers believed that for the survival of the state, they needed to secure the consolidation of a homogenous and unified nation and that is why to unload the ambiguities and the relative inclusiveness that characterized the earlier reform measures (Kasaba, 1997, p. 27). In this understanding, all kinds of ethnic, ideological, religious and economic variation in the population were regarded as detrimental to unity and progress of the new nation as these differentiations could bring about instability (Göle, 1997, p. 84). With the Turkification policies adopted for a national homogenization, pious groups, non-Turkish speakers or non-Muslim communities landed onto “the others” category and their demands based on ancestral, linguistic, religious or ethnic indicators were overlooked by the regime (Yıldız, 2001, p. 18). The vision of the reformers was to follow a well-articulated, linear path towards modernization through which the experience of the whole nation would be akin and simultaneous as they lead towards a militantly secular and ethnically homogenous republic analogous to Western nations (Kasaba, 1997, p. 16). In this sense, Keyder interprets Turkish nationalism as an outcome of the continuity between Ottoman reformers and republican nationalists, which bred a nurturing soil for the lack of popular fervor among the masses who remained as the passive recipients of the nation-

alist message mounted by the modernizing elite (1997, p. 43). Nevertheless, the idea behind this nationalist message was ostensibly to decouple the new state from its Ottoman past and exhibit it totally different from its predecessor (Tunçay, 2015, p. 239).

The schooling could offer the perfect venue to accentuate this fictional rupture and for the nationalist message to be conveyed while the nationalist principles were instilled into the youth through education. Endorsing the educational impetus along the lines of the nationalist principles, the schooling must also be undergirded by the school textbooks. That was why the republican state paid high regard to the preparation of curricula and schoolbooks which would confirm the nationalist precepts and emphasize the glory of the republic. As the school textbooks became the apt symbols which were meticulously designed in accordance with the values the Ministry of National Education wanted to foreground and were conducive to create unified as well as unifying education (Fortna, 2012, p. 60). In such a context, the attempts of the Turkish national education system to transform its citizens into a Sunni, Muslim, and Turkish homogenous mass resulted in non-Muslims living in Turkey being forced to face slightly different educational regulations from those that they were subjected to during the Ottoman Empire (Oran, 2004, p. 111). Altering political agendas throughout governments would gravely impact the ways of governing the minority schools in the following years.

Right after the treaty, the Ministry of National Education which was introduced with the opening of the Turkish Grand National Assembly during the years of the national struggle in 1920 became the national and central authority for monitoring educational matters, when the republic was officially declared in 1923. Following these developments, decentralized education systematically came to an end with the introduction of the law on the unification of education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*) in 1924, as the minority schools irredeemably lost the last pieces of their autonomous status (Somel, 2013, p. 26). For the republican bureaucrats, the law was a way of inflicting the state's monopoly over the educational realm and installing its radical republican educational intentions, while it also

intended to dissolve the diversity in the schooling of which Islamic theological colleges (*medrese*) had a considerable share (Fortna, 2012, p. 22). Thereby, the law did not only unify education under its umbrella and perennially end decentralization in the schooling, but also detached the minority schools from the authority of the patriarchates by putting them under the sole control of the Ministry of National Education. The Education Commission which operated under the authority of the Armenian Patriarchate to regulate the Armenian schools in the Turkish Republic became nullified and eventually ceased to exist (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 78). The minority schools among the others became fully integrated into the national education system monitored by the ministry, with the exception that their expenses and funding to be provided by their foundations like the schools which were established by the missionaries, later became profit-making institutions and named as foreign schools in the Republic.

Furthermore, the Law on the Unification of Education intensified the skepticism among government cadres towards the minority schools as these schools were portrayed as centers for political propaganda and a threat to national security (Bali, 2017, p. 186). By law, all schools in the republic were to follow the same curricula and there was no further need to continue non-Muslim education or keep the minority schools (Bali, 2017, p. 57). According to the government, in fact, the auspicious solution would be to shut down these schools and transfer their teachers to Turkish public schools (Bali, 2017, p. 57). Hence, the minority schools entered a rather arduous period. Although the schools were not closed and education was not interrupted, the conditions of their monitoring became stricter reflecting the psyche of the new age in the republic.

In 1922, the Ministry of National Education notified the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* that although the already established alliance schools could carry on their educational activities, they were not welcomed to open new schools (Bali, 2017, p. 186). In 1923, the ministry legislated the requirement of all classes in the minority schools to be taught by teachers with Turkish citizenship and Turkish culture classes -Turkish language and literature, history, and geography classes- to be held in the Turkish language and by the Turkish teachers who would be appointed by the

ministry itself as opposed to the teachers hired by the school administration (Bali, 2017, p. 186). According to the orders of the ministry, the salaries of the Turkish teachers were set at higher rates in comparison to their colleagues working in the same schools, and paid from the own resources of the schools, which had no say in the recruitment of those teachers (Bali, 2017, p. 186). In a circular note prepared by the ministry in 1925, the ministry sanctioned its earlier practice and Turkish culture teachers became a permanent aspect of the curricula as the weekly course hours of these classes were fixed (Vahapoğlu, 1990, p. 153). In another circular letter published in 1927, additional criteria for teachers working in the minority schools were introduced; teachers were expected to be native-Turkish speakers, graduates of either *Dar-ül Muallimin* or *Dar-ül Fünun* and to pass a Turkish proficiency exam that would be held by the ministry by the end of the year (Bali, 2017, p. 191). All these measures resulted in the number of students attending minority schools to gradually diminish over the years and the schools to close one by one due to the inadequate number of students. When it came to the 1924-25 education year, there were 138 minority schools left in Turkey (Kaya and Somel, 2013, p. 12). The legal framework applying to minority schools was still bound to be further shaped. As a result of the political and even global developments waiting ahead, the number of minority schools did not remain the same. A series of developments would impact their aftermath.

Later years, a new position in the minority schools was introduced; Turkish vice principals. In order to ensure that students at the minority schools were inculcated with Turkish customs and values, vice principal positions would be filled with Turkish teachers by the central appointment system of the ministry (Bali, 2017, p. 307). Since the ministry took this issue very seriously, the schools were informed that in cases when they were reluctant to follow ministerial instructions or to have an ethnically Turkish vice principal on board, they would be shut down based on failing to follow the standards sanctioned by the ministry (Bali, 2017, p. 307). In 1937, this rule was legislated and Turkish principals were

acknowledged as the legal authority in their appointed positions to inspect the state-curriculum and to audit administrative and financial processes in their compatibility with the centrally determined criteria of the ministry (Özdoğan *et al.*, 2009, p. 195).

The measures taken towards narrowing down the cultural autonomy of the minority schools or the standards they were asked to follow were akin to rules applying to the schools established by the foreigners. Bureaucratic elites regarded the minority schools as in the same category with the foreign schools and treated them as such. As a manifestation of this understanding, in 1965, the law no 625 on private education institutions was written to regulate the affairs in the schools which were outside the domain of public education and that was why considered private in any regard.³⁰ The minority schools were included into this category and became contingent upon the same regulations and laws written for the foreign schools. Throughout the years, the minority schools would be boxed in this category, and the laws regulating their affairs would lump them with the foreign schools and the private Turkish schools whose numbers would skyrocket mainly after the 1980s.

The requirement for Turkish vice principal positions was renewed in the law no: 625. Although the law clearly addressed the appointment of Turkish vice principals to the schools established by foreigners, the relevant article (Article 24/2) was applied also to the minority schools whose founders, administrators and teachers were Turkish citizens (Oran, 2004, p. 94). By the relevant article, these vice principals were required to be “of Turkish origin and of the Republic of Turkey descent” which were basically alternative words for Turkish ethnicity (Oran, 2004, p. 94). Albeit certain amendments, the law no: 625 remained in force until 2007 when the new law on private educational institutions was issued.³¹ Roughly clarifying their realm of authority and the rules regarding the establishment and the administration of private, foreign and minority schools, the

³⁰ Official Gazette No: 12026 published on 18 June 1965

³¹ Official Gazette No: 26434 published on 8 February 2007. Also see relevant regulation to clarify the implementation of the law (Official Gazette No: 26810 published on 8 March 2008).

law no: 625 banned foreigners from establishing new schools or having additional school buildings (Article 5). This rule also applied to the minority schools in practice at varying degrees. The disputes over additional buildings for the schools have waxed and waned over the years in accordance with the altering political climate. Albeit the articles of the Lausanne Treaty, the procedures of opening up a new school were always contingent upon additional correspondence, special permits or legal processes stretched over a long time span and never regulated in the domestic law. Despite its unpredictability, this period witnessed the establishment of a few minority schools.

In 1954 in the Yeşilköy neighborhood of Istanbul, the board of trustees of the Surp İstebanos Church³² Foundation wrote a petition to the Istanbul Directorate of National Education and requested a special permit for the opening of an Armenian school in the estate of the Kapamacıyan Elementary School which had been opened in 1878 and shut down in 1942 (<https://yesilkoyermeniokulu.k12.tr>). As the directorate replied to this request affirmatively, education started at the preschool level in the same year. Later, in 1957 the school added facilities for primary level education. Similarly, Surp Haç Tıbrevank High School³³ which was closed down after the establishment of the Republic in 1932 was reopened in 1953 with the personal initiative and special request of the then Archbishop Karekin I Haçaduryan of Trabzon³⁴ (<http://www.surphaclisesi.k12.tr>). However, what was unique with this school was the fact that it was reopened as an Armenian clergy school with the objective of training clergy to be recruited in apostolic Armenian churches in Turkey. The school sustained this feature until the 1960s when theology education was ended by the sanction of the Ministry of National Education, and the school became a high school. Later years, when the socio-political atmosphere was relatively more apt, two more schools were added to this list. The Imroz Rum School in Çanakkale province, which was shut down in 1964 during the escalation of the perpetuated conflict between Turkey and Greece over

³² Սուրբ Ստեփանոս Եկեղեցի

³³ Սուրբ Խաչ Դպրեվանք Վարժարան

³⁴ Գարեգին Ա. Տրապիզոնցի Խաչատուրեան

Cyprus, was reopened in separate buildings as a primary school in 2013 and as a middle school and high school in 2015 (Agos Newspaper, 28 September 2015). The establishment process of new minority schools in the republican period also brought novelty to the earlier practice. Finally in 2014, following everlasting requests of the Assyrian community in Turkey whose educational rights were not acknowledged till that date, an Assyrian preschool was established with the name of Mor Efrem Süryani Preschool in the Bakırköy neighborhood of Istanbul (Agos Newspaper, 22 September 2014).

From the 1950s up until the build-up of their current legal framework, it was a rough path for the minority schools. The escalation of the conflict between Turkey and Greece from mainly the 1950s onwards resulted in stricter measures to be implemented in governing the minority schools. As the new measures were adopted to intimidate the Rum population of the republic, the altering conditions in the administration of the minority schools also directly influenced the governing of the Armenian schools. I explained the psyche of that time period and some regulations introduced in the administration of the minority schools including the aforementioned law no: 625 thoroughly in the next chapter. For the comprehensiveness of my historical background, I will also mention here a couple of others, some of which overlap with the measures I described in the next chapter nonetheless. In 1964, the practice of morning prayers in Rum schools was banned by a circular letter, even though this ban was a breach of the Lausanne Treaty (Oran, 2004, p. 145). In 1967, albeit with certain exceptions, the opening of pious or philanthropic foundations in support of a particular community was prohibited by law (Bayır, 2017, p. 183).³⁵ This ban had an impact on the Armenian Minority Schools' Teachers Solidarity Foundation, which was established in 1965 as the first Armenian foundation in compliance with the Turkish Civil Law. The first chair of the foundation was the renowned intellectual Hermine Agavni

³⁵ See Turkish Civil Law (TMK) Article 101

Kalustyan³⁶, who was also one of the former principals of the Esayan Armenian High School. Since the law did not allow a foundation to be established to solely contribute to the educational affairs of a particular community, the name of the foundation was later changed into Turkish Armenian Minority Schools' Teachers Solidarity Foundation (TEAOV). While the Foundation is still active, it continues to support teachers working in Armenian schools through trainings, workshops in addition to conducting publication and editorial processes of Armenian literature and schoolbooks.

The adoption of new regulatory measures addressing the minority schools continued without losing its pace throughout the years. In that regard, the political atmosphere of the distressing years of the 1960s onwards was overwhelming for the minority schools as well as their foundations. In 1968, for the registration of Rum students to the Rum schools, the ministry required the students first to apply for the confirmation of the ministry and in 1969 the ministry requested the transfer of Assyrian students from minority to public schools (Kaya, 2012, p. 51-53).³⁷ In 1971, by the decision of the Court of Cassation the landed properties of pious foundations were seized by the state.³⁸ After 1971, religious education for Christian communities was categorically inhibited by the closure of seminary schools (Oran, 2004, p. 115). From 1980 onwards following the military *coup d'état* and the new constitution ratified by that intervention, the milieu framing the minority schools intensified its Turko-Islamic tone. Overriding the authority of the principals in practice, the Turkish vice principals became the actual position of authority in the minority schools including managing school affairs, conducting correspondence with the ministry, approving payrolls or keeping professional records of teachers (Oran, 2004, p. 146). Starting mainly in that period, it was extensively surmised that the Ministry strategically appointed Turkish culture

³⁶ Հերմիսէ Աղաւնի Գալուստեան

³⁷ The majority of the Assyrian students in the minority schools were registered in the Armenian schools. By the transfer of these students, the law also undermined the Armenian schools since their student numbers plunged all of a sudden.

³⁸ I extensively talked about this process in the following chapter.

teachers who were the most fervently patriotic Turks to the minority schools (Göçek, 2015, p. 290). The registration of students to Armenian schools whose mothers were not Armenian was denied by the ministry (Oran, 1994, p. 13-22).³⁹ Later in 1993, the Ministry of National Education even intervened with the basic tenets of the Armenian schools and prohibited Armenian as the language of instruction; however, as a result of public reactions the prohibition would be lifted shortly (Oran, 2004, p. 146).

As the 1982 Turkish constitution which was the byproduct of the military intervention into the politics promoted a certain kind of civic nationalism, the state abused this concept to ban the practice of differences stemming from different identities, cultures, religions or languages and compelled the public to dissolve their differences in a national culture that was in fact composed of values of one dominant culture (Bayır, 2017, p. 22). Accentuating its secularism and incarcerating religion in the private sphere, the state buried the inequalities emanating from religious differences and designated the proper content of the private and public spheres by framing the spheres of social organization (Mahmood, 2015, p. 3). In such a context, although the measures and policies that the minority schools confronted with were portrayed as nonaligned treating everyone equally, the state intended to reproduce its power by pushing aside anything non-Turkish or non-Muslim.

The regulations introduced in the 1970s and 1980s largely stayed intact up to the present day. However, after the 2000s the milieu of the minority schools was about to get relatively liberal in practice mainly by the measures adopted in the EU integration process and the influence of the neoliberalization of education initiated by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government. The constitutional amendments issued in 2001 and in 2004 and seven reform packages introduced in 2002-2003 during the EU integration process ameliorated the conditions for minorities in

³⁹ This rule was later removed in 2004, and children of mixed marriages became eligible for registration to the Armenian schools.

Turkey (Oran, 2004, p. 117-120).⁴⁰ Yet, these measures did not prevent the minority schools from closing down one by one over the years as the student numbers plunged over the years. In the 2011-2012 education year, there were 22 minority schools in total (Kaya and Somel, 2013, p. 12). When this chapter was written in 2021, this number was 24, being 23 in Istanbul and 1 in Gökçeada (Imroz) island of the Çanakkale province.⁴¹ 16 of these minority schools are Armenian schools and all of them are in Istanbul (See Figure 2.1). Of these 16 Armenian schools, 5 of them are high schools and 3 of them provide education at all K-12 levels (See Table 2.1). In those 16 Armenian schools, there are 2,828 students registered in the 2022-2023 education year; of these students 529 students have education at the preschool level (K), 906 students at the primary school level (1-4), 795 students at the middle school level (5-8), and 598 students at the high school level (9-12).⁴² My fieldwork reveals that the number of students registered in the Armenian schools is roughly about half of the student population of the community; the rest is estimated to be registered in private and foreign schools in Turkey. Albeit some fluctuations, the overall number of the students attending Armenian schools stays the same

⁴⁰ More specific examples could be first; the abrogation of 1936 Declarations by the Article 4 of the law No:4771 within the third reform package issued on 3 August 2022, which gave the community foundations the right to ownership and dispose of property in cases these foundations either have foundational certificates or not and second; by the fourth European Union Integration Package issued on 2 January 2023 aka the Copenhagen Criteria the transfer of authority to certify the property acquisition of the community foundations from the Cabinet to the General Directorate for Foundations.

⁴¹ Gedikpaşa Hrant Dink School, which is established for the students whose families migrated from Armenia and has Eastern Armenian as its language of education, is not included in this number. The status of the school is not a minority school. Although its students receive structured education and follow the curriculum in Armenian, they cannot receive a certificate of graduation based on the absence of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey.

⁴² The source of the statistics is the Turkish Armenian Minority Schools' Teachers Solidarity Foundation (TEAOV).

over the last five years.⁴³ The number of teachers who are hired by the school administration on contract-base is 393 in the 2022-2023 education year.⁴⁴ This number does not include Turkish culture teachers who are appointed centrally by the Ministry of Education and whose salaries are paid by the ministry.

In the present context, those 24 minority schools are regulated by the Ministry of National Education and subjected to the Law No: 5580 on Private Educational Institutions issued in 2007⁴⁵ and its Regulation on Private Educational Institutions issued in 2012 with a series of amendments in the following years.⁴⁶ Although the schools sustain their status recognized in the Lausanne Treaty as minority schools, they are to follow rules and regulations written for private and foreign schools, which are for-profit institutions. In recent years, through an ad hoc committee the minority schools submitted their request for a regulation written specifically on the minority schools that could clarify the codes of conduct in those schools; however, the ministry has not yet issued any regulation. The absence of a regulation addressing the status or conduct of the schools creates certain ambiguities in their governing as the matters regarding the minority schools are frequently addressed with improvisational measures and uncertainty often prevails in their regulatory processes or operations. In addition to the standards centrally sanctioned by the Ministry for all public, private, foreign, minority or other schools under its jurisdiction, the minority schools are allowed to have their instruction in a language other than Turkish and expected to follow certain

⁴³ According to the statistics of the Turkish Armenian Minority Schools' Teachers Solidarity Foundation (TEAOV), the number of students registered in Armenian schools in the 2016-2017 education year is 2,944; in the 2017-2018 education year 3,050, in the 2018-2019 education year 3,016, in the 2019-2020 education year 3,013, in the 2020-2021 education year is 2,869, in the 2021-2022 education year is 3,016, and finally in the 2022-2023 education year is 2,865.

⁴⁴ The source of the statistics is the Turkish Armenian Minority Schools' Teachers Solidarity Foundation (TEAOV).

⁴⁵ Official Gazette No: 26434 on 14 February 2007.

⁴⁶ Official Gazette No: 28239 on 20 March 2012. For amendments see Official Gazette No: 29051 on 5 July 2014, Official Gazette No: 29406 on 4 July 2015.

measures such as hosting Turkish culture teachers and a vice principal appointed by the ministry, as I mentioned above shortly before.

The Turkish culture teachers is a broader category that refers to Turkish literature, Turkish history, geography teachers in high schools; Turkish language and social science teachers in elementary schools.⁴⁷ These teachers are hired on tenure track and assigned to their positions according to a professional scoring system centrally by the Ministry of National Education. Their seniority and professional development are monitored by the Ministry. As well as Turkish culture teachers, a Turkish vice principal is also appointed to the minority schools by the Ministry of National Education⁴⁸, with the purpose of administering legal and disciplinary processes in the schools, sometimes as the sole authority. In this sense, the recruitment and disciplinary processes of Turkish culture teachers are different from their colleagues, and unlike the others their salaries are paid by the Ministry. The other teachers working in the minority schools, who are not Turkish culture teachers and thereby not appointed by the Ministry, are hired by the decision of the school principal and the board members of the school foundation. As their employer is the school foundation, their salaries are paid by the school budget supplied by the financial resources of the pious foundation. These teachers work contract-based and their contracts are issued by the school foundation. Although these teachers are professionally audited by the Ministry and its provincial institutions, the school foundation has the authority on recruitment and discharge of these teachers.

⁴⁷ The law no. 6581 issued on 27/05/1955, it was ruled that Turkish culture classes would only be taught by teachers appointed by the Ministry of Education. Their job descriptions and periods in office are regulated by Law No: 6581 and by Article 28 of the Regulation on Private Educational Institutions. According to the relevant article of the regulation, one of the Turkish culture teachers appointed to the minority school is assigned to a vice principal position.

⁴⁸ In 1937, the Board of Education issued a regulation on the appointment of Turkish deputy principal to minority primary schools, and head deputy principal to minority high schools. Although this regulation was suspended during the years 1948-1949, it was re-introduced in 1962. For further information on regulations on minority schools see Chapter 3.

During our interviews, the school principals explained that in recent years certain advancements regarding the incumbency of Turkish culture teachers working in minority schools were introduced. In 2015, a circular letter prepared by the Ministry of National Education instituted certain changes in the law⁴⁹ and regulation⁵⁰ on Private Educational Institutions that led the authority of school principals to be expanded.⁵¹ This expansion of authority brought along certain changes regarding the process of reassignment of Turkish culture teachers and their incumbency period. By these changes, following the authorization of designated governorships and with the request of school principals to open a position for the assignment of a Turkish culture teacher, Turkish culture teachers who want to work in that particular minority school can apply for the position to be shortlisted and later suggested by the principal for the final authorization of the governorship and directorate of the Ministry of National Education. In other words, if school principals are persuaded by the suitability of the candidate as a result of a recruitment process, they can request from the designated governorships the specific candidates to be appointed to their schools. Although the final decision is up to the governorships, requests by the principals are usually approved with a few exceptions. According to the same circular letter, principals of the minority schools are also warranted the authority to prolong the incumbency period of Turkish culture teachers year by year as long as the administration of the school is satisfied with the qualifications of the appointed teacher, whose incumbency period was limited to five years maximum

⁴⁹ The Law No: 5580 on Private Educational Institutions published in Official Gazette no:26434 on 14 February 2007.

⁵⁰ The Regulation on Private Educational Institutions published in Official Gazette no:28239 on 20 March 2012.

⁵¹ Circular Letter No: 16915068-10-E.6649558 on 28 June 2015.

before. Later in the same year, these amendments introduced in the circular letter became part of the Regulation on Private Educational Institutions.⁵²

The aforementioned law no: 5580 in effect also specifies the basic tenets of registration to the minority schools (Article 2). The eligibility criteria for registration to the Armenian schools are to be a citizen of the Turkish Republic of Armenian descent. However, the problem in this definition stems from the mechanisms deciding the Armenian descent of students as there is no litmus test for being Armenian. After some notorious practices of the Ministry of National Education in deciding the eligibility of Armenian students, the role to decide on the eligibility of the students was given to the school principals in 2015 (Agos Newspaper, 10 August 2015). They collectively agreed upon some standards, although their decisions are subjected to the audit of the Ministry (Agos Newspaper, 14 August 2015).

On another note, since the minority schools are only open to citizens of the Turkish Republic, the schools cannot accept any Armenian students who migrate from another country. Although with the inflow of migrants from Armenia education is a significant need to be immediately addressed, those students cannot access the Armenian schools. Herein, it is worth to remind what Parla (2019) accentuates in another context; that Turkey is one of the signatories of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and that is why it must ensure all children can access primary education regardless of their legal status (p. 122). However, as the Ministry requires an ID number for the registration process to be completed, students from Armenia cannot be enrolled in the Armenian schools, even though they can sit in as guest students.

⁵² In 20/07/2015 with the regulation published in the Official Gazette No.29406 , the Ministry of National Education Regulation on Private Schools Article 28(a) was amended. With this amendment, Turkish culture teachers are reappointed with the request of school principals and authorization of the designated governorships. Before the amendment, the school principals had no authority to request for their prospective teachers. See the regulation on amendment:

<https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2015/07/20150704-3.htm>

As these schools are regarded as private schools and officially called as private, they do not have any access to public funds, salaries of the teachers are not paid or their building expenses are not covered by the ministry like in public schools. Building expenses, school maintenance as well as teacher salaries are all funded by the pious foundation which that particular school is affiliated with as well as by the financial endowments the school can raise throughout the year. That is why the capabilities of the schools or the opportunities that they can offer to their students are restricted by the budget of their foundations. Although the Lausanne Treaty clearly spells out that the minority schools could enjoy an equal share from the public resources, the schools are not regarded as eligible to have a share from the budget of the Ministry of National Education. In fact, most recently during 2022 budget meetings, the MP Garo Paylan's motion to allocate a share from the ministry's budget was denied by the Committee on Planning and Budget (Agos Newspaper, 5 November 2021).

On the other hand, their special status as minority schools does not hinder those schools from fully being integrated into the education system in Turkey. As much as graduation certificates of students allow them to continue their education in any other school as parents of the student wish, upon their requests the students can also be transferred to public, private or foreign schools in accordance to their preferences. Since Armenian schools follow the same state-curriculum with public schools, school transfers do not demand additional requirements. On the same note, their graduation certificates make them eligible to take high school or university entrance exams; thereby, Armenian high school graduates can proceed their education in public or private universities without any predicament.

I already mentioned that the minority schools are to follow a centrally prepared state-curriculum. However, as the Armenian schools are entitled to have the entire curriculum, with a few exceptions that I will address shortly, in the Armenian language, they are expected to translate this state-curriculum into Armenian and cover the same topics in a pedagogical manner approved by the ministry. As the curriculum is common in all schools, students are responsible for these course subjects in the

centrally held high school and university entrance exams that are conducted fully and only in Turkish. Although the Armenian schools have the liberty to choose their language of instruction, the school administrations can also prefer the classes to be taught in Turkish. Today, considering particularly the pressure that the central exams create on students, the schools with a few exceptions prefer to teach the classes almost exclusively in Turkish. Whereas at the preschool level Armenian reserves its place as the language of the classroom as well as instruction, in the following years it is displaced by the preponderance of Turkish and at the further classes in high school as the central exam preparation dominates education, the instruction becomes fully Turkish. I will discuss this matter thoroughly in the following chapter while visiting the neoliberalization dynamics of the educational realm in Turkey.

When adopting the state-curriculum, the Armenian schools keep their right to integrate Armenian language and Armenian literature classes into the curriculum and to replace the content of religion & ethics classes with the tenets based on Christianity and Armenian customs. When preparing the program of the Armenian language, Armenian literature and religion & ethics classes, the teachers still have to follow the guidelines provided by the Ministry for Turkish language, Turkish literature and religion & ethics classes respectively and create course material analogous to those prepared by the Ministry. The weekly course hours of those classes should be equal to their analogous Turkish classes. For instance, if the curriculum has 4 hours of Turkish language classes, 4 hours of Armenian language classes can be added to the program. However, as the decision is the school's to make, sometimes the administration ends up decreasing Armenian language or Armenian literature classes to not overwhelm the students with so many extra course hours. The content and teaching materials of these classes are designed by the teachers of the classes. There are already Armenian schoolbooks which have been approved by the Ministry to be used as course materials in Armenian language and Armenian literature classes. However, the paucity of these books makes it necessary for the teachers to prepare additional course

materials. The rest of the classes in the curriculum, which are not Armenian language, Armenian literature or religion & ethics classes, can be taught in Armenian only on the condition as I mentioned earlier, that the school follows the state-curriculum sanctioned by the Ministry. However, the preparation of any course materials for classes held in Armenian is the responsibility of the schools. The Ministry distributes Turkish school-books compatible with state-curriculum to all schools in Turkey including the minority schools. The Armenian schools can use these books as their course materials as they wish or provide supplementary Armenian course materials if they teach the class in Armenian.

Last but not the least, the status of the minority schools allows them to celebrate religious holidays and take the days off by informing the Ministry at the beginning of each school year. Since the schools follow the yearly schedule of the Ministry, this situation elicits the taking of days off for both Muslim and Christian religious holidays as well as national holidays which are common to all schools.

Ending this chapter on these remarks, my intention throughout the chapter was not only to paint a clearer picture to describe the current context of the Armenian schools but also, as I expressed my intentions earlier, to show the factors forging the ambiguity of the minority schools. Beyond this descriptive picture, in the following chapters I intend to explain the ways these dynamics work in practice and to unravel the network of relationships engulfing the Armenian schools by bringing some examples from my fieldwork. On these remarks, I argue that the milieu of the Armenian schools will be more salient to discuss their predicaments as well as their value and virtue for the Armenian community.

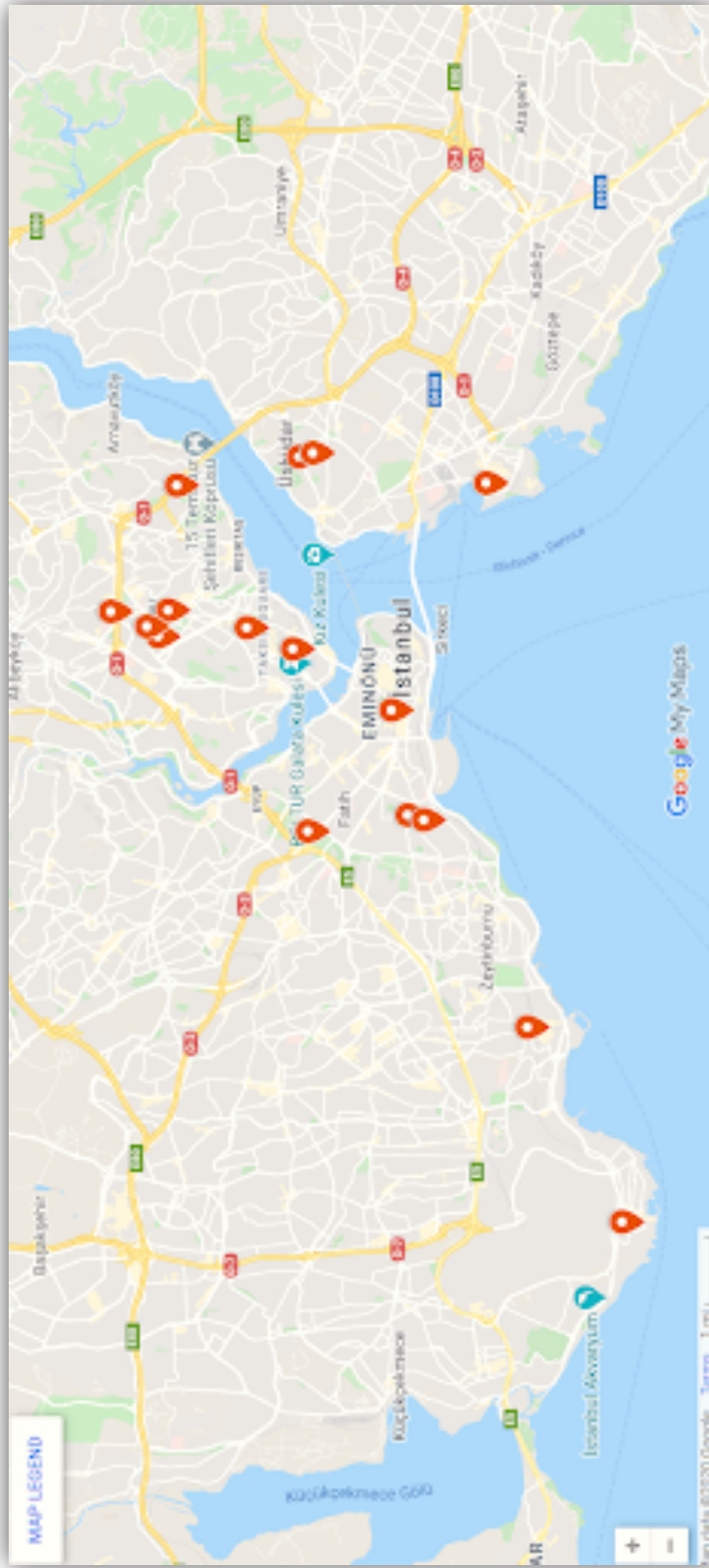


FIGURE 2.1 Armenian Schools in Istanbul in 2023 (each red pin represents one school)

ARMENIAN SCHOOLS

TABLE 2.1 The list of Armenian Schools in 2023

School Name	Year Of Establishment	Level of Education	Location by Neighborhood
Anarad Hıçutyun Armenian Elementary	1868	Pre-school, elementary, middle	Koca Mustafa Paşa, Fatih
Aramyan Uncuyan Armenian Elementary	1873	Pre-school, elementary, middle	Moda, Kadıköy
Bezciyan Armenian Elementary	1830	Pre-school, elementary, middle	Kumkapı, Fatih
Bomonti Armenian Elementary	1808	Pre-school, elementary, middle	Bomonti, Şişli
Dadyan Armenian Elementary	1844	Pre-school, elementary, middle	Bakırköy
Esayan Armenian Elementary and High	1895	Pre-school, elementary, middle, high	Taksim, Beyoğlu
Getronagan Armenian High	1886	High school	Karaköy, Beyoğlu
Kalfayan Armenian Elementary	1866	Pre-school, elementary, middle (boarding)	Üsküdar
Karagözyan Armenian Elementary	1912	Pre-school, elementary, middle (boarding)	Şişli
Levon Vartuhyan Armenian Elementary	1834	Pre-school, elementary, middle	Topkapı, Fatih
Merametçiyen Armenian Elementary	1912	Pre-school, elementary, middle	Feriköy, Şişli
Pangaltı Armenian Elementary and High	1825	Pre-school, elementary, middle, high	Pangaltı, Şişli
Sahakyan-Nunyan Elementary and High	1831	Pre-school, elementary, middle, high	Koca Mustafa Paşa, Fatih
Surp Haç Armenian High	1706	High school (boarding)	Üsküdar
Tarkmançats Armenian Elementary	1785	Pre-school, elementary, middle	Ortaköy, Beşiktaş
Yeşilköy Armenian Elementary	1954	Pre-school, elementary, middle	Yeşilköy, Bakırköy

SOURCE Türkiye Ermenileri Patrikliği www.turkiyeermenileripatrikligi.org

3

Governing Armenian Schools Through Ambiguity

As a part of my larger project ruminating the liminal characteristics of the Armenian schools in Turkey, my initial goal is to unfold the ways the Armenian schools and their quotidian practices are governed. This chapter serves this initial aim and tries to delineate the quotidian domain of legality with respect to the Armenian schools in the terrain of a whirlwind of political changes in governance emerging predominantly from the neoliberal shift of Turkey. Despite the preponderance of earlier studies on the ethnic and religious minorities of Turkey that sees the state as an agent and elucidate its actions with respect to a *raison d'état* (Aktar, 2000; Akçam and Kurt, 2016; Bali, 2000; Bayır, 2017; Kirişçi, 2000; Yeğen, 2007) or descriptive studies on the minority schools explicating the minorities at an impasse as a result of a repressive state (Barış, 2019; Kaya, 2012; Yazıcı, 2015), this chapter presents a perspective at odds with the prevailing understanding of a state that calculates its moves as a comprehensive unity. Taking certain studies such as Feldman (2008), Yonucu (2018) or Parla (2019) as its vantage points, the chapter unfolds the Armenian schools with respect to their tenuous domain of everyday practices and accentuates legal ambiguity in governing the schools. Considering the paucity of analysis probing tenuous domains or ambiguous ways of governing in Turkey, this chapter offers a novel way to understand how

ambiguity governs the minority schools as the schools are held in abeyance and the tenacity of government is perpetuated with political shifts emanating from neoliberalism.

Against the general surmise that there is a nation state which is actively involved in the control of the minorities or their schools, this chapter hunts down governmentality around the Armenian schools, which is historically shaped by Turko-Islamic precepts reigning the political and socio-cultural context from the later periods of the Ottoman Empire to today, and argues that the relationship between the state and the Armenian schools is not as straightforward as it is claimed conventionally. Although it is largely told that the Armenian schools in Turkey have been governed strategically by an evil *raison d'état*, this chapter asserts that this explanation is rather insufficient in addressing the issue comprehensively and is not quite supported by the empirical data in the sense that it is rather possible to find contrary examples to this argument. The chapter delineates that while reshaping itself on different occasions and yet presenting its image as a comprehensive and all-encompassing whole, the Turkish state actually governs its minority schools by preserving legal ambiguities and instrumentalizing these ambiguities as spaces of maneuver in accordance with its political agenda. That is why instead of resorting to an explanation of a meddling state which controls and rules over every detail regarding the Armenian schools, I assert the Turkish state as a meandering state whose actions are not so straightforward but rather meandering with reforms and improvements, although its desire to subdue the minorities perseveres.

Instantiating the current situation of the Armenian schools, the objective of the chapter is to foreground both continuity and rupture in governing the minority schools in particular. The chapter argues that sovereignty is undergirded by legal ambiguity and combines with discipline and technologies of self-government. Governance subsumes Turko-Islamic precepts that constructed the authority and image of the state; and thereby, the rupture that altered the political domain with neoliberal precepts coexists with continuity and is conducive to the perpetuation of

sovereign power and its image. In other words, although the chapter underscores governmentality and the political shift in governance as opposed to the state as a subject, it still prefers to use the concept meandering state because the sovereignty which is historically constructed and derived from Turko-Islamic ideology does not wither away; on the contrary, it can be sustained under the auspices of governmentality.

With the purposes of illustrating the transfiguration process of governance of the Armenian schools, I outlined this chapter in a way to capture different examples of the altering dynamics in the socio-political context. The outline of this chapter is organized under three main titles. First, while building on the insights of scholars theorizing the state and governance, I elucidate what the concept “meandering state” connotes in this particular case and the reasons why I prefer to use it. Later, I delineate the way the field of education altered substantially with the whirlwind of changes emanating from the introduction of neoliberalism in Turkey and how these changes can be read in the context of the Armenian schools. Lastly, I explicate my main argument by explaining the way legal ambiguity is instrumentalized to govern the minority schools by holding them in abeyance. In this regard, the former two sections serve a purpose of explaining the dynamics and context entailing the conditions to govern the minorities by ambiguity.

With the purpose of not perturbing my participants, during my fieldwork I did not use any recording device and instead preferred to take notes when appropriate and possible. Most of the school administrators and teachers were initially timid to invite me to their schools and classrooms because of their professional identities. Due to their accountability to their own institutions as well as to the Ministry of National Education, they eschewed expressing their thoughts about the current legal situation of the schools. Although they were more open and even candid about sharing their own experiences, their reluctance and weariness were salient when talking about the daily predicaments of the schools and the way they were governed. This auto-censorship, I believe, tells us a lot about the atmosphere engulfing the Armenian schools today. There-

fore, in order to both acknowledge their experiences and show my familiarity with the legal context applying to the minority schools, during our conversations I often brought up particular topics and issues including the legal predicaments to probe on. In this sense, I have to say that my participants were not completely free from my channelization to certain topics or accentuation on certain issues. However, I can confidently say this did not inhibit them from expressing their thoughts and experiences. They skipped the topics that they did not want to talk about and brought up new topics and perspectives when they wanted to.

When sharing their experiences and thoughts since the participants indistinctly mentioned regulations, articles, rules and practices, for the purposes of presenting content-wise consistent and extensive examples, instead of quoting my participants directly or sharing the incidents exactly as they told, I preferred either to find those regulations, articles, documents with reference to their publication information on the Official Gazette, or track down those facts, cases or events on the newspapers and relevant academic studies, and share them throughout the chapter to re-narrate the story in its comprehensiveness and historicity. Although all the information shared throughout this chapter were drawn from my fieldwork and the interviews I conducted, I explicate phenomena delineating the current context of the schools by frequently adducing evidence from various resources and preferred not to share excerpts from my interviews.

§ 3.1 Reshuffling Perspectives towards the Turkish State

Statist approaches (Norlinger, 1987, 1988; Skocpol, 1979; Krasner, 1978; Evans et al., 1985) decipher the state as an autonomous entity and a system of decision making whose actions cannot be shaped by forces in society (Mitchell, 1991b, p. 82). The state is presented as a disembodied ideality integrated with national interests (Mitchell, 1991b, p. 86) and described with respect to its tendency to be an expression of the pact of domination and act coherently as a corporate unit (Skocpol, 1985, p. 48). With its es-

sential unity, the state stands apart from society as a set of original intentions or preferences, and its conflicts between different parts of the state apparatus are regarded as secondary and internal to this larger unity (Mitchell, 1991b, p. 88). With the purpose of explaining contradictory and incoherent forms of state action, more current accounts theorizing political authority argue that the state subsumes complexity and multiplicity of actors and institutions, and yet they undergird that the state signifies forms of power that differ from institutions that cannot be explained by concepts such as governmentality or governance (Morgan and Orloff, 2017, p. 17-18).

In line with statist approaches, the preponderance of earlier studies regards the Turkish state as a hegemonic nation-state characterized with a nationhood that is based on the ethnicity, religion and cultural identity of one majority group (Yeğen, 2007, p. 126; Ergil, 2000, p. 43). In building the dominance of this majority group and promoting itself as a homogeneous nation state, the state denies the existence of multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism of the country as Turko-Islamic precepts are conducive to the production of its sovereign power (Kirişçi, 2000, p. 1). Among other studies, the studies on minorities as well elucidate the socio-political context with reference to a repressive Turkish state as it coherently acts as a system of decision-making (Akçam and Kurt, 2015; Bayır, 2017; Turan and Öztan, 2018). Cognizant of the prevalence of such studies and narratives in the domain of everyday, during my fieldwork, it was not perplexing for me to see that the narratives of my participants were structured in a way that the state was depicted with reference to its rational calculations, preferences and desires as a meddling state, as I name it, meticulously controlling legality and scrupulously manipulating quotidian details of the everyday life.

In order to accentuate the coherence among the state apparatuses which makes this meticulous intervention possible, Bayır (2017) argues that as legality and judicial bodies cover up nationalist tendencies promoting Turko-Islamist values, they actually act in coordination with the nationalist agenda of the state (p. 407). She furthers that judicial bodies

never act as against the political status quo; rather, they disregard requests to promote differences within the political and legal system and deny pluralist characteristics of the society (Bayır, 2017, p. 407). While locking the public space within the framework of language, culture, history and values of one specific majority, the state abuses the concept of civic nationalism to ban the practice of differences stemming from different identities, cultures, religions, languages, and compel the minorities to dissolve their differences in a national culture that is in fact composed of Turko-Islamic precepts (Bayır, 2017, p. 9, 22).

Historically constructed Turko-Islamic ideology as the constituent element of the sovereign power of the Turkish state equally resonates with the minority schools and the legal framework applying to them. The edifice of the minority schools was reconfigured by concomitant socio-political shifts with the establishment of the Turkish Republic. With the Lausanne Treaty, which is largely accepted as the founding treaty of the Republic, the minorities reserve their rights to manage and control any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education of their communities.¹ However, as my research confirmed the findings of earlier studies and research projects (Kaya, 2012; Oran, 2004, 2018; Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011) that although Armenians reserve the group-right to preserve their schools and enjoy their cultural rights as indicated in the Lausanne Treaty, like I already explained in the former chapter the articles are not implemented without any reservation or setback as it is often specified by the public discourse. Article 41 of the Treaty says that “the Turkish Government will grant in those towns and districts, where a considerable proportion of non-Muslim [sic] nationals are resident, adequate facilities for ensuring

¹ Here, I refer to the non-Muslim minorities as it was specified in the Lausanne Treaty and address to Armenian, Rum and Jewish populations whose cultural rights were legally recognized in the Lausanne Treaty. Here onwards, whenever I use minority, minority schools, or minority foundations I refer to these three populations. Throughout the text, I use minority schools and minority foundations interchangeably with community schools and community foundations respectively.

that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Turkish nationals through the medium of their own language." Although Article 41 explicitly specifies that the non-Muslim minorities are entitled to enjoy an equitable share in the public funds for educational, religious, and charitable purposes, the Armenian schools cannot benefit from any financial contribution; rather, they are abandoned to the fate of their individual foundations. The Armenian schools, like the other minority schools, are funded by their community foundations, and preserving their facilities or covering any other expenses to sustain these schools stay within the responsibility of the particular foundation that each school is attached to. Exceptions to this rule are sporadic benefits in kind by a few municipalities. In such a context, the schools whose foundations are not wealthy and resourceful enough to secure their funding find themselves at an impasse at every education year. In some schools that I visited, many participants brought up this issue as thwarting their very existence.

Although legal experts interpret Article 45 of the Lausanne Treaty on the rule of reciprocity as a clause on parallel responsibilities for both Turkey and Greece, it is often instrumentalized as a leverage at the international disagreements between Greece and Turkey and seen as collateral or could be abrogated in case of a breach by one party (Oran, 2004, p. 97; Tarhanlı, 2002, p. 37). From the perspective of legal obligations, the rule of reciprocity seems like it does not refer to the Armenians in Turkey. However, as skirmishes between Turkey and Greece bear legal consequences for the Rum schools, the reworking and revisions taking place in the governing of the Rum schools reverberate in the Armenian and Jewish schools, because they are all tied by the same laws and regulations as they all are put under the category of the minority schools. In this regard, international agreements or disputes between Turkey and Greece shaping the state of the Rum community in Turkey are also significant in framing the context around the Armenian schools and any political development at the international arena between Greece and Turkey begets drawbacks in the Armenian schools eventually. A series of regulations which were issued after the exacerbation of the Turkish-Greek dispute

over Cyprus after the 1960s in particular can be mentioned in this context. Regarding these developments, Oran (2018) gives a thorough description of the general framework and Kaya (2012) gives a very comprehensive list of these regulations and legal modifications which were introduced by either the Ministry of National Education or Istanbul Directorate of National Education starting mainly after the 1960s.

Some of these legal modifications were repeatedly raised by my participants during our interviews in order to delineate the overall atmosphere of the time period. Here, I would like to focus on my field data and mention a couple of examples reflecting this mindset; in 1966 the Ministry of National Education banned books which were published outside of Turkey to be used in the community schools², in 1970 the Ministry of National Education appointed Turkish vice principals in the minority schools to become the sole authority in receiving and signing all official documents sent to the schools; in 1971 Istanbul Directorate of National Education sent an official document and requested the schools to ask for permission for every event, theater performance or show taking place in the schools, and their Turkish translations to be sent to the Istanbul Directorate³; and in 1974 Istanbul Directorate asked the minority school administrators to send Turkish translations of all exam materials including their answer keys⁴ (Kaya, 2012, p. 51-53).

Furthermore, the Law No: 625 on Private Educational Institutions⁵, which was issued in 1965 and stayed in force up until its replacement with the new law in 2007, shows us how the nationalist agenda of the state speaks towards non-Muslim citizens. Throughout the articles of the Law No:625 the term foreign schools⁶ also refers to the minority schools and compels them to follow the same regulations that foreign schools are

² Ministry of National Education Document No: 311-2941 on 26 July 1966

³ Istanbul Directorate of National Education Document No: 510/63 on 25 August 1971

⁴ Istanbul Directorate of National Education Document No: 531-47 on 22 August 1974

⁵ Ratified in Official Gazette No:12026 on 18 June 1965

⁶ Here, in accordance with the Law on Private Educational Institutions (Official Gazette No: 26434 on 14 February 2007), the foreign schools refer to the schools which were established by foreigners.

obliged to follow in their operations. These regulations include the requirement to appoint a Turkish vice principal from among the Turkish culture teachers working in the same school.⁷ Even further to that requirement, in the relevant article it says that “in the absence of Turkish culture teachers [suitable to be appointed to this position], a branch teacher, who is a Turkish citizen of *Turkish descent*, can be appointed to this position” [emphasis added] (The Law No: 625 Article 24)⁸.

Until very recently, these vice principals, who are appointed by the Ministry of National Education, were also the chiefs of records in their schools, the sole disciplinary authority keeping and assessing disciplinary and professional records of Turkish culture teachers.⁹ The school

⁷ The mindset behind this requirement is to have a Turkish speaker in the administrative board of the foreign school to monitor the regulations and rules, so that the foreign school would not have a bureaucratic problem especially with the Ministry of National Education. *Özel Öğretim Kurumları Kanunu* [The Law on Private Education Institutions] No: 625 Article 24. Although this position was created with the Decision No:9/290 on 16 November 1937, it was abolished in 1949 (Circular Letter 93/2-2565 published in *Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Tebliğler Dergisi* [The Ministry of National Education Bulletin] No: 543 on 1 August 1949), and re-brought into force in 1962 (*Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Tebliğler Dergisi* No: 1208 Vol: 25 published on 18 June 1962, Circular Letter No: 5887 sent on 28 April 1962).

⁸ The Law No:5580 on Private Educational Institutions (Official Gazette No: 26434 ratified on 8 February 2007). Although this article was not included in the recent law on private educational institutions in 2007, the relevant article took place in the regulation in 2008 but with a difference this time that the phrase “of the Turkish descent” was abolished (Article 35 of the Regulation on Private Educational Institutions (Official Gazette No: 26810 ratified on 8 March 2008)), and the recent regulation on private educational institutions issued in 2012 took over the same article (Article 28 of the Regulation on Private Educational Institutions (Official Gazette No: 28239 issues on 20 March 2012)). The community schools are still obliged to include a vice principal appointed from among the Turkish culture teachers working in their schools, who are appointed by the Ministry of National Education through a central appointment system.

⁹ Ministry of National Education Document No 236.1-2358 sent on 1 July 1964. In the other schools, I mean the schools except for foreign schools, the authority to keep the disciplinary records of the teachers belongs to the school principal.

principals I talked to stated that this situation used to undermine the authority of the principals, and cause dualism between principals and vice principals in the schools since it was the vice principals who had the exclusive authority to audit the work of Turkish culture teachers despite the higher rank of the principals. By a directive prepared by the Ministry in 2010, the situation slightly changed for the better and the authority of school principals was relatively recognized in the disciplinary processes.¹⁰ With this amendment, the school principals became the chief of records and disciplinary authority in the school for the teachers who were hired by the school administration, whereas for Turkish culture teachers the vice principals became the primary and the school principals the secondary disciplinary authority and chief of records, secondary being higher in the rank. By this change, the school principal had some disciplinary authority over Turkish culture teachers, which was entirely absent before.

As I already explained in Chapter 2, only citizens of the Republic of Turkey of Armenian descent can be registered to an Armenian school.¹¹ Until very recently, the Ministry of National Education decided whether the students were eligible to be registered in the Armenians schools¹² and monitored this process during which the parents of students were asked to submit their applications to a committee assigned by the ministry to request the registration of their children to an Armenian school and seek an approval from the Ministry which allegedly made a decision

¹⁰ Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Özel Öğretim Kurumları Genel Müdürlüğü Yönergesi No: 2490 sent on 24 March 2010. However, Turkish culture teachers are still audited first by the vice principals unlike their colleges in the same school, and vice principals are still only audited by provincial and district directorates of national education and relevant governors, not by their principals although they come first higher in the organizational chart. The school principals who are supposed to rank highest in the hierarchy in their schools, lack the authority to audit their vice principals.

¹¹ Article 5/c of The Law on Private Educational Institutions No: 5580 ratified in 2007.

¹² The document no 235/18 sent by the Istanbul Directorate of National Education to the District Directorates of National Education on 8 August 1991. This procedure also means that the Ministry had the authority to decide on the Armenianness of its citizens; whether or not to accept their Armenian identity.

based on its registration database. During my conversations with the school administrators about the bureaucratic difficulties that the schools had experienced in the past years, this subject was poignantly raised to instantiate the disagreements between the schools and the Ministry. They particularly shared some instances when the parents had trouble in registering their children, and even more tragic, in proving their Armenianness so that their children can be registered in an Armenian school.

In 2013, it came out that since the establishment of the Republic, the civil register offices actually kept a record of ethnicity of the population and even coded them in accordance with their ethnic identity (Agos Newspaper, 1 August 2013).¹³ While this situation found relatively large coverage in the media and started a controversy, it also created frustration and indignation in the public. It is not comprehensively known exactly with which purposes the state used this information. However, one of the known facts is that the Ministry of National Education used this database to approve registration requests of parents by matching the racial codes of students with the particular community schools that the students want to be registered in. After the public indignation with the racial coding came into open, finally in 2015, with an amendment on the Law on Private Educational Institutions, the final decision on the criteria for registration to the minority schools was given to the school principals - alt-

¹³ This procedure came into the open when the parents of a student applied for the permit of the Ministry of National Education to be able to register their child into an Armenian pre-school. The Istanbul Directorate of National Education sent a letter to Şişli (District) Directorate of National Education and requested an eligibility check on the racial code of the family in their identity registration documents, having number "2" referring to Armenianness. (See Agos Newspaper: 1 August 2013. *90 yıldır 'soy kodu' ile fişlemişler.*) Following this occasion, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs stated that this record keeping is solely for the purposes of education and deciding the eligibility of students for their community schools. (See Agos Newspaper: 2 August 2013. *İçişleri Bakanlığı: Soy durumları Milli Eğitim Bakanlığına veriliyor.*) However, the interview by a journalist with a head of registry office showed that minorities who had no schools also had registry codes for categorization (See Radikal Newspaper: 2 August 2013. *'Soy kodu' Osmanlı'dan, Süryaniler 4 numara.*).

though this does not mean that the decisions of the principals are not audited (Agos Newspaper, 10 August 2015).¹⁴ The coding system was allegedly removed from the databases of the Directorate General of Population Affairs with the decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.¹⁵ Following this amendment, a group of school principals, board members and representatives of the Patriarchate came together and agreed on the standards for the eligibility of students to be registered in the Armenian schools (Agos Newspaper, 10 August 2015). According to the final decision given by this committee of representatives, as a requirement for the registration and to judge the eligibility of students, the principals would look for the certificate of baptism of the prospective students in either the Apostolic or Catholic Armenian church or for the certificate showing the membership of the child in the Protestant church (Kuyumciyan, 14 August 2015). Today, the school administrators follow these standards by and large.¹⁶

As my research shows and the school administrators affirm; a considerable number of the aforementioned enforcements are rather loosely or sometimes nominally in practice now. In operation, the processes run more conveniently and sometimes are flexible enough to provide adequate solutions to the problems of the schools. However, for example the ban on books published outside of Turkey is still in practice. For the minority schools, which have a prevalent trouble in producing and finding education materials in their language of education, this kind of measures does not make their work easier, and, what is more, restraining education within the limits of school textbooks in a global world where information is shared transnationally exceeding national borders does not seem very much pedagogically convenient.

¹⁴ The document No: 16915068-10-E.6649558 sent by Directorate General of Private Educational Institutions to Istanbul Directorate of National Education on 28 June 2015.

¹⁵ The Minister of Internal Affairs expressed only verbally that the practice of racial coding came to an end in the databases of the Directorate General of Population Affairs (See Agos Newspaper, 25 February 2016. *Soy kodu 'şifahen' kalktı.*).

¹⁶ I will further probe these standards in the following chapters within the context of identity and religion.

Discussing the content and extent of history textbooks used in public schools, and how Turkish nationalism and myths around the Turkish identity produced through these textbooks do not fall into my subject of research. However, in order to present the comprehensiveness of the situation, I would like to say a few words about the subject as these matters were largely specified during my interviews. In every school under the auspice of the Ministry, the guidelines of the Ministry within the framework of a national curriculum cover everything regarding the operation of the schools from the content of textbooks to classroom sizes or to events organized in the schools (Kancı and Altınay, 2007, p. 52). Education in Turkey is comprehensively and tightly defined and controlled by official policies of the Ministry of National Education from the center through state-imposed guidelines (Kancı and Altınay, 2007, p. 52). As a result of this state-centric curriculum development and textbook production, textbooks in Turkey which are distributed to schools by the Ministry of National Education are regarded as the major means of nationhood and the promotion of Turkish nationalism (Kancı and Altınay, 2007, p. 52). The minority schools in general and the Armenian schools in particular are not exempt from these regulations. Like their counterparts, from the earlier periods of the Republic their functioning as well hinged on this centralized national curriculum system. While the minority schools were obliged to stay within the limits of this national curriculum and follow the guidelines provided by the center, they were also not allowed to include Armenian history into their curriculum. At present, the Armenian schools still cannot add Armenian history classes in their curriculum or teach Armenian history either as a separate class or in Armenian language classes. The national discourse does not only regard Armenian history as not pertaining to the history of the Republic, but also perceive teaching it as inconvenient and even damaging against national integrity. As opposed to Armenian history classes, like I mentioned in the previous chapter the schools include Armenian literature classes to the curriculum on the condition that the syllabus of these classes corresponds fully with Turkish language and literature classes whose syllabuses are also determined by the Ministry.

In Turkey, school textbooks are distributed to students free-of-charge by the Ministry. In the Armenian schools, the same rule applies. However, since the Ministry only publishes and distributes textbooks for the classes in Turkish, the designation of textbooks and teaching materials for the classes held in Armenian and the classes that are not included in the national curriculum stay under the responsibility of the schools and the purchase of teaching materials under the responsibility of the parents. Abruptly in 2010, the Ministry of National Education made a gesture to the Armenian schools, and published and distributed textbooks of mathematics and life sciences classes in the Armenian language, which were previously translated into Armenian by the initiative of the Armenian Teachers Foundation without any monetary gain (Barış, 2019, p. 295). Again, for the first time in the 2015-2016 academic year in the religious culture and morality section of the high-schools entrance exam (TEOG) organized centrally by the Ministry, students attending the Armenian schools were asked questions about Christianity in Armenian.¹⁷

Additionally, in the context of the upturn of events with the EU integration process and the reform packages following it, there have been quite a number of improvements with regards to regulating the minority schools among other reforms ameliorating quotidian practices of the ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey. Whereas the minority schools could not gain much on the legal ground as their special status still did not receive a legal acknowledgement in the domestic law or they did not acquire equal access to public funds or resources, in the quotidian domain the lawyers and school administrators I interviewed underscored concrete improvements especially after the Justice and Development

¹⁷ A large set of questions were prepared by the Patriarchate and sent to the Ministry of National Education, and the Ministry chooses questions for the exam by an automation system from the pool of questions. With this practice, Armenian religious culture became part of the central examination system and acknowledged as a complimentary part of the society. However, this step in itself refers to the fact that Armenian culture is regarded within the boundaries of religion and still not quite accepted as a component of a shared art, literature and history constituting an important segment of the Ottoman past.

Party came into power in 2002 and mainly after the negotiations of the EU membership accelerated in about the same period.¹⁸

What I am saying is that the aforementioned examples could have been merely analyzed and explained with reference to a repressive state as a coherent system of decision making, and could be substantive examples to a meddling state that meticulously controls the functioning of the schools with its legal means. According to these examples, we can argue that the law which is at the monopoly of a Turko-Islamic state almost always has worked for the depredation and even ravage of non-Muslim cultures. The narrative of my participants as well present the state with its essential unity characterized with its national interests and a Turko-Islamic synthesis doctrine as they vehemently depict the condensation of a meddling state in their daily lives. However, in addition to legal reforms through which I could track down developments in the legal status of the schools, throughout my interviews especially with the school principals and teachers, I learned that mainly after the early 2000s, the situation of the schools considerably ameliorated, despite occasional deteriorations.

I argue that the statist approaches fail to explain these recent changes, reforms and developments in the situation of the minorities in general and the minority schools in particular. Moreover, they fall short in explaining the enhancement of quotidian practices in the life of the schools, albeit the tenacity to keep the legal framework as it is in some areas. I argue that such a perspective is not sufficient and is not undergirded by empirical examples and there is a need for more finely-tuned analysis to capture these oscillations. These oscillations in the political authority

¹⁸ One of the striking examples of these improvements, which was also largely expressed by the principals and journalists I talked to, is the registration methods and processes of the community schools. The legal regulations in 2002, 2003, 2008 and 2012 following the reform packages within the framework of the EU integration process brought some alterations for the regulation on the acquisition of landed properties of minority foundations, and recognized their right to acquire properties registered under their legal entities. (Information acquired from an interview with a legal expert.) First one of these regulations was in 2002 when the clauses were added to the Article 1 of the Law on Foundations No: 2762 issued on 5 June 1935 (Official Gazette No: 24841 on 9 August 2002)).

urge us to pursue the political shift in Turkey that begets certain changes for governing the minority schools.

With the objective of explaining these oscillations cognizant of a political shift, I prefer to use the term “meandering state” which subsumes both forms of sovereign power and governmentality, both precision and ambiguity, both continuity and rupture. I argue that not only does the sovereign power of this meandering state that is historically constructed on a Turko-Islamic synthesis doctrine not entirely surrender, but it also encompasses new forms of governance through legal ambiguity. I also argue that governing through means of legal ambiguity couples with the technologies of self-government in the domain of education which became possible with the emergence of the new individual introduced substantially with the neoliberalization of education in Turkey.

In order to capture this meandering state, I propose that shifts in political authority require us to think through the lenses of governmentality. Today as a result of the internationalization of economies and changes in productive structures, the state undergoes a metamorphosis (Hibou, 2004, p. 2). As Jessop captures, the state in the new neoliberal context is a qualitatively new political configuration; therefore, we need the urge to alter our frames of analysis to analyze these new state forms (1999, p. 381). Instead of presenting the state as the supreme holder of power which deploys that power to dominate and rule, by thinking through the means of governmentality we can decipher the dispersal of power across social institutions and individuals, and thereby transcend our conventional definitions of the state (Sharma and Gupta, 2006, p. 25). In this new frame of analysis, we can elucidate the way the rule is secured, sometimes in tenuous ways, and the way power is exercised in society by governmentality that offers a variety of not necessarily coordinated methods (Sharma and Gupta, 2006, p. 25).

Foucault asserts that as government has a finality of its own, it significantly differs from sovereignty (Foucault, 1991, p. 94). Unlike the statist approaches, looking through the lenses of governmentality, Foucault argues that the state has no essence, no inherent propensities (Gordon, 1991, p. 4). Foucault rejects to see the state as a single unified body; rather,

he sees it as a composite reality subsumed by a dispersed range of powers that penetrate into our everyday routines and practices (Joseph, 2003, p. 179). For Foucault, unlike sovereignty which represents a top-down, unified form of power exercised from a central point, in modern societies power does not refer to a fixed property which is at the possession of someone or something; on the contrary, power emerges as multiple, strategic and dispersed (Joseph, 2003, p. 177). Instead of seeing it as the vertically highest institution where power inheres, the new form of government offers us the ways to see power through a horizontal network of institutions and individuals (Sharma and Gupta, 2006, p. 25). With the aim of explaining this aspect of modern societies, Foucault conceptualizes the term of government as ‘the conduct of conduct’ which works through certain ‘techniques of power’ that are designed to shape, guide, monitor or affect the behavior of individuals as they take part in social and economic institutions such as the school, the factory or the prison (Gordon, 1991, p. 2, 3).

However, the emergence of new forms of political authority does not necessarily mean that power altogether takes over the place of sovereignty. Despite the distinction between sovereign power and governmentality that he accentuates, Foucault acknowledges that these two forms of power can coexist in variegated ways (Butler, 2004, p. 52). Sovereignty is not eliminated by the emergence of a new art of government; on the contrary, it is perpetuated by governmentality (Foucault, 1991, p. 101). For this reason, the state cannot be identified merely either with the acts of sovereignty or with the field of governmentality, since they both act in the name of the state and compose it as contemporaries (Butler, 2004, p. 54). Instead of eliminating sovereign power or denying the precepts of its *raison d'état*, governmentality works in various ways to enhance and even to perfect it from within (Foucault, 2015, p. 25).

In the light of these insights, I figure the aforementioned examples remind us that reading social and political domains of Turkey requires us to include variegated lenses. For this reason, I aim to follow the scholars that carve out a new space for analyzing forms of governance. In that re-

gard, I find *The Making of Neoliberal Turkey* (2016) is a very helpful vantage point to rethink the Armenian schools as the schools face new challenges with the neoliberalization of education in Turkey. The authors foreground that as the post-1980s Turkey witnessed both the decentralization of power and the unification of power under certain state apparatuses at the same time, Turkey underwent a political shift substantially through a neoliberalization process (Erol *et al.*, 2016, p. 3, 7). The neoliberal shift refers to a new political authority that also begot a new form of society as it created new assemblages around the idea of the market (Türem, 2016, p. 41). Based on this perspective, they argue that this configuration refashioned our conceptual tools to understand socio-political dynamics; and therefore, propose a fresh analytical perspective based on the incorporation of the dual concepts of neoliberalism and governmentality as opposed to state-centered analyses of Turkish society (Erol *et al.*, 2016, p. 3).

Similarly, Küçük (2017) contends that particularly during the governance of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the political power performed a change with the restructure of administrative, financial, and judicial state apparatus by a corporate mentality. Describing the differentiation of the AKP period from the incipient stages of neoliberalism in Turkey, Küçük and Özselçuk (2015) accentuate the dual transformation in the mentality of governance and in the societal body politics with reference to the corporatization of the governing mind (p. 162). However more specifically, they draw attention to the ways the transformation of governance engages with the national identity. They argue that in this new form of society, the governing mind attempted not only to underpin and oversee neoliberalism but also to obviate the “disrupting” effects of the politicization of social stratification by reconstructing the national identity (2015, p. 162, 164). In doing so, it eliminated gridlocks of nationalism and redressed its dysfunctionalities by rearranging social differences through a partial recognition politics instead of denying them completely as it did before (Küçük and Özselçuk, 2015, p. 168). While this partial recognition perpetuates the conflictual, unstable and dialogic struggle between parties, it also further consolidates the dominance of

the majority by interfering with the apt means and methods to demand rights, status or equality (Küçük and Özselçuk, 2015, p. 168).

For the reasons of grasping the transformation of governance, I see a need to revisit neoliberal transformation that multiplied and decentralized power in Turkey in the particular context of the Armenian schools. Taking studies on how reconfigurations of power produce new variants of the modern as an inspiration (Erol *et. al.*, 2016; Fujitani, 1996; Mahmood, 2015; Wedeen, 1999), the further objective of this chapter is to couple the sovereign power with disciplinary technologies of governmentality, and show how these variegated aspects of the modern alter contextual dynamics that the Armenian schools in Turkey reside in today. With the purpose of painting a picture of the context of the Armenian schools roughly after the 1980s but predominantly after the 2000s, I will delineate in the next section the neoliberalization of education in Turkey.

§ 3.2 Emerging New Social Forces with the Neoliberal Shift

In her reading of Navaro-Yashin (2002), Özyürek (2007) probes the argument that the idea of the state is still intact and vibrant because it is reproduced by daily practices of certain groups staying outside the central domain of the state, and criticizes Navaro-Yashin (2002) for not questioning the reasons why power is reproduced outside the domain of the state at that very historical sequence (p. 37). I believe the same question applies to my research, albeit in a different way. In order to understand the changing dynamics governing the Armenian schools, it is significant to comprehend the transmogrified domain of education, because substantially with the intensification of competition and new definitions of success, the lives of the students in the Armenian schools and their parents revolve around values emanating from the market. In that regard, I argue that with the neoliberalization of education the state no longer needs to control certain areas of the Armenian schools in their quotidian practice; rather, as the schools embody neoliberal precepts through various means, power working at the level of practice produces individual subjectivities as apt citizens of the state.

Introducing a theory of political economic practices, neoliberalism has infiltrated into our ways of thought; and therefore, had effects on how we interpret, live in or understand the world as it became a hegemonic discourse (Harvey, 2005, p. 2. 3). In his seminal work, Harvey describes neoliberalization as ‘the financialization of everything’ referring to the predominance of finance over all areas from economy to the state apparatus and to our daily lives (2005, p. 29). As this trend became hegemonic mainly after 1982 with the impact and central significance of the IMF and the World Bank, free market fundamentalism and neoliberal orthodoxy have been increasingly regarded as necessary and even natural for the regulation of the social order (Harvey, 2005, p. 29, 41). With competition represented as the primary virtue by neoliberalism, individual success or failure has predominantly started to be scored with respect to their market values (Harvey, 2005, p. 65).

Chevier argues that during the shift in the mode of production the state loses its privileged position and stops to be the master of collective recognition (2004, p. 253). This shift marks a weakening of the articulation of national discourses, disciplinary apparatuses including educational ones (Yudice, 1995, p. 4). However, this does not allude to weakening of the state; rather, the state is reconfigured as the global dispersal of new forms of organization, consumer culture or information technologies occupy the space left by a national discourse (Yudice, 1995, p. 4). Thereby, by refashioning the political domain, neoliberalism redefines the public sphere and promotes new ways of reconfiguring the social domain (Atasoy, 2009, p. 22).

As neoliberalism has become the hegemonic economic political structure, compatible with global changes Turkey followed a similar path in the reconfiguration of its economic and political realm. Following global trends of neoliberalization mainly after the 1970s, Turkey liberalized its national economy by introducing the market mechanism with January 24 1980 measures to integrate with global capitalism (İnal and Akkaymak, 2012, p. xiv). Later, this process was solidified with socioeconomic and political conditions promoted by the 1980 military coup (Kurul, 2012, p. 84). However, it was after the 2000s the readjustment of the political domain

in accordance to the market values was increasingly intensified with the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came into power. As the political economic conjuncture marked a movement away from a state-led developmentalism, the program of the current ruling AKP was to reconfigure the society based on a synthesis constituted in between a neoliberal discourse and a Muslim cultural orientation (Atasoy, 2009, p. 7, 9). There are many important studies on the neoliberalization process of Turkey unfolding how the political space has been redefined and the social space reconfigured with neoliberalization and how the notion of private and public spheres has been altered (Adaman *et al.*, 2017; Akça *et al.*, 2014; Atasoy, 2009; Balkan *et al.*, 2015; Erol *et al.*, 2016; Gökay, 2021; İnal and Akkaymak, 2012; Kandiyoti and Saktanber, 2002; Önder, 2016; Rutz and Balkan, 2009; Navaro-Yashin, 2002). A dispute about prior discovery is no part of the intention of this chapter; however, for the objective of this chapter and to be able to unpack the daily predicaments of the Armenian schools, I find it necessary to pithily present the neoliberalization of education in Turkey building on the insights of some of these authors.

After Turkey declared its commitment to neoliberal policies and suppressed social opposition with the military coup of 1980, the marketization of the education system came later in the 2000s particularly in the AKP period (Özmen, 2012, p. 47). The AKP considered the education system responsible for several problems of Turkey and foregrounded the necessity for a structural reform in the education system that would be in line with the neoliberal values promoted by and achieved with the guidance of the World Bank, the IMF and the EU (İnal and Akkaymak, 2012, p. xiv). The main objective of this structural reform was to adopt a neoliberal discourse while changing the national stance of education into a global one and to produce the labor force desired by the market economy (İnal and Akkaymak, 2012, p. xv). When the AKP presented the neoliberal education program which was introduced mainly after 2004 as the only way to overcome the failure of public education while accentuating quality, competition, standard and governance in education, it also instrumentalized education to increase human capital (İnal, 2012, p. 19, 20). The

educational change was heavily oriented to the marketization of education, as the main objective was to educate students in accordance with the market economy and to supply a new workforce for the highly globalized markets (İnal and Akkaymak, 2012, p. xv; İnal, 2012, p. 18).

The marketization of education connoted the change of school curricula in line with new expectations of the neoliberal global structure and even casting different roles for the youth from different socio-economic level families. Özmen explicates that the neoliberal policies had an influence initially on the curricula and correspondingly on the textbooks and auxiliary materials addressing sixteen million students in the formal education system (2012, p. 47). In addition to revisions on the curricula and textbooks, the reforms introduced Total Quality Management (TQM) and performance assessment of teachers, abolished the laws restricting religious education, and increased the number of Koran courses in line with conservative agenda of the government (İnal and Akkaymak, 2012, p. xv). With the 2004 Primary School Education Reform oriented neoliberalism in the education system, the textbooks became a source leading students towards fields of production, marketing, advertising, consumption and entrepreneurship as the market economy necessitated (Koşar-Altınyelken and Akkaymak, 2012, p. 64).

In this transformation, the collapse of public education going hand in hand with interventions into the public budget further expedited the marketization and commodification of education at every level in Turkey. Although the budget allocated to education under the AKP government increased, the share in educational funding decreased gradually over the years (İnal, 2012, p. 22). Whereas the budget of the Ministry of National Education for educational investment was 17.18% in 2002, it regressed to 4.57% in 2009, and parents were expected to cover increasing educational costs (Eğitim-Sen, 2021). The gradual withdrawal of the state from public services eventually commodified education (Rutz and Balkan, 2015, p. 63). Despite the increasing number of students, the schools received disproportionate shares of educational allowances which eventually resulted in crowded classrooms, deficiencies in education equipment, paucity of teachers partially due to unattractive salaries, deterioration of the quality

of education, insanitary schools without water, heat or security, and more importantly decreasing confidence in public schools and teachers (Kurul, 2012, p. 89; Rutz and Balkan, 2015, p. 37).

While almost every field of public education has been privatized and marketed, the lack of public investment in schools paved the way for private schools and tutoring institutions to emerge as alternatives (İnal and Akkaymak, 2012, p. xv). The preference of parents and students for the transition from public schools to private ones became even more salient as the number of private colleges and tutoring institutions towered up gradually (Yücesan-Özdemir and Özdemir, 2012, p. 11). The number of primary and secondary private schools increased from 961 in 2011 to 4,333 in 2020, and private high schools from 885 in 2011 to 3,882 in 2020 (Eğitim-Sen, 2021).

The features of private schools which make them significantly differ from public schools are worth mentioning here to be able to present a clearer picture of the education environment in Turkey. Whereas the class sizes of public schools can go up to 60 students depending on supply of the number of schools in the region, private schools have to keep their class sizes 20 students for pre-schools, 30 students for primary and secondary schools, and 24 to 30 students for high schools depending on the type of the high school.¹⁹ Private schools are famously known for their competitive foreign language education that are often provided by the professional expertise of native speakers. Unlike their public school counterparts, private schools also have evaluation tests that are usually held monthly to evaluate the performance of their students. Since their budget allows, private schools also equip their classrooms with technology devices ranging from computers, equipment for visual learning, smart boards, and devices for science classes to sport equipment or art supplies. With the opportunities of these equipment, they can also provide extracurricular activities for their students which can develop their

¹⁹ Ministry of National Education Private Educational Institutions Regulation Article 48 (Official Gazette No:28239 on 20 March 2012).

social, cultural, physical as well as artistic skills, or create room for student clubs which are usually presented as improving organizational and leadership skills of students. In this picture, public schools are most of the time regarded as less preferable because of the inadequacy of opportunities that they can offer. Additionally, public schools are also perceived as less stable because they are influenced most by the ever-changing and oft-renewed regulations and policies.

Furthermore, with the penetration of market values into non-market spheres, community-based ideals left their space to those of individualism blended in the social policy regime of the ruling AKP (Yücesan-Özdemir and Özdemir, 2012, p. 11). This meant the deepening of competition among schools to undermine solidarity and to solidify inequalities among students (Kurul, 2012, p. 92). This transformation deepened the gap among students from different socio-economic levels. Whereas middle income families could imagine social mobility for their children, the youth from low and lower-middle class families were deemed worthy of jobs in flexible job markets (Bulut, 2012). Rutz and Balkan underscore that when neoliberal values, which stand for the individualization of responsibility and destiny, heated up competition strategies especially among the new middle class families, these decisions additionally influenced the children of socio-economically disadvantaged families by deepening the inequality among students. (2015, p. 17, 19). However, Rutz and Balkan do not mention how other students who were thrust to the peripheries of the educational domain have been influenced by these processes. Like their counterparts, the Armenian schools, which essentially persevered to sustain Armenian cultural values and communal solidarity, adhered to competition and market values promoting individual success at the expense of ravaging the cooperation among the schools which have been largely acknowledged as key to cultural continuity. My research unfolded that success as it is defined by the market values pit against cultural sustainability in the Armenian schools. I will further discuss this phenomenon in detail by visiting the perspective of the parents while I discuss their parts in the larger Armenian family in the next chapter.

In addition to the marketization of education, as aforementioned briefly, the examination event itself also plays a distinguishing factor among the young generation of Turkey. The emergence of the central examination system as a momentous event in the lives of students was one of the concomitants of the neoliberal transformation. In 1974, the Inter-University Student Selection and Replacement Center was established to operate the ways of acting together of universities in the processes of entrance examinations.²⁰ In 1981, one year after the military *coup d'état* and as a result of the changing political conjuncture, this center was nationalized, and put under the regulation of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) as the Center for Assessment, Selection and Replacement (ÖSYM, n.d.). With the nationalization of this center, a central examination for the selection of prospective students for universities was put into practice and the process started to be regulated structurally from one center. Similarly, high school entrance examinations, which were initiated in the 1960s, were centralized by the Ministry of National Education in 1983.

This examination system brought along some implications, and played its part to alter the education environment drastically. This overly competitive measurement process brought about high school education has been fully centered on the examination event, and has become for all intents and purposes dysfunctional (Gök, 2010, p. 1). Since the main concern of students and parents is now to enter a prestigious high school and thereafter a university, which is highly regarded as the initial step on the way of a successful career, the schooling path that brings students all the way up to the university has been instrumentalized, lost its education component, and mainly focused on instructive elements. In this new context, the meaning of knowledge was altered, and it referred to answering multiple choice questions as fast and as accurately as possible (Rutz and

²⁰ In order to overcome the problem of excessive surplus of candidates, starting with the 1960s universities initiated entrance examinations through which they could decide on desirable students suitable for their curriculums. Later, this trend paved the way for the formation of an inter-university council to manage the process, and operate ways of acting together.

Balkan, 2015, p. 139). As the central examinations dominated the classrooms and displaced the role of teachers, the exam dynamics compelled teachers to fixate on certain predefined topics and methods in the employment of central exam preparation (Rutz and Balkan, 2015, p. 204). In this environment, the value of educational institutions was measured by their prospects in preparing students for the central exams as well as their replacement listings. Competition and success measured by multiple choice questions consolidated its place in the educational culture in Turkey in the 2000s, and has reinforced its own place since then. I believe the statistical data of the gap between the number of applicants and quotas can paint a clearer picture to realize the severity of the situation. In 1977, while 360 thousand students entered into the university entrance exam, quotas could only let 60 thousand students be accepted to universities. Mardin (1992/2005) delineates this situation as that the remaining 300 thousand students were obliged to work in low paid jobs where their future prospects were not so bright (p. 281). Today the situation has not changed, only deteriorated over the years. In 2022, according to statistics of the Council of Higher Education, 3.243.334 students applied for the university entrance exam, whereas the quotas only let 850.641 students to receive higher education (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, n.d.).

As nationally conducted central examinations emerged as the access points to best high schools and universities, they became the sites where middle class competition and privilege could be best observed (Rutz and Balkan, 2015, p. 26). Today, the central examination system dominates the daily life of every student as well as every parent in Turkey, and paves the way for almost obligatory changes in the Armenian schools. My research unpacked that the central examination system and the marketization of education dramatically influence the situation of the Armenian schools today. During our interviews, the teachers over and over underscored the fact that not only they were obliged to cover the topics included in the central exam word by word without any flexibility, but also, they were limited by merely covering these topics and not bringing additional topics to the classrooms. During my visits, I could observe firsthand how the concerns stemming from the central examination event dominated the

classes, as the teachers focused on delivering a curriculum targeting the central examination as comprehensive as possible.

Moreover, since students have to answer the questions in state exams in accordance with the curriculum prepared by the Ministry, which reproduces and confirms the national history, education is tied with the strings of this narrative. It is often regarded as not practical to bring different perspectives to the classroom, because it serves no purpose for the central exam. In such a context, Armenian language and culture is challenged by the dynamics of this examination event because it does not meet a practical need and it struggles to find its place in this grand carnival of central examination.

In the following chapter, with reference to my interviews I decipher in length how the central examination and the neoliberalization of education have shifted the internal dynamics of the schools. For the purposes of this chapter, I will not probe this subject further, and confine myself to argue that the neoliberalization of education has been a breaking point for the Armenian schools in that they found themselves in a conundrum that challenged them to find a balance between neoliberal values and cultural sustainability. While Armenian literature and language could not find any place in standardized skills and knowledge that the market demands, the school administrators that I talked to said that the Armenian schools have undergone certain processes to relinquish the cultural aspects that they primarily wished to preserve. In that regard, they gave examples from the simplification of materials of Armenian language and literature classes to their preferences of holding the classes in Turkish instead of Armenian because it was more convenient for the exam preparation.

With neoliberalization altered social dynamics in the field of education permanently, disciplinary power governing the Armenian schools has started to work within. When neoliberalism redefined the political domain, sovereign power that we used to refer to as the negative, constraining, exterior power gave way to internal, productive power (Mitchell, 1991b, p. 93). Neoliberalism gave birth to disciplinary power that, unlike sovereign power, works at the level of detail and produces actions of

individuals instead of constraining them (Mitchell, 1991b, p. 93). In the age of neoliberalism, governance does not pursue straightforwardly shaping collective behavior anymore; rather, it aspires for the production of a certain kind of mentality that can eventually bring desired practices (Lemke, 2015, p. 30).

The emergence of neoliberalism marks a macroeconomic shift that elicits new individual subject positions (Türem, 2016, p. 33). Governing extends its meaning, and refers not only to how we exercise authority over others but also to how we govern ourselves, our own bodies, personalities, and inclinations (Dean, 2010, p. 20). Governmentality constructs the modern individual as an isolated, disciplined, receptive and industrious political subject (Mitchell, 1991b, p. 93). This modern individual constructs themselves as an enterprise in competition who has to acquire as much as possible to get ahead of others (Türem, 2016, p. 45). In our case, the conduct of conduct finds its meaning here in the domain of education when individual subjectivities of students are produced in accordance with neoliberal values and when students desire success as defined by the market. With the neoliberalization of education the students in Turkey perceive competition as essential to survive in the education and labor system. Students are expected to be entrepreneurial to create and polish their distinction among their peers. Moreover, the parents, who regard their children as their individual projects to be gradually developed, turn into entrepreneurial families while proceeding their constant competition with other families (Rutz and Balkan, 2015, p. 20).

In this new era, the government does not need to oversee the daily practices of the minority schools any more. Instead of dealing with the schools as a negative, exterior power, it institutionalizes the schools to be integrated into the mainstream education system in a way that they can nurture the market. The state acts as an institution nourishing neoliberal values by constituting and ensuring competition in variegated realms and levels (Türem, 2016, p. 42). As the central examination, foreign language acquisition, acquiring and developing organizational and leadership skills that the market demands dominate the education system, the

Armenian schools spend all their energy to meet these demands. The individuals produce acquiescence themselves by embodying competition as the education system teaches them. The schools are now governed from within with the active involvement of students, parents and teachers as competition predominates in the domain of education.

Mitchell deciphers the condensation of new techniques governing quotidian practices of our lives as "enframing" (1990). According to his conceptualization, by their intangibility and impersonal nature, technologies of power present themselves as non-particular, non-material and unchanging frameworks, which enframe actual occurrences (Mitchell, 1990, p. 569). These practices of this sort, he continues, create the effect that as if they transcend the dimension of reality, although they are constituted like the rest of the social world (Mitchell, 1990, p. 569). The new modes of power create the common effect of enframing and appear to stand outside actuality, outside events, outside time, outside community, outside personhood and outside reality (Mitchell, 1990, p. 569). Their effect stems from their local influence, regularity and repetitive uniformity (Mitchell, 1990, p. 571). The central examination system in Turkey creates this common effect of enframing in the realm of education. All the constituents of the education system in Turkey take the central examination system and competition that it entails as a transcendental dimension of reality, something as non-particular and non-material.

The Armenian schools as well are not off the grid. They share the same framework with the other schools since new techniques of governing profoundly impact their operation. For that matter, the destruction emanating from the neoliberalization of education carries variegated meanings for the Armenian schools as they frequently end up in a position requiring them to relinquish certain aspects of their identities. Today, although the Armenian schools are enframed by tight curricula and expectations shaped by a central examination system, they are often analyzed solely with reference to an external all-encompassing state. However, as I described above oftentimes, the state does not intensively pursue tedious strategies to subdue minorities; rather, governmentality

produces acquiescent individuals as the schools play their role to be incorporated to the marketization of education. On the other hand, visiting the tools of governmentality does not suffice to analyze and comprehend how the Armenian schools are governed. The marketization of education couples with legal ambiguity to govern the Armenian schools as these two phenomena feed the illusion of the state as an all-encompassing entity to be promoted.

§ 3.3 Protracting Ambiguity as a Governing Mechanism

At the beginning of the chapter, in order to emphasize the multiplicity of ways governing the schools, I suggested analyzing the environment surrounding the Armenian schools, their experience and predicaments with reference to a meandering state which encompasses tools of both sovereign power and disciplinary power. I use this concept in a way referring to both continuity and rupture in the political power in the governing of the Armenian schools as I argue that the state meanders through sovereign power and disciplinary power and embraces both of them. In order to probe the concept of this meandering state further and talk more about new strategies of the sovereign power, I paint a picture with cases from the field to describe how the governance of the schools performs through legal ambiguity. I contend that these cases illustrate that ambiguities are undergirded by the coexistence of sovereignty and governmentality; they build on the continuity of Turko-Islamic precepts of the sovereign power and the rupture from the constraining power of the previous political authority.

In spite of the fabricated contrast between modernity and ambiguity, ambiguity is indeed a significant part of the modern state by which the state can govern its population without comprehensively dictating collective action or scrupulously demarcating realms of interaction. The modern state pioneered to create a new type of power which was pervasive as it was never experienced before. While delegitimizing and dissolving local self-government mechanisms of communities and undermining social foundations of their traditions and lifestyles, the modern state had

to mingle with the government of these social practices and design them (Baumann, 1991/2020, p. 150, 151). In the course of this design, it supported certain forms that promote similarity whereas effaced the others by assimilating them into uniformity (Baumann, 1991/2020, p. 151). The assimilation of these features, which meant either to weaken or to eliminate competitive resources of local powers, performed as an entry ticket to a world released from the sense of otherness, but actually threw its victims into a trap of chronic ambivalence, because they could never be fully part of the desired outcome (Baumann, 1991/2020, p. 148-153).

The objective of modern practice, says Baumann, is not the conquest of foreign lands; rather, it seeks to fill the gaps for a complete picture, because modern practice has no tolerance for uncertainty (1991/2020, p. 21). Building an order means dissolving the ambiguous, and in the political sphere this objective corresponds to the categorization and expulsion of the foreign, the definition of the legitimate and the illegitimate in the domestic sphere, and the elimination of legal gaps by defining them (Baumann, 1991/2020, p. 43). Based on Baumann's explanation, we would expect the Turkish state to define the legal sphere so concretely and explicitly that the legal framework applying to minorities to be meticulously prepared without leaving any legal gaps. However, the case with the Armenian schools²¹ is far from pre-specified with rigid laws and regulations where there is no room for uncertainty. Because of the lack of laws and regulations which should have been written specifically for the community schools to define their status, rights and regulations, these schools are governed in a state of ambiguity, and this ambiguity gives birth to modern forms of governing by holding the schools in a state of abeyance and abandoning them to mercy of the political agendas. Although the modern state seems like it cannot endure ambiguity, it actually embodies a network of possibilities stemming from ambiguity.

²¹ I use minority schools, community schools and their subcategory Armenian schools interchangeably, because the legal framework applying to the Armenian, Rum and Jewish schools is the same. In the legal documents, regulations and laws the schools are legally called minority schools.

Paul Veyne demurs to see political life as something gravitating around the poles of spontaneity or constraint which consistently keeps people under control; rather, he foregrounds it as something taking subordinate needs sporadically into account (1992, p. 315). Similarly, although I agree with the studies (Barış, 2019; Kaya, 2012; Yazıcı, 2015) arguing that the desire of the Turkish state to subdue the minority schools prevails, this does not mean that governing the Armenian schools is so straightforward. Instead, it includes enhancement and reforms of the legal framework and practice. As strategies of sovereign power couple with governmentality, these strategies are not based on firmness, but uncertainty. I argue that legal ambiguity is used as a strategy to govern the Armenian schools by sovereign power, while variegated forms of governmentality already perform by means of the marketization of education.

My argument is based on studies that center ambiguity as a tactic of sovereign power. Freitag depicts Ba'athist ideology in Syria as intentionally performing vaguely with the purpose of embodying disparate groups (1991). As her book captures the elusiveness of power in daily life in contemporary Syria, Wedeen illustrates that the actual experiences of both domination and resistance cannot be analyzed by the coherence of power, but its ambiguities (1999). Feldman portrays incapacity and the dynamic of abeyance as a tactic to maintain the rule in Palestine (2008). Parla describes 'uncertainty as an instrument of sovereign power' to hold migrants in legal abeyance (2019). She additionally underscores the fact that as hope is embraced by migrants to resist immobility and marginalization for legal inclusion, it performs as a tool of governmentality (2019, p. 177).

While both governmentality and sovereign power apply law as a tactic, Butler asserts that this mechanism works either by employing law in accordance with the interests of the state or suspending it to an instrumentality of the state (2004, p. 82). She further explains that the acts of the suspension of law should give us insights about the reintroduction of sovereignty as it contorts law to its own uses (2004, p. 54, 55). In addressing the selective nature of law in Turkey, Belge argues that the Constitutional Court of Turkey acts selectively in using its clout to protect some

values while suppressing others (2006). In her work on anti-terror law, Bargu underscores the ambiguity and contestation of the definition of terrorism and describes the discourse of terrorism as a product of ideological conflicts resulting in 'definitional ambiguities and the political stakes of these ambiguities' (2014). As Biehl characterizes the asylum system in Turkey with indefinite waiting, limited knowledge, continuous inquisitions, unpredictable legal status, restriction of movement and ambiguity of laws, she describes this system with the concept of 'protracted uncertainty' which has a powerful governing effect by containing, demobilizing and criminalizing asylum seekers both in a temporal and spatial sense (2015). In a similar vein, Sarı and Dinçer as well define the asylum system in Turkey as constituted by ambiguities and uncertainties as 'improvisation, unpredictability and irregularity' characterized the system (2017). Yonucu uses the term 'absent present law' when capturing the contradictions of the rule of law and the anti-terror law while she describes it as both functioning and not functioning selectively (2019). She argues that ambiguity and unpredictability create the effect law to be experienced as an inconceivable and elusive power over individuals (2018, p. 718).

Unfolding the complexity of governing in Gaza, Feldman pays attention to how continuity and rupture, stability and crises, contradiction and connection, regularity and exceptionality perform in bureaucratic practice as a governing dynamic which is both tenuous and effective at the same time (2008, p. 12, 13). While exploring the conditions of rule, she sees authority as not simply constituted by 'clearly stated regulations or minutely plotted jurisdiction'; rather, she depicts its formations as dispersed and pervading throughout (2008, p. 15). She says authority is not steady and constant; it is produced through practice (2008, p. 15). Furthermore, she argues that by looking only at the daily practice in its historical specificity, we can understand how diverse and contradictory techniques work together in governance and the perpetuation of tenuous governments (2008, p. 224). By giving attention to practice, we see the authority of tenuous governments is produced through reiteration of mundane details (2008, p. 3) and consolidated through interactions

among those who participate in governing (2008, p. 61). It is the practice of government services that makes things work, albeit tenuously, and renders the authority opaque by incorporating multiplicity of governing bodies, practices and participants (2008, p. 188).

3.3.1 *Ambiguity in Legal Framework*

At the initial steps of my research, in order to grasp the practical level of the legal framework applying to the Armenian schools, I interviewed lawyers working on cases that were relevant to the lack of a legal entity representing religious minorities, landed properties of community foundations or problems resulting from lack of regulations on the community schools. Due to their professional expertise, they were knowledgeable enough to explain dynamics of communal disagreements substantially emanating from the lack of umbrella institutions that could manage communal affairs and ensure dialogue between parties. Although some of them directly pointed to deficiencies of the legal framework in addressing operations of the Armenian schools, our conversations heavily centered on more general and collective problems of the Armenian community, such as the lack of a legal entity handling communal matters at a larger scale or troubles pertinent to landed properties of the community foundations. These issues may seem like falling outside the interests of this research. However, I will show that the legal and financial precarity of the foundations has a straightforward disruptive impact on the schools and plays a role in holding them abeyance.

As customary and aware of the fact that I am not a legal expert, the lawyers I talked to initially had the propensity to start unpacking the legal framework applying to the minorities by articulating the relevant articles of the Lausanne Treaty.²² Soon after they foregrounded the fact that there is no correspondence of the section on the protection of the minorities in the Turkish domestic law. For me, it was another confirmation of

²² The section on the protection of the minorities (Articles 37-45)

the words of Baskın Oran, the prominent professor of law, who throughout his studies extending over years captures the cases and issues that the religious minorities of Turkey have to bear. What was startling to me in one of these meetings was when one of the attorneys brought me Oran's seminal book *Minorities and Minority Rights in Turkey: From the Ottoman Empire to the Present State* (2018) from her library and told that all the answers I was looking for were already in that book. Besides the fact that I already read the book, my curiosity did not end there and I proceeded to ask my questions to be able to compare and contrast the knowledge about the legal framework with comments of school principals and teachers on the practice of legality.

Oran stresses the limits of the domestic law addressing the minorities in Turkey, and highlights the fact that there is no written legislation on the protection of the minorities (2004, p. 83). In fact, the existence of the conferences²³ on the subject of the legal entity and representation question of the non-Muslim minorities organized in Turkey tells us a lot about the ubiquity of the knowledge towards the problem. The book, *Yok Hükmünde* (Koptaş and Usta, 2016), composes papers that lawyers from the field submitted in one of these conferences and presents a comprehensive framework on the subject. Like Oran (2004, 2018), while capturing the lack of legal entity representing the religious communities and legal vacuums in the domestic law, the authors of the book share examples of how legal ambiguity is perpetuated throughout years and governments.

Being also one of my interlocutors, Bakar underscores the lack of the rule of law as the basis of legal and practical problems of the Armenian community (2016, p. 108). As a result of the absence of precise regulations addressing the legal entity of religious communities in the relevant body of law, Zonana foregrounds the fact that these communities are obliged

²³ Religious Minorities in Turkey (11 October 2012, Galatasaray University); Non-Muslims and their Legal Entity: Problems and Rights I (13 May 2013, Ankara University); Non-Muslims and their Legal Entity: Problems and Rights II (30 January 2014, Istanbul Bilgi University).

to engage in activities indirectly through their foundations and associations (2016, p. 91). Vingas reminds that 168 minority foundations are consumed because the elections for board members cannot be held due to the absence of regulation on the elections of community foundation (2016, p. 15).²⁴ Aslangil connects this legal gap to issues of the community schools and stresses the requirement to redeem school affairs from the laws governing the foundations (2016, p. 131). Since the schools are under the rubric of their foundations, the laws governing the foundations also envelop the schools and further undergird ambivalence. The schools are held in abeyance in a status that is subjected to regulations of both the Ministry of National Education and General Directorate of Foundations.

Continuing on this note, we can see the same pattern in the legal status of the community schools. Although the right to manage and control the schools by their respective communities is perpetuated in the Republic in accordance with the Treaty, today there is still no regulation specifically written for the management of the minority schools.²⁵ Following the constant demands of the minority schools to have a regulation which can respond to their special status and needs, finally in 2012 a new regulation²⁶ was issued. However, as the principals and lawyers I interviewed highlighted, this regulation is far from meeting the requests and needs of the minority schools as it brought nothing new to the legal realm regarding their functioning. The regulation was basically another version of former regulations applying to the minority schools; it did not change or

²⁴ With the abolishment of relevant articles in the Regulations of Foundations in 2013 (Official Gazette No:28533 on 19 January 2013), the board elections of the community foundations could not be held until June 2022, when the Regulation on the Elections of the Community Foundations was issued (Official Gazette No:31870 on 18 June 2022). The elections were held in October, November and December 2022.

²⁵ Kaya (2012) and Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı (2011) mention the Regulation on Armenian Schools and Regulation on Armenian Secondary and High Schools issued in 1976. However these regulations are not in use, and according to the statements of my interviewees they are outdated to address the current problems of the minority schools.

²⁶ Ministry of Education Regulation on Private Schools (published in Official Gazette No:28239 on 20 March 2012).

acknowledge the minority schools as a separate category. In order to find a permanent and substantial solution to this problem, a committee of school principals and board members prepared a document pointing out the situation and rooms for advancement for the minority schools. Nonetheless, their efforts could not bring any solution to their legal uncertainty. Still at this point, not only communal affairs are regulated *de facto*, but also the school affairs are governed on *ad hoc* solutions often subjected to tools of improvisation. Therefore, when unraveling the legal basis of the minority schools, my conversations with the legal experts and school principals centered on the uncertainty prevailing in the governance of the schools.

However, this should not mean the incapacity of the state in providing a legal basis for communal affairs. The legal experts, board members, academics and school principals showed their enthusiasm many times throughout the years to point to legal uncertainties undermining the functioning of the schools through their statements in different venues, as well as during my meetings with them. The absence of regulation could have been surmounted through their input. Moreover, the Ministry of National Education is a self-supporting and self-sufficient institution to be able to fulfill educational needs of the society inclusively. However, laws governing the minority schools continue to be characterized with unpredictability and irregularity as a result of the lack of regulation. Therefore, practices applying to the schools change from government to government and the officers dealing with the minority schools are obliged to learn the environment almost from the bottom up in their incumbency periods and develop their own methods. This in itself multiplies the problems of the administrators of the schools and entails them to develop tools of improvisation when dealing with bureaucracy.

Before I started my field study and visited the schools, I conducted a pilot study to have a general idea of the setting and to get familiar with names and procedures regarding the Armenian schools. During that study, I met with my friends, colleagues, classmates or family friends to acquire more honest opinions and hear some criticism of my study. In one of these meetings, on a nice November evening in the cafe of the Turkish-

German bookstore I had the intention to ask my friend, who also happened to my ex-colleague, about his personal experiences and high school memories to perceive his viewpoint on the subject that somehow, I have never been so curious about before. Carried away with more salient problems of the Armenian schools, sharing his high school memories made him tell the history of his high school. As an alumnus of the school, in most general terms he told the tumultuous legal process of the school. Later, with my keenness ignited in this conversation, I asked the school principal further about it. Albeit some missing points and details, she narrated the same story that I shared with you below. However, in order to pay homage to the historical and legal details of the process and pronounce the names accurately, I take the text written with the advisory of legal experts and shared on the website of the school as my reference point, and tell the story of the Surp Haç Tibrevank High School²⁷ to illustrate one of the examples of how uncertainty and ambiguity are used as tools to govern the schools.

Since the Surp Haç Tibrevank High school was originally founded to fulfill educational needs of ecclesiasts, this example also signals the disputes about the seminary and clergy schools in Turkey and gives some insights about the way educational needs of officials working in non-Muslim religious institutions are met through improvisation and irregularity. Despite the right of religious communities to keep their religious institutions intact, the vaguely constituted discourse of secularism has a sanction against the sustainability of seminary and clergy schools. After 1971, clergy schools were shut down and the practice for the education of ecclesiasts was interrupted.²⁸ Today, there is no seminary or clergy school in Turkey whose graduates can work and maintain customs and traditions in their religious institutions. That is why religious authorities of Christian communities develop alternative ways to bypass the problems stemming from the absence of religious education and send their

²⁷ Սուրբ Խաչ Դպրեվանք Վարժարան [Surp Haç Tibrevank Varjaran]

²⁸ The Decision of the Constitutional Court on 12 March 1971 1969/31 E and 1971/3 K (Official Gazette No:13790 on 26 March 1971)

potential candidates abroad for professional training and theological education. The legal ambiguity that the Surp Haç Tibrevank High School was put in originated from those conditions.

In 1678 in the Üsküdar neighborhood of Istanbul, the Surp Haç Church opened a religious school, later in 1770 the structure of the school was expanded, transformed into a seminary school and subsisted until 1932 when it was shut down and suspended education (tibrevank.com). In 1950, when Archbishop Karekin Haçaduryan²⁹ was elected as the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, with his personal initiative and with the permission of the Ministry of National Education, the school was re-opened as a boarding seminary school with secondary and high school parts and additionally with a theology department with the name of “Surp Haç Tibrevank Armenian Seminary School”. In the following year, in order to monitor the administrative affairs of the school, the Foundation of Surp Haç Tibrevank Armenian Seminary School was established with the permission and acknowledgement of the Istanbul Governorship. Again, in the same year, Istanbul Governorship acknowledged the legal entity of the foundation and its right to acquire properties in accordance with the Law on Foundations. Thereby, with the recognition of the Governorship from 1953 till 1961 until the abolishment of the Committee of Collective Management of Armenian Properties³⁰, the foundation was monitored like the other Armenian foundations by the Committee. In 1961, after the abolishment of the Committee, the foundation was recognized as a community foundation by the Governorship with the decision of Kadıköy Civil Court of General Jurisdiction³¹. In 1967, on the pretext that the theology section of the school had inadequate number of students to further theological education, the theology department of the school was shut down and the school retained its educational facilities only in its secondary and high school parts. In 1969, when the Ministry of National Education strongly requested the school to renounce its semi-

²⁹ Գարեգին Ա. Տրապիզոնցի Խաչատուրեան

³⁰ Ermeni Malları Müşterek İdaresi Komitesi

³¹ Kadıköy Asliye Hukuk Mahkemesi Decision No: E:1961/104 K:1963/48 on 7 August 1961

nary education on the grounds that seminary education did not correspond to principles of secularism, the school was transformed into a minority school with the name of “Private Surp Haç Armenian School”.³²

However, things got further complicated and became vague after that date. Although the foundation renewed its board membership elections every 4 year starting with 1961 with the permission of the Governorship based on the Law on Foundations, the Governorship delivered their certificates of election to board members every time without any complication, and the Ministry of National Education inspected the foundation for years, in 1985 the election of the board members was not approved by the Governorship and their certificates of election were not delivered. The decision was given on the allegation that the foundation did not have a legal entity. The Governorship did not recognize the foundation’s right to be established as a foundation and declared its legal existence null and void (Güreh, 24 April 2012). During the period of time that the Governorship perceived the foundation void, not only did the school stay in education, but also the Ministry of National Education continued to acknowledge the school as legitimate enough to assign Turkish culture teachers and vice principals to employ there.

Even further, in 1999 based on the decision of the Secondary Commission of Minorities (*Azınlıklar Tali Komisyonu*)³³, the Ministry of National

³² Having said that, in the next year, the number of Imam-Hatip Schools (Imam and Preacher Schools), which were established in accordance with the Article 4 of the Law of Unification of Education in 1924 with the objective of training religious experts, swiftly increased and reached 72 (Aşlamacı and Kaymakcan, 2017, p. 281, 282). These schools were later transformed from vocational schools into mainstream educational institutions, which gave their graduates the right to pursue university degrees in religious as well as non-religious fields (Hendek, 2019, p. 10). The principles of secularism which the Turkish state was so eager to follow were perceived highly vulnerable vis-a-vis the education of clerics, but kept their resilience in the presence of Islamic education and the public countenance of its institutions.

³³ In 2004 the document abolishing the Secondary Commission of Minorities officially proved that the Commission was secretly established by a presidential precept in 1962 to oversee minority affairs. The members of the Commission included representatives from the National Security Council, the National Intelligence Service as well as the Turkish General Staff (See Küçükşahin, 24 February 2004).

Education alleged that the foundation was approved as a minority foundation *by mistake* and in fact had no legal entity to acquire properties. Therefore, its properties should be identified and transferred to the Treasury. In the document sent by the Ministry of National Education Directorate of Private Educational Institutions on 10 September 1999 says that

“According to the decision of the Secondary Commission of Minorities, in concern with all landed properties including the building of the school registered under the name of the Foundation of the Surp Haç Armenian High School, which was treated as a minority foundation by mistake, it is necessary to file a court case by the Ministry of Finance. Until the court case is finalized, (..) the school is required to be administered by an appointed trustee according to the (...) court ruling.”³⁴ (Özuzun, 23 March 2003)

In the following years, a court case against the foundation was filed, and in the petition of the lawsuit it was stated that “As it is understood, the Surp Haç Armenian High School, which was in service since 1953 in Üsküdar, was opened to education in accordance with the law No: 625 The Law on Private Educational Institutions; however, later the school administrator misguided the authorities into presenting the school as a foundation and acquired properties from Armenian citizens through the means of bequeath or endowment.”³⁵ (Özuzun, 23 March 2003).

The legal abeyance predominating and undermining the legal status of the high school continued up until the improvements in the area introduced by the reforms with the EU integration process gained pace in the

³⁴ "Azınlık Tali Komisyon kararına göre, azınlık vakfı olarak sehven işlem gören 'Surp Haç Ermeni Lisesi Vakfı' adına tescilli okul binası da dahil bütün gayrimenkuller ile ilgili olarak Maliye Bakanlığı'nca dava açılması gerekmektedir. Dava sonuçlanıncaya kadar, (...) okulun (...) yargı kararıyla kayyum sıfatıyla yönetilmesi gerekmektedir."

³⁵ "1953 yılından beri Üsküdar'da faaliyet gösteren Surp Haç Ermeni Lisesi'nin 625 sayılı Özel Öğretim Kurumları Kanunu uyarınca açıldığı daha sonra okul idarecilerinin, yetkili kurumları yanıltmak suretiyle, okulu bir vakıf gibi göstererek Ermeni vatandaşlardan vasiyet ve bağış yoluyla mal iktisap ettiği anlaşılmıştır."

2000s. Nevertheless, the legal existence of the foundation was not approved and the foundation was left without any board members to monitor its administrative affairs up until 2012, when its status was finally (re)recognized by the General Directorate of Foundations.³⁶ The legal process and the predicaments this everlasting process gave birth to were overly political and predominantly shaped by the political agendas of the time. However, the means and tactics used during this process were not peculiar either to the time period or to the Foundation of the Surp Haç High School. This was not an individual case where ambiguity was used as a mechanism in governing the non-Muslim population in general or the Armenian schools in particular. In fact, we can see a similar logic applying to all minority foundations and leaving them bereft of their landed properties, and thereby financial security. I will cover this topic comprehensively later in this chapter where I talk about the financial insecurity of the schools as one of the root causes of their problems of uncertainty.

Despite the absence of regulation specifically written on the minority schools, the legal area is not completely deprived of legal regulations and there are certain laws and legislations regulating school affairs. However, these regulations are rather limited to peripheral issues of the larger puzzle. In addition to the problems stemming from the absence of a regulation written specifically on the minority schools, the quotidian practices of the schools are complicated by irregular status of the schools. Having a vague legal status, the minority schools are subjected to the same legal framework with private and foreign schools, whereas neither of these ad-

³⁶ TC Başbakanlık Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü, Vakıflar Meclisi [Republic of Turkey Prime Minister's Office Directorate General of Foundations Council of Foundations], Document No: B.02.1.VGM.0.05.00.00/268 and No: 219 and Document No: B.02.1.VGM.1.25.00.02.(29).130/3643 sent by TC Başbakanlık VGM İstanbul 2. Bölge Müdürlüğü [Republic of Turkey Prime Minister's Office Directorate General of Foundations İstanbul 2. Regional Directorate].

jectives refers to the minority schools in any context. The schools are regulated by the Law on Private Educational Institutions³⁷ and its corresponding regulation³⁸ that was originally designed for foreign schools, driving schools, training centers and other private educational enterprises constituted outside the realm of public education. That is why in most of the cases the minority schools are left in a state of legal ambiguity, in which their individual problems and needs require additional exchange of petitions between public authorities to explain that they fall outside the category. The uncertainty prevailing in the legal domain of the minority schools is further consolidated with being placed in a category where the schools are expected to fulfill standards as their profit-making counterparts. As a result of this conundrum, the schools undergo a series of predicaments on a daily basis.

The minority schools have to employ Turkish culture teachers who are appointed and inspected by the Ministry of National Education and to submit a candidate among these teachers to be a vice principal for the approval of Governorship.³⁹ Whereas this regulation does not apply to private schools and only selectively apply to foreign schools as only their vice principals are appointed by the Ministry, it is very unremittingly practiced in the minority schools whose administrators and teachers are almost exclusively Turkish citizens.⁴⁰ While the minority schools are subjected to this regulation, their legal counterparts (foreign and private schools) have the liberty to hire their teachers through competitive mechanisms.⁴¹ Another example on the same subject is pertinent to the

³⁷ Law No:5580 on Private Schools (published in Official Gazette No:26434 on 14 Feb 2007).

³⁸ Ministry of Education Regulation on Private Schools (published in Official Gazette No:28239 on 20 March 2012).

³⁹ Article 28 of the Regulation on Private Educational Institutions (Official Gazette No:28239 on 20 March 2012).

⁴⁰ The exception to this situation is English language teachers who are employed because they are native speakers.

⁴¹ Until 2015, the minority schools could not choose the Turkish culture teachers working for them. However, this regulation has changed, and now the schools can go through an employment process and submit their preferred candidates to the Ministry for the final

Law on the Turkish and Turkish Culture Teachers of the Minority Schools⁴². As the name implies, the law regulates the appointment of Turkish and Turkish culture teachers to the minority schools. Although there is no regulation on the administration of the minority schools, the Ministry shows its urge to regulate the areas when the minority schools step in the boundaries of national discourse. The Ministry primarily and even essentially designs these areas and regulates the incumbency period of teachers working in the minority schools and yet tenured in the central system of the Ministry. In other words, as the regulation addresses appointment procedures of Turkish culture teachers and vice principals to be employed in the minority schools on behalf of the Ministry, it does only acknowledge the special status of the schools when contacting its bureaucracy, but does not address why they are in particular subjected to this procedure through an external appointment.

3.3.2 *Irregularity in Quotidian Practices*

The ambiguous legal framework brings us to unfolding the *sui generis* characteristics of the minority schools. Aware of the legal basis, I pursued the ways to highlight distinctive features of the minority schools during my visits, and particularly asked questions to the principals to unriddle the subject. Nevertheless, the answers I received were not so complex or perplexing; my participants basically underlined the fact that the regulation overlooked the main reasons for the establishment and maintenance of the schools. The minority schools were essentially established to meet educational needs of their communities and endure their existence as charitable institutions in charge of education, no matter whether the family of the student could afford this education or not. The minority schools do not function on a registration-fee system, where the education is provided as a service in exchange for a fee. Rather, with their communal

approval and appointment. Although the principals have the right to suggest their candidates, the final say is the Ministry's.

⁴² The Law No: 6581 on Turkish and Turkish Culture Teachers in Minority Schools (published in Official Gazette No: 9013 on 20 May 1955)

responsibility, they are obliged to provide education to children of the community. Regardless, the law and regulations governing the schools place them into a category of revenue-generating institutions as in the case of private or foreign schools.

I had the chance to probe this topic through my meetings with different parties and listened to the practical problems from different angles including board members and principals. At each meeting I gained more insight and learned more examples to tell. In one of these meetings at an elementary school, the principal opened the topic with an example of problems stemming from the tuition fee system. Every academic year, private schools are asked to inform the Ministry of National Education about their tuition fees for their financial audit, and this requirement also applies to the minority schools. That is why each year the principals of the minority schools send an informative letter to the Istanbul Directorate of National Education explaining that they are not private educational institutions but minority schools without any objective of profit generating, and therefore, do not function on a tuition fee system. By sending this explanatory document, the minority schools ask to be exempted from this procedure consecutively every academic year. The ambiguity of status begets a situation in which the minority schools have to ask for an exemption on a yearly basis, almost seems like a one-time favor, instead of having their status meticulously defined, which can set the rule for permanent predictability. The lack of a regulation specifically addressing the minority schools does not only put these schools in a position where there is confusion and ambiguity about their status, but also it leads to extra measures to be taken for the management of their practical daily affairs. It goes without saying that the way and extent of how these extra measures are taken is very well contingent upon the improvisation and thereby arbitrariness of public servants and authorities.

In a state of bureaucratic ambiguity, the administrators of the minority schools have a never-ending burden and obligation of explaining themselves and why they are called private although they are externally and obscurely integrated into the public education system. Administrators described that certain institutions, even some public institutions,

presumed that they were private schools by simply looking at the adjective of “private” before their legal institutional names. This situation caused them to have difficulties in matching with the accurate bureaucratic office while communicating with public institutions and finding accurate respondents to their petitions and applications sent to public offices. Being confused with private schools also hinders the Armenian schools from seeking financial contribution from external institutions and foundations. Since the donations and endowments made to the Armenian schools categorically seem like registration fees in accordance with the legal framework they are tied to, this situation derives a tax obligation for the schools.⁴³ The schools are liable to pay VAT by reducing this amount from the donations and endowments they receive, although, I emphasize, they are not revenue-generating institutions.

During our conversations, administrators also raised issues of non-eligibility to public funds and services. The minority schools are not eligible to receive public funds and use public services because of their “private school” status. Whereas the Ministry of National Education provides sanitation and cleaning services for public schools, the minority schools are left out of these public services⁴⁴, and expected to meet their own needs with their own resources. For the same reason, the salaries of the teachers working on a contract-base are not covered by the Ministry, unless these teachers are Turkish culture teachers on tenure track. On top of that, the Ministry of National Education Private Educational Institutions Standards Code, which regulates the physical condition of private educational institutions, brings standardized qualifications to be followed and defines lowest common denominators for private institutions,

⁴³ The General Communique on Institutional Tax (Official Gazette No:26482, issued on 3 April 2007) Section 2.4 considers the minority schools as private enterprises separate from their foundations, and requires them to pay taxes for their incomes. However, although the schools are not income-generating institutions, the donations they receive are regarded as their income.

⁴⁴ The inadequacy of the sanitation and cleaning services that the Ministry of National Education provides for the public schools is a burning issue and has broad repercussions. However, I make a comparison here between the public and minority schools in terms of legal regulations.

applies to the minority schools as well. The minority schools are asked to follow the Standards Code, and adjust their buildings and facilities in a way that they can offer privileges that private schools are obliged to tender. However, for the minority schools, which bear up against their physical boundaries as they dwell in their historic, century-old buildings, meeting these standards and providing laboratories, gyms or certain facilities that these standards ask for can be very challenging and costly. Because of their controversial circumstances, these topics find coverage in the newspapers reporting about Armenian communal affairs or any development that might interest the community among other daily news. With the purpose of keeping up with the updates on the subject and seeing it from another perspective, I talked to one of the journalists who was reporting on communal issues in a Turkish-Armenian bilingual weekly newspaper. Based on his observations, he summed the issue briefly as below:

“The criteria, such as gym, laboratory, science class, which are expected in practice from private schools, are expected [to be fulfilled] by these schools as well. As a requirement to receive a financial incentive, the Ministry of National Education expects these standards to be met. The community schools used to take advantage of this financial incentive; however, since now the Ministry of National Education expects the school to meet all of the standards, the Armenian schools cannot take advantage of a financial incentive anymore.”^{45 46}

⁴⁵ Citation from the interview I conducted with a journalist in June 2019.

⁴⁶ Hereby, aforesaid financial incentive is the state incentive, which was initially designed in 2014 to be given to the private schools per student attending them in the wake of shutting down all private teaching institutions, which were established to give complimentary classes for the preparation of students for the central exams. Although the minority schools could benefit from this incentive in the academic years of 2014 and 2015 on the basis of the fact that they were tied by the law on private educational institutions, but mainly as a result of a gesture following a personal incentive of lobbying with the

Along with their legal ambiguity, the content of the law and regulations that these schools are tied to lack comprehensiveness in the sense that the law does not address specific needs of the schools and even fails to bring written regulations and roadmaps in presenting the rules that administrators of the schools are expected to comply with. The issues regarding how to register endowments and donations, how to develop curriculum in the Armenian language, how to train contracted Armenian-speaker teachers, how to develop materials for courses in the Armenian language, or even how to open a new minority school can be counted here. All these matters are done by *ad hoc* solutions and measures. Instead of recognizing the exclusive status of the minority schools in a written form and issuing a law and regulation uniquely suited for these schools, the state would rather dissolve their special status in ambiguity and in this way does not disrupt its meticulously designed national integrity while preserving the monolithic self-envisagement. The principals and administrators whom I had a meeting with as my interlocutors laid stress on the culture of precedents and customs in their relations with the public institutions. The officers are often not familiar with the legal structure and requirements around the minority schools because there is no document for reference. For instance; the administrators are very well aware of the fact that officers may not be informed about the special status of the minority schools, and that is why especially school principals have to explain and remind their irregularity and why they are exempt from certain things such as in the cases of the Standards Code or the breakdown documents of their financial records. In such cases, public officers and administrators either have to transfer practical information towards new members or they develop their own *ad hoc* solutions to daily matters.

In addition to the inaccessibility to public services and bureaucratic impediments stemming from uncertainty, the schools are also bereft of

Ministry of National Education, in 2016 this procedure was largely interrupted and incentives stopped (Milliyet Newspaper, 8 October 2014; Agos Newspaper, 22 September 2016).

the benefits of central capacity development. The Ministry of National Education does not deliver any service to the minority schools, but is only interested in the inspection of them. However, certain needs which can only be delivered and fulfilled with the help of a structured central system, reliable financial resources, pool of professionals and a functioning bureaucracy with a special expertise on education, cannot properly be met with individual endeavors of the Armenian schools. For instance; the Armenian schools are entitled to teach all classes, beside Turkish culture classes, in Armenian on the condition to follow the same curriculum with public schools and teach the same content. However, the lack of Armenian education materials including pre-designed syllabuses is one of the major impediments to sustaining education in the Armenian language. Whereas the Armenian schools have a very specific need of Armenian curriculum development for K-12 levels, the Ministry of National Education is reluctant to form a committee to address this need, appoint professionals who have the intellectual resources to tackle the provisions that curriculum development might require, or allocate a share from public resources. Considering curriculum and materials corresponding to this curriculum are prepared in Turkish by a large cohort of professionals employed on behalf of the Ministry, the Armenian schools hold no chance on keeping up with the pace and comprehensiveness of the work done by the Ministry and its subordinate institutions. By implication, teachers in the Armenian schools are compelled to teach their classes in Turkish whose materials and syllabuses are already provided by the Ministry as opposed to an Armenian curriculum and teaching materials.

At this juncture, while Armenian language and literature classes already create a burden that the Armenian schools are reluctant and incapable to bear on their own, the Ministry requires the curriculum and class plans designed for Armenian language and literature classes to overlap with the curriculum of the Turkish language and literature classes which are developed by the Ministry itself and taught as a requirement in public schools. Moreover, the Ministry gives the responsibility to prepare course plans and find teaching materials for Armenian language and literature classes to the Armenian schools and their teachers. Although Armenian

language teachers, who voluntarily have to take the responsibility of Armenian curriculum development for their classes, do not possess the resources, expertise or simply the time to take the challenge, they collaboratively develop curriculum and individually prepare their own teaching notes and materials.

In order to overcome problems stemming from the lack of a central authority or institution monitoring secular affairs of the Armenian community, sometimes the foundations work as the administrative and executive organs of communal affairs. In cases when these networks are not enough to address the problems, the matters can be brought to the attention of the Patriarchate to seek for guidance. However, in the domain of education, the multiplicity and ongoingness of the needs required another solution to pursue means to support the functioning of the schools and provide a platform where teachers can stay in dialogue and support each other in various ways. The Turkish Armenian Minority Schools' Teachers Solidarity Foundation (*Türk Ermeni Azınlık Okulları Öğretmenleri Yardımlaşma Vakfı*) was founded with this spirit.⁴⁷ The objective of the foundation was to encourage solidarity among Armenian teachers working in the Armenian schools, offer professional training for them and produce Armenian teaching materials for the schools. Thereby, uncertainties in the domain of education tried to be diminished by collective work of a civil initiative. However, being a small-scale initiative, the foundation has its own limits and does not have the capacity to resolve long-lasting and recurring problems of the schools such as preparation of teaching materials for K-12 levels.

⁴⁷ In 1961 the Armenian Teachers Association was established, and in 1963 a foundation was added to its structure. The foundation, which was formed with the objective of addressing distinctive needs and predicaments of Armenian teachers was not approved on the grounds that it was regarded as conflicting with principles of inclusivity and secularism. That is why later the name of the association was changed into Turkish Armenian Minority Schools Teachers Solidarity Foundation (TEAOV). Here onwards, referred to as Armenian Teachers Foundation.

Besides, the hardships of generating teaching materials elicit some additional drawbacks in teaching Armenian language and literature classes. Since the preparation and publication of new textbooks fall into abeyance as a result of lack of professionals on this subject, and books published outside Turkey cannot be assigned as textbooks by law, the only option left for teachers is to assign formerly published books that received their approvals from the Ministry. However, as expected, in comparison to altering curricula and more importantly emerging demands of the new era, these books fall behind educational and pedagogic necessities as they linger in the past they were written. As examples to those books which are still largely in use; *Թանգարան* [Tankaran] which was written mainly as an introduction book for social sciences and literature by Hrant and Zabel Asadur⁴⁸ (Sibil) in 1911 and renewed for a couple of times throughout their lifetime, *Նոր Թերականութիւն* [Nor Keraganutyun] which was written by Hovhannes Kazandjian⁴⁹ as an Armenian grammar book in 1907, can be mentioned here among a few others. Although the books are considered adequate in terms of the sophistication of the language by Armenian language teachers, they also remark on the fact that the books cannot keep pace with contemporary needs and education methods of the present. In addition to these books, Armenian Teachers Foundation (TEAOV) additionally publishes literature books to be used especially in primary schools, a monthly journal *Ժպիտ* [Jbid] for pupils, and republishes new editions of formerly written literature books with the purpose of meeting the need for complementary reading materials.

It goes without saying that the lack of professional networks for curriculum development or limited educational materials cannot be the primary reasons behind the disappearance of the Armenian language in classrooms. The root causes of this phenomenon touch upon many issues from the political climate of Turkey past and present to socio-economic

⁴⁸ Հրանդ և Չապէլ Ասատուր

⁴⁹ Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան

components of the Armenian community. Remaining faithful to my research subject, I try to mention a few of the causes of this phenomenon throughout the chapters. Here, I will raise another component of this issue without digress from my topic. As a consequence of the lack of resources and inaccessibility to public institutions, the professional training of Armenian language and literature teachers emerges as one of the challenges that the Armenian schools have to face today. The lack of Western Armenian language and literature departments in the universities obliges the schools to develop alternative ways and *ad hoc* measures in training their Armenian language and literature teachers, and in improving Armenian language skills of their subject matter teachers so that they can be fluent enough to teach their classes in Armenian while they catch up with an up-to-date terminology in their areas.

Having no educational departments on the subject matter, for Armenian language and literature classes the schools have no chance but to hire graduates who have their diploma from any department of the faculty of education and happen to master the Armenian language on account of their personal endeavors. In cases where these two qualities do not overlap, the schools opt for hiring graduates, who have bachelor's degree in other departments of universities without any form of teacher training or pedagogy education but again fluent in the Armenian language, with the title of qualified/expert instructor instead of teacher.⁵⁰ This category contorts the law so that a temporary solution to the problem can be found. Although not very often, the schools prefer this method to add people with competitive Armenian language skills into their cohort of teachers. Among the one-to-one interviews I conducted outside the schools, I had two interviews with people who worked with this title. Notwithstanding he did not work as a teacher any more, one of these interviewees explained the reason for this category to be introduced in these words:

⁵⁰ Article 38 of the Regulation on Private Educational Institutions (Official Gazette No:28239 on 20 March 2012)

“The state does not establish Armenian language education departments to give teacher training [on this subject]. Now, there is [the category of] qualified instructor; if experts lack in one subject area, these qualified instructors without receiving any teacher training can be hired [to fill the expertise gap]; however, they cannot work in administrative jobs [in the schools].”⁵¹

The responsibility of training teachers and educators working in the Armenian schools are at the liability of the schools and their foundations. These schools are compelled to deliver this task in a state of uncertainty where resources, means, procedures or actors are not legally and bureaucratically very well structured. For the same reasons, in order to contribute to the professional and academic development of teachers and qualified/expert teachers, the schools with a sufficient budget reserved for academic development also send their teachers to summer courses held by institutions usually either in Armenia or in Europe. Considering these points, we can say that education in the Armenian language and of the Armenian language is left to its own devices of improvisation in a state of ambiguity where probabilities and prospects change from time to time or from person to person in authority. Under the circumstances, ambiguity does not only act as the means to discipline and govern the community schools by keeping them in gray zones of bureaucracy, but it also is the producer of arbitrariness in favor of political agendas.

While the problems emerging from the absence of a legal basis are resolved by exceptions, ambiguity manages to stay as the prevailing rule and these exceptions do not distort unpredictability. In order to analyze the mechanisms of how ambiguity rules, we need to pay attention to the lapses and understand how they do not taint the rule of unpredictability or irregularity. Although these exceptions seem like sporadic events, in managing the minority schools these exceptions constitute a rule; a rule of exception (Agamben, 1998). The rule of exception, which most of the time refers to a set of alternative measures and temporary solutions for the community schools, does not only address legal gaps left unattended

⁵¹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a former teacher in August 2019.

on purpose, but also it becomes the way of governing the Armenian schools by creating the practice of it. As Agamben puts it, in this regard the rule applies to the exception in no longer applying, but in withdrawing from it (1998, p. 18). That is why instead of regarding the exceptions as an external realm, it would be more helpful for this case to think of them as a part of the larger rule because they are permanent parts of governing the schools instead of being anomalous individual cases. On such occasions, this rule refers to a common knowledge through which people can address their troubles to be settled by state authorities on one-shot occasions.⁵² Through this rule of exception, despite individually initiated processes, social networks, personal favors, goodwill gestures or endeavors of a certain group bringing a one-time solution to a problem, the status quo can be kept intact. In governing the Armenian schools, the state authorities sporadically give one time favors with the request and facilitation of influential persons of the Armenian community.

In my meeting with one of the board members, in the context of explaining how responsive the Directorate of National Education was to the problems of the minority schools, he narrated how their request to replace a professionally incompetent Turkish language teacher was met. Although he told the story to explain to me that state institutions do genuinely care about the predicaments of the Armenian schools, this story gave me the insight that instead of reporting this teacher through bureaucratic ways, the board members of the school chose to call upon an intermediary. Another example could be the financial incentive given by the state to private educational institutions as I briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter. Although the incentive was originally designed to be granted to private schools, following a one-to-one meeting with the Ministry of National Education the minority schools could also benefit from this incentive as a goodwill gesture of the Ministry to support their financial

⁵² Butler argues that as much as precarity is used as a tool by a more powerful other, people develop creative responses to deal with relations of domination as they create spaces of negotiation and maneuvering (2004, p. 133).

stability.⁵³ These acts did not change the rule or create a procedure to support the schools financially; however, the meeting warranted a favor accepted as an exception instead of an entitlement that can set a precedent for future cases.

3.3.3 *Precairy in Financial Durability*

This discussion brings us to address another aspect of ambiguity governing the schools; their financial insecurity. Having no state funds or public resources available to the schools and having no income through a registration-fee system, the maintenance of the Armenian schools almost entirely depends on either revenue coming from the landed properties of their foundations or sporadically given endowments. In a state of inadequate revenues, the schools often call for donations and endowments of philanthropists or parents up to a point that they could afford. That is why detrimental impacts on their landed properties limit the capacity of the schools with sporadic endowments and further deepen the uncertainties about the maintenance of the schools. Having these dynamics in mind, I will tell the following example thoroughly with the objective of explaining the root causes of deepening the financial insecurity of the schools. This example does not only show how ambiguity becomes a segment of the legal mechanism governing the landed properties of the minority foundations, it also aims to show how legal uncertainty gives rise to circumstances intensifying the financial insecurity and thus ambiguity of their financial resources.

International dynamics of the Turkey-Greece dispute over Cyprus resulted in substantial consequences for the Rum population of Turkey. Rums did not only become a target of the governments that toned up their national discourse, but this discourse also resulted in some legal

⁵³ Since the schools are under the rubric of the Regulation of Private and Foreign Schools, they are officially regarded as private schools and they are evaluated under this category as I explained throughout the chapter. However, following the principles of the Standards Code is a prerequisite in order to be eligible for this financial incentive. Although the minority schools are not capable of meeting the principles of this code, by this good gesture they could benefit from the incentive for a limited period of time.

drawbacks that directly had impacts on quotidian practices of all minorities. As the vagueness of the legal existence of the minority foundations was instrumentalized to govern minorities, their landed properties fell into jeopardy through legal ambiguity. These legal processes still carry weight with the Armenian schools today. The Armenian schools, whose parent foundations lost landed properties through confiscation, had to deal with problems stemming from financial unpredictability.

One of the root causes of current problems of the community foundations stems from the fact that the formation of non-Muslim foundations goes back to the Ottoman Empire. Since non-Muslim foundations fell outside the jurisdiction of Sharia courts, their formation was slightly different from Muslim foundations (*waqf*). Instead of an approval from a Sharia court, verbal orders of the sultan were accepted as the foundational certificates of non-Muslim foundations (Polatel *et al.*, 2012, p. 30; Ekşi, 2011, p. 13). However, those foundational certificates did not prevent Muslim or non-Muslim foundations to have problems in registering their landed properties up until 1913 when the concept of legal entity was introduced (Polatel *et al.*, 2012, p. 32). For their land and property registration, foundations used ways of '*muvaazaa*' according to which properties were registered either under the name of a person who were known and trusted in the community (*nam-ı müstear*), or under the name of a saint or an ave such as Mary, Jesus (*nam-ı mevhum*) (Davuthan, 2002; Ekşi, 2011). In 1913, with the regulation of the legal area⁵⁴, the legal ground was ultimately designed for all Ottoman legal entities to acquire property *de jure* (Ekşi, 2011).

The Lausanne Treaty warranted the legal basis for the preservation of non-Muslim foundations in the Republic of Turkey. Later, following the Civil Code enacted in 1926, in order to establish a comprehensive legal framework with regards to foundations, the Turkish state enacted the Law No: 2762 on Foundations in 1935.⁵⁵ With the objective of regulating

⁵⁴ 1328 Eşhar-ı Hükmiyyenin Emval-i Gayrimenkuleye Tasarruflarına Mahsus Kanun-i Muvakkat.

⁵⁵ The Law No: 2762 on Foundations ratified on 5 June 1935 (Official Gazette No. 3027, 13 June 1935).

properties of all non-state entities, the law asked all foundations to declare their scope, sources of income and properties, which caused these declarations later to be known as 1936 Declarations (Polatel *et al.*, 2012, p. 50, Ekşi, 2011, p. 21).⁵⁶ With the Law on Foundations enacted in 1935, legal entities of the minority foundations, which were granted them back in 1912, were officially registered. According to Reyna and Zonana, this law made the minority foundations gain their legal statuses on the condition that they would declare their immovable properties appropriated up until that day and register under their names (2003, p. 42, 43). By this law, Directorate General of Foundations accepted the declarations as the foundational certificates of minority foundations (Oran, 2004, p. 105). In later years, it turned out that these declarations did not acknowledge the right to acquire property; however, put these foundations in an ambiguous legal status. This ambiguity creates the main difference between the minority foundations and the foundations that were established after 1926 in accordance with the Civil Code (Reyna and Zonana, 2003, p. 146).

Up until a decision in 1971, the legal basis constituted by the Law on Foundations was preserved and the minority foundations enjoyed their legal entity in acquiring landed properties (Reyna and Zonana, 2003, p. 43). With the escalation of the Turkey-Greece dispute over Cyprus, the decision of the Court of Cassation initially in 1971⁵⁷ by the civil chamber, and later in 1974⁵⁸ by the assembly of civil chambers undermined the legal entity of minority foundations and their right to accumulate landed properties (Oran, 2004, p. 107, 108). According to this decision, the 1936 declarations of the foundations were accepted as their foundational certificates. However, since these declarations did not have any clause on the acquisition of additional landed properties, it was decided by jurisprudence that the minority foundations could not appropriate landed properties. By this decision, it was ruled that the properties which were not claimed by the foundations in their 1936 declarations have to be handed

⁵⁶ Article 44 of the Law No: 2762 on Foundations

⁵⁷ Court of Cassation Civil Chamber No:2 Verdict No: 4449 E, 4399 K on 6 July 1971.

⁵⁸ Court of Cassation Assembly of Civil Chambers Verdict No: 1971/2-820 E, 1974/505 K on 8 May 1974.

back to their former owners, if their former owners are not eligible, to the public treasury.⁵⁹ As the minority foundations had legal impediments in acquiring landed properties starting in the 1960s as an impact of the tension between Turkey and Greece, the decision in 1974 and the jurisprudence following it abolished the right of the minority foundations to acquire property and discarded their acquired properties as void (Bakar, 2002, p. 269). From that period onwards the confiscation of properties of non-Muslim foundations started, if not accelerated, and all landed properties acquired from 1936 to 1974 were transferred either to the Treasury or to their former owners.

During my conversations with legal experts, we also talked about this legal process. One of the legal experts was also a lawyer working on these cases of confiscation. In fact, at the time of our interview, she was working on a new case regarding the restitution of landed properties of one of the Armenian foundations. When asked how the confiscation of landed properties impacted the Armenian schools in terms of their financial sustainability, she explained that after 1974 the Armenian schools were impoverished considerably since their foundations lost their resources of income to be able to sustain the schools financially and to keep them competitive with foreign language education and new education technologies.

Moreover, as a result of the legal impediment against acquiring landed properties either through purchase or through endowment, the schools undergo a grueling process to invent alternative ways to raise a budget for their maintenance. My research showed that the schools became largely dependent on voluntarily given registration fees and occasionally given endowments. That is why their maintenance became bound up

⁵⁹ Decision 8 May 1974 number 1971/2-820 rule and 1974/505 K decision; “1936 beyannamesi vakfiye olarak kabul edilmiş ve bu vakfiyede yeni taşınmaz mal iktisabına dair hüküm olmaması nedeniyle cemaat vakıflarının yeni taşınmaz mal edinemeyecekleri hakkında içtihat oluşturularak bu cemaat vakıflarının yeni taşınmaz mal edinebilmeleri yolu kapatılmış, 1936 Beyannamelerinde bildirilmemiş gayrimenkullerin de eski sahiplerine iade, eski sahiplerinin ölmüş olması ve mirasçılarının bulunmaması halinde hazineye intikalleri yolu açılmıştır.”

with arbitrary donations of wealthy members of the community. In order to raise a budget for their maintenance, the schools largely rely on annual endowment dinners. Not to be constrained with these endowments, the foundations sometimes opt for registering their properties under the name of a board member or a notable from the community. However, these kinds of methods may create even further problems. When I asked a teacher who is also familiar with the management of the boards, she vehemently expressed her frustration on this subject. With no pun intended, she summed up the matter in a couple of sentences by giving names and specific examples. I share here a part of her conversation without mentioning any names or concrete examples:

“The troubles created by the state serve well for the benefit of certain people. Since it was forbidden before by law for [a minority] foundation to acquire landed properties, the property of the foundation was given to a board member so this person could administer the legal process [regarding the property]. Once the persons received [the legal ownership of] the property, they never returned it.”⁶⁰

This legal deadlock lasted roughly till 2003, when reform packages were passed in the wake of Turkey's concurrence to the Copenhagen Criteria with respect to its EU integration process. Starting with the accession process, but mainly from 2002 to 2005, the state adopted political reforms to fulfill the EU accession criteria some of which were focusing on the minorities (Baç, 2005, p. 18), and made some amendments on the Law on Foundations⁶¹ including the immovable properties of the minority foundations. Although the democratization process did not occur solely by a linear relationship through which the EU imposed its conditionality, the form and timing of the change were intricately related to the accession process (Tocci, 2005, p. 82). In these developments, the AKP

⁶⁰ Citation from the interview I conducted with a teacher in November 2019.

⁶¹ Two laws can be mentioned mainly; on 3 August 2002 “Çeşitli Kanunlarda Değişiklik Yapılmasına İlişkin Kanun”, and on 2 January 2003 the reform package for the concurrence to the Copenhagen Criteria (see Kurban and Hatemi, 2009; Polatel *et al.*, 2012).

government's portrayal of itself as the party which aimed to revive the liberal and multicultural legacy of the Ottoman Empire could also be taken into consideration as an impact of its neo-Ottomanist vision harnessed in its regional standing at the international sphere and on the discourse of its domestic politics (Wastnidge, 2019, p. 23).⁶² The AKP government began its term with the promise of democratization and recognition of the equal status of religious and ethnic minorities in Turkey with its attempts to value positively a particular kind of neo-Ottomanism. However, articulations of neo-Ottomanism did not bring democratization in the long run and inequality persisted between various groups with a lack of liberal, multicultural, and democratic principles which also characterized the Ottoman Empire (Wastnidge, 2019, p. 24).

Within a framework of reform packages and under the sway of neo-Ottomanism attempts, finally in 2008 Law No: 5737 on Foundations re-granted the minority foundations the right to acquire landed properties without any further condition.⁶³ However, this new law failed to address the issue of confiscated properties of the minority foundations. With the introduction of the right of individual application, some minority foundations appealed their cases to the European Court of Human Rights

⁶² The Welfare Party (RP), the AKP's parent party, suggested the promotion of multiculturalism and its practices as a new social model for Turkish society in its electioneering for 1994 parliamentary elections (Özyürek, 2007, p. 99). Later, the AKP followed its path and used the same discourse as it presented its program standing against oppressive policies and practices of the former regimes.

⁶³ Article 12 of the Law No: 5737 on Foundation ratified on 20 February 2008 (Official Gazette No: 26800 published on 27 February 2008). Article 3 of the Law defines the community foundations as "The foundations, which acquired their legal entity according to the Law No:2762 regardless of having foundational certificates, and whose members are citizens of the Republic of Turkey, belong to non-Muslim communities in Turkey ["Vakfiyeleri olup olmadığına bakılmaksızın 2762 sayılı Vakıflar Kanunu gereğince tüzel kişilik kazanmış, mensupları Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşı olan Türkiye'deki gayrimüslim cemaatlere ait vakıflar"].

(ECHR) for the restitution of their properties⁶⁴, and acquired compensation for the violation of their rights (Ekşi, 2011). One of the lawyers I interviewed was among the cohort of lawyers who submitted the ECHR the first application regarding the landed properties of an Armenian foundation. She explained that although they opened many cases against the decision and confiscation cases coming after it, no good came out of the lawsuits and neither the decision nor practices of confiscation were revoked. However, she said, after the exhaustion of domestic remedies the right of individual application to the ECHR opened a new way for the court case. With their individual application to the ECHR, a building that was registered as the property of the Treasury at the time was given back to the foundation. This case decision later started the process to change the domestic law by serving as a precedent. On 27 August 2011, following the rulings of the ECHR as precedents, a temporary decree was enacted, and paved the way to start a legal process for minority foundations to reclaim their seized properties in a limited period of twelve months.⁶⁵ Although some of the foundations were able to benefit from the legal readjustment, and reclaimed their properties from the Treasury, the legal process for the foundations whose properties ended up in third parties has been challenging and ongoing.

This long process of governing the minority foundations through ambiguity and unpredictability did not only impoverish the Armenian community by depriving it from its own resources, but also created irrevocable consequences for the Armenian schools and undermined their self-sufficiency. I am not saying that this is the case for all Armenian schools. There are still resourceful schools that can offer near costless education for their students almost effortlessly, and there are others who did not

⁶⁴ See some of the cases; *Özbek and Others vs. Turkey*; *Yedikule Surp Pırgıç Armenian Hospital Foundation vs. Turkey*; *Samatya Surp Kevork Armenian Church, School and Cemetery Foundation's Steering Committee vs. Turkey*; *Fener Rum Boy's High School Foundation vs. Turkey*; *Fener Rum Patriarchate vs. Turkey*; and *Bozcaada Kimisis Teodoku Rum Orthodox Church Foundation vs. Turkey*.

⁶⁵ See No: 5737 Law on Foundations temporary article 11 (Resmi Gazete, No.28071, 1 October 2011)

have any property to start with. However, it is important to acknowledge that the cases of confiscation distorted the communal structure and deprived the Armenian community from its own resources. As much as this example shows how the vagueness of the legal basis is perpetuated to be used as a mechanism against the minority foundations, it also points out a meandering state which transfigures from period to period with altering dynamics while employing both governmentality and sovereign power with changing rates.

3.3.4 *The Meandering State*

In order to emphasize the pervasiveness of ambiguity, Agamben underscores its lack of content. He attracts attention to the point which might interest us very well regarding our point:

“For life under a law that is in force without signifying resembles life in the state of exception, in which the most innocent gesture or the smallest forgetfulness can have the most extreme consequences. And it is exactly this kind of life that Kafka describes, in which law is all the more pervasive for its lack of content, and in which a distracted knock on the door can mark the start of uncontrollable trials.” (Agamben, 1998, p. 52)

Based on his insights among other authors I referred to, I argue that the legal framework around the community schools draws its strength not from carefully and delicately designed regulations and laws which desire to leave no room for maneuver. On the contrary, its strength is hidden in an infinite number of possibilities which can only flourish in ambiguous spaces and more importantly can serve the agenda of the governing mind very well. Harboring these infinite number of possibilities and unsteadiness in its texture, the state presents itself as an all-encompassing and comprehensive entity through its imagined effects that exhibit the state as not tolerating and contradicting with ambiguity.

This state effect, I argue, is produced in sites where governmentality and sovereignty coexist in governing the minorities. As ambiguity, unpredictability, and irregularity prevail as the tools in governing the Armenian

schools, these means become further instrumental when incorporated into an education system performing with the rules of the market. The reiteration of bureaucratic drudgery, quotidian practices, central examination systems or constant renewal of curricula, all collectively produce the state effect, and create the perception that as if the state is a coherent separate entity over the society.

In order to be able to address the spaces of ambiguity, Mitchell suggests to think of the state as an object of analysis which appears both as a material force and an ideological construct; both real and illusory (1991a, p. 76). These two aspects of the state make it possible for the ideological construct of the state to have a coherent public image, although its material substance that is composed of variegated institutional arrangements and political practices is ambiguously constituted (Mitchell, 1991a, p. 76). Similarly, Migdal accentuates two contradictory forces of domination and suggests analyzing the state on the one hand as a unified construct expressed in its image, and on the other as a dispersed entity accommodating contradictory practices and alliances of disparate groups (2001, p. 22).

Despite its dispersed and contradictory aspects of the material force, the state is illustrated as a comprehensive whole. In fact, everything that seems to be inherent to the state including 'its organization, goals, means, partners and operative rules' constantly changes in accordance to its altering alliances and opponents (Migdal, 2001, p. 23). Mainly based on this framework, I preferred to use the term 'meandering state' to describe altering attitudes towards the Armenian schools. However, in these processes the imagery of the state stays fixed. It is presented in a way that it is a dominant, integrated, autonomous entity that controls all rulemaking in a given territory either directly through its own agencies or indirectly by sanctioning authorized organizations such as businesses, families, clubs and so on (Migdal, 2001, p. 16). The work of many scholars give insights us about this subject as they argue that: the state as an entity above society does not exist in the phenomenal world, but a fiction of the philosophers (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940); the state is not a thing and does not exist, but a number of particular institutions produces its reality

(Miliband, 1969); the state is a fetish (Taussig, 1992); the state is not a reality behind a mask but the mask itself preventing to see the political practice as it is (Abrams, 2006). Foucault denounces the state as a mythicized abstraction, and yet underscores the tactics of government in producing it:

“But the state, no more probably today than at any other time in its history, does not have this unity, this individuality, this rigorous functionality, nor, to speak frankly, this importance; maybe, after all, the state is no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think. . . . It is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality.” (Foucault, 1991, p. 103)

Then in my case, if the state is no more than a composite reality and is an ambiguously defined political authority, then how does the sum of institutional practice manage to illustrate the public imagery of the state as fixed, coherent and all-encompassing? On this matter, Bourdieu elucidates that the state produces itself constantly and executes its symbolic power by embodying itself in objectivity in the form of organizational structures and in subjectivity in the form of mental structures and categories of perception and thought (1991, p. 56,57). He describes the state as nothing but a word, undergirded by collective belief that upholds the existence and unity of its scattered and divided ensemble of organs of rule (Wacquant, 1993, p. 41). The idea of an autonomous state cannot exist without the affirmation and execution of bureaucratic action of its own teleology (Herzfeld, 1993, p. 37). The bureaucratic authority does not outlast unless everyday practices are repeated to constitute this coherent core (Sharma and Gupta, 2006, p. 13). The effect of the material reality of the state depends on its constructed notion to be reinvented in everyday practices (Navaro-Yashin, 2002, p. 135). Moreover, Mitchell argues that

one answer to this question lies in the phenomenon of the national project, through which the state acquires its unity at the level of ideology and articulates a national project that passes the imagined unity of the state onto society (1991a, p. 88). That is why throughout the text, I repeated that the forces of governmentality are based on a historically constituted Turko-Islamic synthesis doctrine. Based on this doctrine, the Turkish state is constantly reified by the means of; a coherent depiction of law (Mitchell, 1991a), 'press and everyday speech' (Migdal, 2001), 'ordinary life practices and processes' (Navaro-Yashin, 2002), 'routine and repetitive procedures of bureaucracies' (Sharma and Gupta, 2006), and/or reiteration of mundane details in bureaucracy (Feldman, 2008). For the purposes of my chapter, I illustrated examples from the legal mechanism and procedures of bureaucracy in the domain of education. In governing the minority schools, whereas all regulations and laws of the Ministry of National Education applying to the minority schools paint an image that it is normative and detached from daily conflicts and negotiations, the state presents itself as the grand product of its national project, in fact its very meaning is reproduced by these daily negotiations.

It is possible to multiply the examples and perspectives to support the argument that although the Armenian schools are governed through tools of ambiguity, unpredictability, limited knowledge and improvisation, the public imagery of the state is not disfigured or even compromised. It proceeds to abide as a detached comprehensive unity. Therefore, we can understand how the Armenian schools are governed only when we pay attention to the state not as an actual structure, but as the powerful effect of practices (Mitchell, 1991b, p. 94). These effects, as Mitchell describes as structural effects, create the illusion that displays the state as an apparatus apart from society (Mitchell, 1991a, p. 89).

The education system enframing the minority schools, or the law applying to the schools appear in a way that as if they are structures with an independent existence of the people who actually composed them. Hereby, by discovering how ambiguity plays a role in governing the minority schools, we can distort the illusion of the unity of the state, because the state does not seem like a perfectly functioning entity in this context

any more. Rather, it meanders between the forces of governmentality and sovereignty while governing the Armenian schools through ambiguities when necessary and the market values when applicable, albeit preserving its image as a coherent Turko-Islamic state.

4

Recovering Spaces of Familial Culture

As I planned it, my fieldwork was designed to visit the Armenian schools, participate in their daily functioning, and interview all constituents of the schools as much as possible. However, during the course of the fieldwork, the themes that were opened up along the way inspired me to get involved in further spheres of communication. In addition to my semi-official visits to the Armenian schools and my interview-based ethnography in the schools as the school principals welcomed me as their guest, people also invited me to their homes, offices or other personal spheres to share their experiences taking place in or regarding the schools. The information, stories or direct quotations I share throughout this chapter were acquired thanks to these meetings. I scrupulously stored and analyzed the information I procured through these interviews and tried to share them throughout the chapter at times when I think pertinent to the points that I want to foreground regarding my discussion. However, I have to say that as I am privy only to pieces of stories or information that my participants shared with me, addressing these topics in the current context was highly challenging for them. Therefore, my participants, and I assume all the others, are prudent in accepting a stranger into their schools, their homes, or other semi-personal spaces which they do not usually share with a researcher. Thankfully, I was very lucky in that regard. I could overcome this challenge largely thanks to my

family friends, personal contacts or my affiliation with credible institutions. Coming from a context where uneasiness is not an unusual feeling to have, with a concern that describing my participants may reveal their identities, I disallowed portraying my participants throughout the text and instead briefly mentioned their role in the larger context. With the same concern, from time to time instead of sharing their comments or direct quotations, I preferred describing the situations that they explained more broadly without necessarily pointing to concrete examples or names.

During my research, while unraveling the issues around the Armenian schools, my initial aim was to grasp the empowering networks which may help the Armenian culture and identity endure as opposed to a Turko-Islamic nation state and its cultural hegemony in the larger society. I did not necessarily plan to associate empowerment, solidarity or supportive networks of communication within the Armenian community with a symbolic representation of the family. When I first started interviewing people from different backgrounds with different titles to have a general idea about the school affairs, I did not put an effort into finding the links of familial relations between various members who were connected to the schools in numerous ways. However, after I proceeded further with my research and got acquainted with more people, I found myself knowing different members of the same families, who were actually associated or somehow connected with the schools in different ways. These meetings opened me up to new areas where I saw the private sphere of the family overlapped with the space of the schools. This experience led me to think of the Armenian community as a family not only because with respect to the Armenian schools the space of Armenianness harbors close family ties in its functioning and durability, but also, because familial culture reigns within the community, and collaborative networks of communication is a significant factor of the configuration of the Armenian community clustering around the community schools. I realized that it is not possible to differentiate the private sphere from the communal sphere of which the schools are a part. That is why I argue that to the extent that the forms of intimacy of the modern nuclear family are

analyzed, it is possible to delineate the Armenian community as a family, and even further the dynamics regarding the private sphere of the family also have an influence on the edifice of the Armenian community.

It goes without saying that it will not be the first time that the Armenian community in Turkey has referred to its familial culture. Since religious, ethnic and cultural spaces of communal belonging provide paramount means to sustain the existence of the Armenian community in Turkey despite the cultural hegemony of the Turkish-Islamic values, the Armenian community in Turkey create a conceptual space of cultural belonging by drawing the lines of its communal boundaries (Komşuoğlu and Örs, 2009, p. 332). There are already works analyzing how the family allegory was employed to accentuate togetherness and unity in the Armenian community. These works scrutinize the family allegory by looking at the supportive networks of relationships, familial practices, the sense of togetherness or a gendered division of labor among its members (Merguerian & Jafferian, 1995; Manoogian *et al.*, 2007; Kalayjian *et al.*, 2010; Ekmekçioğlu, 2016; Suciyan, 2018; Barış, 2019). In this regard, while discovering the current dynamics of the Armenian community in Turkey, this chapter follows the earlier studies on the subject in that it breaks down constituents of this family allegory in the context of the Armenian schools, and contribute to the literature by unraveling the relationships around the schools that is also a part of the larger familial culture. While discussing this familial culture, my aim is also to address this space of Armenianness as a momentous unit of governmentality, and argue that through a family allegory we can understand the governmentality in and around the schools. Instead of romanticizing the Armenian community with respect to its family-like traits, throughout the chapter I show that scrutinizing the Armenian community in terms of its familial culture could only make sense if this family is regarded in its totality referring to hegemonic discourses at play. That is why throughout the chapter as I stay loyal to my focus on the Armenian schools in Turkey, I present a picture where it is attainable to exhibit the space of Armenianness with reference to a larger discussion on spaces of family and the nation-state or spaces in between them.

The family is an often-used allegory to describe the nature of the relations between the citizen and the state, and the nationalist discourse frequently employs the allegory of the family to paint a picture of a national family. Özyürek (2007) attracts attention to the fact that during the 19th and 20th centuries nationalist ideologies describe the relations between the nation and the soil or between the nation and the state as familial relations because these ideas justify the power of the nation state over its people (Sommer, 1991; Malkki, 1995; McClintoc, 1995; Shryock & Howell, 2001) (p. 96). Describing the ways society became the subject of the new life process as a substitute for the family, Arendt explains how organic theories of nationalism are based on an identification of the nation and the interaction between its members with the family and family relationships (1998, p. 256). While explaining race, blood, and kinship as the natural symbols of the state ideologies, Herzfeld (1993) remarks that the ideas of social symbolism of family, local groups, and the sacralized rhetoric of blood serve state ideologies well to induce cohesion and obedience (p. 11). With this perspective, he elucidates that while portraying the nation, the nationalist ideas employ the metaphors of blood, lineage, family, motherland/fatherland to legitimate the reification of culture (Herzfeld, 1993, p. 76). Under the auspices of the nation state, this family affect is often absorbed through educational systems for the purposes of national solidarity (Herzfeld, 1993, p. 31). In the depictions, the national family appears as a spatial entity, eternal and timeless (Herzfeld, 1993, p. 167). The idea of kinship is harnessed, as famously used by Anderson (1983), for the imagining of the larger, national community where it becomes the nexus, the direct link from the body to the polity while it bridges culture and blood and melt them in the same pot (Herzfeld, 1993, p. 76). Weber explicates this direct link from the body to the polity with respect to bureaucracy and asserts that bureaucracy does not tolerate any social grouping regardless of its scale, because it might come between the individual and the state (1936 cited in Herzfeld, 1993, p. 74).

For the purposes of this chapter, I would like to underscore the modernization process of the Republic of Turkey as a salient example of the above arguments, and remind that the Armenian schools have been part

of the context that is similar to what is described above. While constructing the new nation state, the republican regime in Turkey tried to eliminate forms of community-based social structure and aspired to efface connections between the individuals and their kinship, ethnic and religious ties, and produce them as the standardized members of the modern national society (Baban, 2005, p. 53). The Kemalist elite saw the communitarian system of the Ottoman society as a serious obstacle standing on its way to modernization, and sought to dismantle the structure of the communitarian system by introducing a series of reforms (Mardin, 1992/2005, p. 76; Baban, 2005, p. 54, 55). The newly modernizing elite group of Turkey marked group-based memberships as one of the biggest obstacles standing against creating a socially integrated, homogenous modern and national community (Baban, 2005, p. 54).¹

Having said that, although the aforementioned arguments foreground the point that the individual is straightforwardly associated with the state by imagining itself as a distinctive part of the national family, they do not further talk about the space between the individual and the state where the community stands in this larger framework, or the sense of belonging that the individuals owe to their communities. This chapter seeks to unravel this space in-between, and aspire to make sense of the Armenian community in a terrain where no social grouping is tolerated between the individual and the state, and to discuss where we seek power when an intermediary structure that governmentality might appear in different forms is included in the picture. Having these remarks in consideration, this chapter adds the Armenian community into the larger picture as a space and unravels its internal components to help us understand forms of governmentality regarding the Armenian schools.

¹ From a different angle Mardin (1992/2005) attracts attention to the fact that although the absence of intermediary structures between the state and the individual is read as one of the root causes of eastern despotism by Montesquieu, the situation of the Ottoman Empire does not exactly meet this description in that the religious communities in the Ottoman Empire serve as intermediary structures and constitute building stones of a quasi-civil society (p. 42).

In order to unfold this space and explicate the familial culture that I ascertained as a significant feature of this space, I visit Sirman (2005)'s analysis of "familial citizenship" which further captures this theme cognizant of familial relations and culture. Proceeding on a similar note with Herzfeld (1993), Sirman (2005) argues that as the national sovereign state is built as a specific kind of polity, the discourses of the national identity construct the identity of the desirable citizen, and this particular form of citizenship can be depicted as familial citizenship (p. 148). The forms of intimacy pertaining to the nuclear family that are intrinsic segments of the apt citizen is actually what make the citizen the subject of the modern nation-state; therefore, to the extent that it is plausible to analyze the family as a gendered construction so is to discuss the gendered nature of the citizenship and describe it as familial (Sirman, 2005, p. 149).

There is a large body of work arguing that the new models of the family provide content for imagining a new model of the community as a nation (Jayawardena, 1986; Phillips, 1988; Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989; Enloe, 1990; Chatterjee, 1993; Göle, 1997; Abu-Lughod 1998). The family, the nation and gender share the same loci where power is constituted in the sense that nationalism acts as the producer of the relations between members of the family, and between families and the state (Sirman, 2005, p. 153). As gender and family are central units of the new system of government, Sirman underscores the need to look at the process of the production of subjectivities that are gendered and national at the same time to discover how the nation and power are infiltrated into the subject as they produce it (Sirman, 2005, p. 152, 159).

Building on the insights of Sirman (2005), in addition to seeking gendered constructions at the communal level that she argues as intrinsic to both the family and the nation state, I mainly read her analysis from rather a larger framework. I take the family in Sirman's analysis as the larger Armenian family where certain forms of intimacy and gendered division of labor that are inherent in the nuclear family are sustained. While using this family allegory, in addition to visiting the space of Armenianness as a gendered construction, I also present a certain number of components exemplifying various forms of intimacy that are constitutive

elements of Armenian familial culture. In order to present this familial culture, I incorporate quotidian intimate relations that are usually reminiscent of a family into the analysis while portraying the nuances which construct this communal space as a safeguarded internal space. Therefore, with reference to Sirman (2005), I argue that the forms of intimacy pertaining to the nuclear family is actually what makes Armenians the subjects of the Armenian communal space clustered around the Armenian schools.

While Sirman (2005) connects the family and the state through a concept of familial citizenship, she does not mention how communities can be positioned in this framework and how we make sense of these spaces when the family, the nation and gender are linked in a way where the power is constituted. As the new model of the family is opened up as a space and a central unit of governmentality as a result of modernity, the state wishes to penetrate into this space. However, the communities, of which the Armenian community is presented as an example here, emerge as spaces that have different forms of governmentality and require the state to develop idiosyncratic ways to penetrate into. Although the nuclear family is often read as an important segment of the newer forms of government, the space of Armenianness keeps its ambiguity in that manner. That being said, the larger objective of this chapter is to show how we can make sense of the Armenian schools that have different forms of governmentality as parts of a communal space between the individual and the nation state.

When describing the sovereignty of anticolonial nationalism in his oft-quoted book *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Chatterjee (1993) formulates the world of social institutions and practices by two domains: the material and the spiritual (p. 6). Whereas the former refers to the domain of the 'outside', where the West had an undisputed superiority in the economy, statecraft, science and technology, the latter pertains to an 'inner' domain bearing the essential signs of cultural identity (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 6). When I apply this framework to my case and try to reimagine what I have learned during my research with these categories, the frontiers of these domains do not seem

to be firmly in place -although I prefer to read the inner domain with the help of a family allegory. Before I started to write this chapter, I was more confident talking about the frontiers of the domains of the inside and the outside of the Armenian community; however, as writing this chapter I find myself asking borders of the inside/outside or material/spiritual. Although looking at the Armenian schools through the looking-glass of a family allegory makes it seem like the disparity between the inside and the outside to become clearer, it is possible to challenge and recurrently redefine these frontiers while reformulating the inside and the outside concurrently. In that sense, whereas this chapter tries to define the inner domain of the Armenian community with respect to the Armenian schools in particular, it also alludes to certain points to unveil the opacity of these spheres.

Corresponding to Chatterjee's formulation (1993), in order to differentiate the relations of power with respect to the Armenian community, Ekmekçioğlu (2016) describes the spaces of the Armenian community in terms of the existence of the intensity of the state's interference. Armenian families are considered as "the in-side", the home space where Armenians can connect with other Armenians free of state's scrutiny, whereas schools are regarded as "the mid-side" as spaces under state-surveillance where they can connect with other Armenians only by the presence of the law and regulations (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 13). Bearing in mind Ekmekçioğlu's categories, by presenting the Armenian schools with respect to their familial culture, my aim is to indicate the junctures where the in-side and the mid-side intermingle. Instead of seeing these areas mutually exclusive, I ask the reader to see them in connection with one another where they share certain characteristics and similar forms of engagement with the nation state, if not as interpenetrating with one another where it is no more viable to see which aspects belong to the in-side and which to the mid-side. Only in this way I believe we can have an idea on the circumstances enclosing the subjects of the Armenian schools, or how strong the structure in which these subjects reside.

Although the framework that this chapter offers may appear like the space of Armenianness is tantamount to a space to which the state cannot

penetrate, acknowledging the cultural awareness of the Armenian community as a form of empowerment through a family affect does not necessarily mean that I underestimate the strength of power structures. Throughout the chapter I mention how different mechanisms and networks of solidarity contribute to sustaining the Armenian culture or identity; however, I also acknowledge that the Armenian community is not exempt from ideas or discourses that are inscribed by the educational institutions of the Turkish state into its citizens. In such a context, it would be not plausible to argue that the Armenian community can escape from governmentality penetrated into the family, media or educational institutions. Rather, the space of Armenianness tries to find its place in this larger framework between the individual and the state or between the family and the state, while bearing certain values of the nuclear family and positioning itself as opposed to a national family where it is not possible to refrain from the structures of the nation state.

Unlike the secular viewpoint which regards that there are only two mutually exclusive options available; either an agent representing and asserting herself or a victim as a passive object of chance and cruelty (Asad, 2003, p. 79), in this chapter I try to reveal ways in between. I take into consideration what Asad suggests; the suffering emanating by the state oppression may also be regarded as an active state since it is not passively received (2003, p. 79). Having this in mind, I show how the schools and people who are engaged with these schools in one way or another are not simply recipients of state practices. Although they participate in those practices, they also generate provisional measures to sustain the culture and the community. I argue that by creating networks through a familiar culture, the schools actively endure instead of being mere victims, and this endurance is not necessarily a passive state.

§ 4.1 Nuclear Family in Familial Culture

As I talked to people with different points of views during my fieldwork, it was almost perplexing for me to see that all the participants share more or less a common understanding when it comes to their expectations

from the Armenian schools. The schools are mostly regarded as one of the few places where students can improve their Armenian language skills and reinforce cultural practices, if not get acquainted with them in the first place. My participants generally view the schools as the spaces providing a foundation for the generational continuity of Armenian values. It is also largely agreed that the schools are among the most equipped places to be able to create a ground for students to develop ways of discovering self-meaning towards their ethnic and religious identity. The Armenian schools provide a ground for cultural practices and self-meaning of the community to be carried over to the next generations. They also function as a physical space to bring the members of the community together where social solidarity among the members of the community becomes possible.

According to the field survey conducted with 228 participants in 11 different neighborhoods of Istanbul by Komşuoğlu and Örs (2009), attending an Armenian school is regarded very important as it is seen as one of the rare opportunities to learn the Armenian language and come together with other Armenians (p. 338). As my research confirms these findings, my participants consider Armenian schools to have such a crucial role in the Armenian community because the schools are among the few institutions which have the institutional capacity and capability to accumulate knowledge, provide a space throughout years where the Armenian language can be practiced as opposed to its near absence in the wider public space, and where cultural norms can be transferred, if not renegotiated by the members of the community.² In that regard, their importance comes from the fact they keep the communal memory intact in times when other forms of communicative networks are thwarted. That is why I illustrate the schools as the fortresses of the Armenian culture keeping the Armenian cultural existence physically apparent and viable with the

² I also would like to mention the Armenian press in this discussion. Although it is categorically different, Armenian newspapers are considered as established means to talk about Armenian history and communal affairs. As Suciyan (2018) argues, since teaching Armenian history is strictly forbidden, Armenian newspapers in Turkey have been the sole means of communication to narrate Armenian history (p. 23).

help of their institutional memory and towering their walls when the socio-political context of Turkey becomes precarious or even detrimental towards multiculturalism of the society and narrows down spaces for Armenian culture to be sustained.

In order to visit each school, every time I first contacted the school principals and had a preliminary meeting with them to have a general idea of individual characteristics of their schools. To an extent that the school principals shared a perspective regarding the role of the Armenian schools within the community, they also proudly emphasized the glorious past of the schools going a long way back to the Ottoman Empire and their contributions to the intellectual development of the community and of the larger society. The schools owe their significance to their institutional existence from the times of the Ottoman Empire, which render the transfer of cumulative knowledge possible, and keep the memory of the past in its historicity through language and religion classes in particular.

As Ekmekçioğlu (2016) elucidates the post-genocide period, the significance of the schools also stems from their role of maintaining the identity after the catastrophe that ravaged the Armenian intellectual production. Especially in the post-genocide period, the Armenian Apostolic Church put equal emphasis on churches and schools as special sites in which Armenians could exercise self-determination (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 124). Like the churches, the schools had to be perpetuated at all costs because they were the legal and traditionally accepted way of maintaining identity and recovering Armenianness (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 124). In the current context, we see the reflections of this understanding as the schools are regarded as the guardians of the extended past of the Armenians persevering throughout generations. One of our meetings, while describing the role of the schools, a high school principal pithily put into words how the social solidarity that these schools encourage keeps the Armenian identity and values intact while reproducing self-meaning for its members:

“Schools are the places that keep us together. We would be assimilated into the wider society without our schools. Thanks to our schools, social networks can be maintained. The youth can learn

more about their community. They can connect to their past. Only by these schools, the [Armenian] social environment can be impactful on the individual.”³

Although the schools are powerful references to understand cultural transfer and sustainability in the community, they are not the sole actor in such processes.⁴ The school administrators and teachers share the fact that even when they push boundaries and try their best to teach the language and cultural codes -however they perceive them- to their students there are many different dynamics, including family, as a crucial component of self-meaning production and acquisition. During our conversations I realized that in unraveling the surrounding environment of the schools, the families played an integral part in the mental structure producing subjectivities. That is why I find it necessary to discuss the role of the nuclear family, and furthermore how it plays a role in configuring the structure enclosing the Armenian schools.

Although I did not anticipate the parents to be the majority or even a significant group among my participants, during my conversations with teachers and school administrators they were frequently mentioned regarding their preferences or expectations from their schools. With a few exceptions, my acquaintance with the parents is limited to the parents who currently or at some point in their life have been actively involved with the schools as teachers, school administrators, board members of their foundations or through other roles actively participating in the functioning of the schools. Stemming from their active roles in the schools, they already have a certain perspective towards other parents who do not prefer to register their children to Armenian schools, but mostly those who have requests that sometimes conflict with the objec-

³ Citation from the interview I conducted with a high school principal in March 2019.

⁴ It goes without saying that the expressed prominence of the schools in this context also comes from the fact that my questions particularly swirled around the schools when I tried to understand their significance and meaning. My participants gave various examples of other factors that are also effective in maintaining the identity, and even that may annul the aforementioned explanation entirely.

tive of the schools as the bearers of Armenian culture. Although the majority of my parent-participants perceive the schools as exclusive places of cultural production and as places for proper pedagogical education and intellectual development, the parents who are described by my participants in this section refer to those who predominantly focus on the larger neoliberal educational structure. In that regard, the picture that I draw in this chapter to depict the parents is not so neat, rather there are nuances among the parents.⁵ The reason why I foreground a certain group of parents in this section is because of the fact that I want to show their additional palpable impacts on the educational dynamics in the Armenian community.⁶

Whereas the nuclear family shapes the dynamics in the schools as the schools take into consideration expectations and concerns of the parents, the family as well is constructed by the impact of communal dynamics; and therefore, these processes are better to be read as bi-directional. The political context surrounding Armenians had a respectable amount of influence on the edifice of the Armenian families. Zeitlan (1995) attracts attention to the fact that since the land of the Armenians was divided and the nation was dispersed, the family is assumed as having an idiosyncratic role in ensuring protection and survival for the Armenian culture (p. 87). After mass atrocities, Armenians rebuilt their families while becoming an extended family (Kalayjian *et al.*, 2010, p. 299). Under the conditions that preclude the expression of Armenianness within the political realm, cultural practices by kin-keeping become indispensable for the preservation and protection of the Armenian identity (Bilal, 2007, p. 58). That is why Armenian families and community members are encouraged,

⁵ While these parties are not necessarily mutually exclusive or separated from each other with clear boundaries, I also do not mean to say that there are two parties. Rather, concerns, viewpoints and expectations of the parents are very diverse.

⁶ By describing requests or viewpoints of the parents, I do not actually attribute agency to them in that regard, because they are not the sole decision makers in this context; rather, they try to create the conditions that their children thrive in. In that regard, throughout this section I want the reader to keep in mind that the parents are almost oblivious carriers of the changing dynamics of Turkey into the schools.

even expected, to go to church, marry other Armenians, gather for special occasions, and most importantly teach the Armenian language to the new generations (Kalayjian *et al.*, 2010, p. 299).

Today, with my research I saw that these practices are still potent. Armenian families in Turkey are largely viewed as the spheres where the Armenian language, as a significant part of the Armenian identity, is introduced to the new generations through kin-keeping and family practices, that is why the standpoint of the family towards the Armenian identity and culture would tell much about how the identity of the child would be shaped in the following years. Broadly speaking, usually the expectation from families is to give a comprehensive introduction to the Armenian cultural identity for their children; thereby, the children can develop belonging to their culture. According to teachers, students' capability to pursue talking in Armenian language depends largely on their bearing and background. They expressed their perspective on seeing the family as significant since it shapes the competence of the child in the Armenian language and the rate of involvement in learning and reproducing Armenian culture. The general view among the Armenian language teachers is that Armenian language education starts at the household where it is introduced as the mother tongue and the language of communication. They believe this introduction most of the time encourages the child to go further in learning and discovering the cultural dynamics of their community. In that regard, the teachers I had a conversation with frequently raised their concerns about the inadequate Armenian language skills of newer generations of students. An Armenian language teacher highlighted the fact that individual cases sometimes have larger repercussions; when the family could not or did not introduce the language to the child, this situation also hinders the language development in the classroom by affecting other students, and put teachers, who struggle to find a balance in the classroom, in a position to simplify the curriculum so that students in the same classroom can meet at a common denominator:

“In comparison to previous years, we have less students competent in the Armenian language when they start school. In the past, since students were competent in the language, we could add on.

However, we now have students starting school without any knowledge of Armenian. That is why we had to simplify language education, without even transferring cultural practices. Since students have a limited vocabulary, we tend to teach less sophisticated stuff.”⁷

In other words, competency in the language and knowledge of cultural practices obtained in the household have an impact on classroom dynamics. Teachers also foregrounded the role of the family in the cultural development of the child, and how this in turn affected the success of the schools in fulfilling their objectives. From this perspective, if students develop an awareness of the Armenian identity in their families by being introduced to the Armenian language as a start, then in the long run this awareness can be reinforced in the schools and thin down the possibilities of the deterioration of commonly shared cultural aspects. That is why the schools believe that the most important part of education starts in the household. As a closer observant to familial affairs and progress of their students over time, a school counselor working in a high school explained the overall tendency as following:

“Cultural sustainability and cultural transfer are ensured through the institutional capacity of schools and churches. Although the cultural transfer between generations is stronger during the primary school years, students develop an interest towards the mainstream society in their high school years. Gradually, the Armenian language competency fades away. On the other hand, in cases where the language of the household is Armenian, then the competency could abide in the school as well.”⁸

During our discussions about the impact of the family on children, mixed marriages between Armenians and non-Armenians were also ap-

⁷ Citation from the interview I conducted with an Armenian language teacher in May 2019.

⁸ Citation from the interview I conducted with a school counselor working in a high school in March 2019.

proached from a similar perspective with respect to the cultural development of the student and as well interpreted as an influence on the texture of the Armenian community. With the purpose of illuminating the root causes of endogamy that is still predominant in the Armenian community in Turkey, in her book, Ekmekçioğlu (2016) crisply explains why endogamy is treasured among the Armenians in Turkey. She states that as a result of the persistence of patrilineal descent rules and “the legacy of long centuries of the Ottoman state meddling in who could marry out and who could not, endogamy has largely remained as the norm among Armenians in Turkey to this day” (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 10). Similarly, Dagirmanjian (2005) describes the commitment to in-marriage as one of the significant aspects ensuring the preservation of the distinctive Armenian culture against the forces of assimilation (p. 445). While endogamy is accepted as a crucial means to preserve the Armenian identity, by the larger community mixed marriages are regarded mainly as resulting in assimilation (Özdoğan *et. al.*, 2009, p. 357).⁹ My interviewees widely expressed that in combination with other socio-political factors mixed marriages mostly led the Armenian language in the household to cease to exist, and leave its place to a fully Turkish-speaking family. Thereby, they mostly see mixed marriages as one of the reasons why the Armenian language dissolves over generations. Although mixed marriages cannot be sufficiently the reason why the child does not fully adopt the Armenian culture¹⁰, most of the time these families are perceived to fall short in giving an introduction to Armenian culture, and enkindling a light of curiosity for the Armenian cultural heritage.¹¹ Albeit the paramount function attached to

⁹ According to the research conducted by Özdoğan *et. al.* (2009, p. 357), Armenians exhibit negative attitudes towards mixed marriages. Although the rate of mixed marriages is estimated to be high around 50% by the Patriarchate, according to the results of the research and its future projection mixed marriages seem to be unwelcomed by the Armenian community.

¹⁰ Especially when we consider the desire that the family decide to enroll the student to an Armenian school so that the student can learn and experience Armenian culture.

¹¹ Whereas mixed marriages are regarded as one of the reasons of cultural dissolution, there are exceptions to this argument that there are many fluent Armenian-speakers

endogamy, in recent years with the changing patterns of socialization this custom seems to be interrupted. According to the research conducted by Komşuoğlu and Örs (2009), the interviewees see mixed-marriages as more common because of the changing patterns of daily life in which members of the new generation spend more time on their education and jobs in comparison to traditional Armenian families (p. 337).¹²

In such a context where cultural traditions are highly treasured, social events organized in the schools are largely regarded as building blocks for cultural continuity especially of the students who cannot experience certain cultural events at their households or who live in boarding schools far from their families. These social events are ardently appreciated not only because they are entertaining and dynamic means to introduce cultural and social norms to students but also because for some students whose families do not maintain or are not familiar with cultural traditions, school events are the only places where students can encounter certain cultural practices. As my participant observation reveals, such practices include food making and sharing events, decoration for religious holidays, narration of religious traditions, presentation of traditionally performed songs and tales, bake sales where traditional Armenian foods can be found or introduction to important public figures and stories. Unfortunately, the timing of my research did not overlap with all the social events organized by or with the help of school administrations, their foundations or alumni, but I came across quite a number of them. I visited Christmas sales for the benefit of the schools a couple of years in a row. Since the timing of my field visits coincided with Easter, I encoun-

whose parents are not competent in the Armenian language, and yet who have found their way through it, and became accomplished speakers with their wide knowledge on cultural codes.

¹² On this particular topic, Beylunioğlu and Kaymak's (2021) book offers a comprehensive discussion to understand how mixed marriages are perceived by people at different age groups in Greek, Jewish and Armenian communities and further to see an analysis on the way societal dynamics and concerns are embodied in individuals and thereby influence the private sphere.

tered a couple of social traditions and customs of Easter. I distantly participated in the exchange of Easter greetings between school administrators and teachers, and learned that every Easter the school which I visited at the time gives Easter sweet yeast bread to students as a gift. In most of the primary schools this time of the year also witnesses decoration of the school for Easter of which painting eggs is a common custom. In addition to the celebration of holy days, social gatherings also include events recapturing the cohesiveness of the community. During one of my visits, I also encountered a lunch given by a benefactor in the honor of a deceased member of the community preceding with a short ceremony of prayers. The purpose of this food giving event, *hokicaş*, is to distribute food for the soul of the deceased person. Although it might not appear as such to people who are already familiar with the event, at that time the lunch itself seemed to me as a very candid and sincere moment of a communal tradition because it portrayed a moment of unity in a non-private sphere.

§ 4.2 Where Familial Culture and Educational Policies meet

Coming back to the topic regarding the parents, I will leave the matter of cultural continuity and the spaces to sustain it here and to capture the link between nuclear families and the schools I will continue with the reasons why parents prefer to register their children to the Armenian schools. At the beginning of my field study when I had this question in mind, as a conversation starter, initially I asked the parents a very simple question: why do they prefer their children to attend Armenian schools? The initial answers I received were unanimous as if the parents were in some kind of an agreement to give the same response; that they wanted their children to learn the Armenian language and be accustomed with Armenian cultural practices. Although these answers may seem satisfactory enough for a newcomer, as I found out later, they cannot go beyond wishful thinking. The application of these expectations is slightly different from the statement.

When I went deeper into conversations, I had to come up with two follow-up questions that could unravel what these parents actually told

me; to what extent and at what expense do they want their children to be competent in the Armenian language; and what does Armenian culture really refer to in this context? Since in the former chapter I already talked about the implications of the neoliberal education system that was introduced mainly after the 2000s and how this transformation paved the way for almost obligatory changes in the Armenian schools, I will not repeat the altered dynamics of the education environment in Turkey here. Rather, in this chapter as an addition to the former discussion I will further elaborate on how the central examination system that dominates the daily life of every student as well as every parent in Turkey shapes the decisions of the parents, and thereby begets some repercussions for the familial culture that I delineate.

Armenian students are not exempt from the harsh competition that the central examination system along with the free-market economy brings for them. In the era of commodification of education, Armenian parents want to offer the best possibility to their children and this also means seeking opportunities outside the Armenian community. Whereas the parents want to prepare their children in accordance with the requests of the new global structure and its job markets, the Armenian schools are not exempt from the broader developments taking place in the Turkish education system and have to compete with other schools promising to prepare the students in the best competitive way to lead them to success and to increase their value in the labor market. In that regard, the teachers whom I had a conversation with frequently stated that the parents set private schools as an example for the Armenian schools and expected them to adjust their objectives accordingly.

The literature needs a lot of contribution to fully address the impact of the neoliberal shift in Turkey on the Armenian identity and discussions around it. This subject definitely needs further research; however, by delivering my share I address this gap within the context of the Armenian schools. As my research shows through the example of the parents, Armenian families have turned towards the desires that global capitalism might offer for new middle and upper-middle classes in the transformed societal structure. I argue that the Armenian schools oscillate between

the two phenomena as the parents have two-fold requests that lead the Armenian schools to end up integrated into the education market.

In the current context where curricula are prepared in accordance with the prospects of free market economy and language acquisition targets higher mobility for international corporate networks, language learning is perceived to have a value to an extent that that language serves well for the market value of the individual. In this market it is regarded that the Armenian language has not much practical return because the fields and disciplines that have no market-value are deemed worthy to shrink, if not vanish. In that sense, while the Armenian language dies down in the process of cultural globalization, the Armenian identity as well pays its share when it encounters market dynamics and is challenged by them. The Armenian schools experience a double bind. The impacts of cultural globalization leave no room for certain cultures to be sustained. In Turkey, education is standardized and centralized where the curricula are not given enough flexibility to address cultural richness of the society. In a highly centralized education system where the standards of educational and eventual life success are set at state schools, it becomes more difficult to sustain non-Muslim schools (Göçek, 2015, p. 287).

This situation can be regarded as a minor implication of an identity crisis arising from a fall-out from an intense restructuring of capitalism that has challenged experiences of cultural belonging (Moran, 2015, p. 115). While the scope and pace of global integration resulted in the acceleration of flows and linkages between nations, the exposure to shared identities of globalism makes it difficult to preserve cultural identities intact as the social life becomes mediated by the global marketing and identities become detached from their context (Hall, 1992, p. 299, 302). As regards, this particular example in the context of the Armenian schools should make us consider whether the forces of globalization associated with the transition to post-Fordist and neoliberal capitalism disrupt expressions of identity, where cultural identities become increasingly unstable and fragmented by the forces of global capitalism (Moran, 2015, p. 115). In our case we may argue that preserving the Armenian cultural

identity intact is challenged by global marketing, and individuals become prone to embracing identities of globalism as a result of global integration. That is why while the Armenian schools try to sustain Armenian cultural values and promote them in opposition to larger impact of the global integration on the daily life of Armenian students, they also go against private schools that adopt certain measures as an endeavor to be articulated to global capitalism and adjust their curriculums to teach the skills to integrate their students to global labor market as the private schools also multiply in number almost overnight.

What is more interesting that although identity politics considerably shifted political paradigms in a global context mainly after the 1970s and 1980s, it did not create an impact as expected on the Armenian community in Turkey. Although with the construction of the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Armenia in 1967 an awareness towards the Armenian identity and a shared sense of belonging were replenished and collective consciousness among Armenians scaled up, Armenian identity politics could not come into sight and become visible in the political arena in Turkey. There is no doubt that many explanations can be given here if we delve into the socio-political reasons why Armenians in Turkey have to seek shelter in silence. However, as a small anecdote what I want to argue here is that the potential of identity politics clashed with the changing dynamics of the society with the introduction of neoliberalism and was swallowed by them.

Referring to research on the changing patterns of Armenian family life conducted in Paris, London and Cyprus, Pattie (1995) talks about a similar phenomenon. She attracts attention to the fact that in the modern times the life of Armenian families has started to revolve around the needs and demands of the job while focusing on the individual rather than the family, where the collective “we” lost its emphasis (Pattie, 1995, p. 141). In that regard, we are to acknowledge the unique character of neoliberalism that it infiltrates every room of the education system and does not leave any other option to outlast. As neoliberalism promotes competition among students, teachers, administrators, parents and schools, not only the solidarity in the schools is undermined but also the main purpose of the

schools is locked on exam preparations (Kurul, 2012, p. 92). I explicated the neoliberal transformation and central examination system at great length in the former chapter, because empowerment and solidarity in the Armenian schools are pertinent to those dynamics. Despite the incontestable sway of capitalist economy, I still think that the community affect has not resigned its position completely and its impact is still observable at different scales today in the Armenian community. That is why while I discuss the transformation of the Armenian schools, I still persist to portray Armenians associated with the schools as members of a family and give certain examples that capture this discussion.

Knowing the dynamics of this ambivalent situation, in the schools that I visited I learned that the school administrators invite parents to their prospective students' days at every registration period where they find the chance to explain their own perspective, objective as well as achievements to parents, and attract them to choose their school over the others. In those prospective students' days, parents usually tend to bargain over subjects that they want to see changed. During our meetings, many teachers explained that most of the time the main topic of discussions in parent-teacher meetings swirls around issues of having classes in Armenian, the intensity of foreign language classes or introducing extracurricular activities as much as the budget of the school allows.

In the couple of schools that I visited, teachers shortly mentioned the reasons for their disagreement with the parents on these subjects that are worth mentioning here; adopting the Armenian language as the medium of instruction. Later, I also learned that in a couple of other schools the teachers had similar kinds of debate with the parents. Although with a few exceptions the majority of the Armenian schools hold their classes almost entirely in Turkish, I can say that this discussion is still relevant in the schools. In that regard, the general concern of the parents stems from the assumption that if the classes are held in Armenian, the students might not understand the content of the class entirely and cannot follow the lesson. That is why sometimes the parents might act reluctant in registering their children into the school that wants to keep the Armenian language as the language of instruction entirely or for certain classes, and

consider other options that might offer the students more competitive skills.

As teachers narrate, most of the time parents request classes to be held in Turkish so that the students are not at a disadvantage in comparison to other students attending non-Armenian schools. School administrators and teachers told me that at times like this they tried to convince parents that holding classes in Armenian would not impede exam preparations of students or give them a disadvantage. In order to simply describe the situation, one of the teachers who put a great effort to keep holding her classes in Armenian stated that:

“It became very difficult to sustain the Armenian culture because now the students and parents do not care about it; they just want to graduate as soon as possible, mind their own business, go to university and start to work.”¹³

In such a context, teachers say that they see themselves as intermediaries finding ways of satisfying parents, while they struggle to keep the objectives of the Armenian schools.

It also needs mentioning here that the focus of discussions between parents and teachers alters from school to school. Based on the composition of students and parents but mainly on preferences of the boards, the schools decide their priorities. Sometimes making Armenian the language of instruction does not sit high on the list of these priorities. In other schools that I visited, the reason why the parents acted halfheartedly in registering their children to that school stemmed from the fact that the parents believed that their children could not receive English language education well enough in comparison to other schools, and requested the school administration to take action on that regard. In another school, the heat of the discussion was on extracurricular activities and student clubs that the school was expected to offer which might introduce students organizational and leadership skills. That is to say, what

¹³ Citation from the interview I conducted with a math teacher in March 2019.

I argue here is the fact that to the extent that education is commercialized, and becomes a product to be bought, the parents become customers who see making requests to the schools as their entitlement. It goes without saying that the Armenian schools in Turkey are not exempt from these dynamics, although they are funded by community foundations.

During our one-to-one meetings, I also talked to teachers about their future projections regarding the schools. So many of them shared their concerns about the durability of the schools. As we talked about the transformation of the Armenian schools, a school counselor I interviewed stated that as teachers and administrators, their uneasiness stemmed from two main points. Will the Armenian language vanish? Will the schools be shut down as a result of inadequate numbers of students? These issues are not something that the parents are not aware of. They as well are very familiar with the predicaments and the context surrounding the schools. Since the parents know very well the fact that the schools desperately need students to sustain their existence in a time period when the population of the schools is on the decline, they may use this leverage to alter the condition in favor of their own preferences, and even ask their personal suggestions to be fulfilled.

Going back to my initial question in this regard; the answer to the question to what extent the parents prioritize their children to learn the Armenian language is to the extent that this language learning would not set their children back from the competition of answering as many multiple-choice questions as possible and learning the languages which could carry them higher in the ranks of the job market. As I already emphasized above, while the parents seem to be indecisive and ambivalent regarding their preferences, they actually value bonding with the Armenian community via the Armenian schools. However, they also make sure that this commitment does not trouble their children's articulation to the global world. They prioritize the achievement of their children, which most of the time translates into the affluence of opportunities for furthering an undergraduate or graduate education abroad or employment in the promising countries with higher life standards.

In order to paint a picture of the prevalence of circumstances, some of my participants gave a rough number about the student population attending non-Armenian schools. According to their estimation, half of the student population of the Armenian community attend non-Armenian schools, almost all of which are private schools. My participants also further explained that the motivation of the other half of the student population attending to Armenian schools cannot entirely be explained by their commitment to cultural identity or values. Some of the parents prefer the Armenian schools because they want their children to be educated in a safe place where their children do not have any discriminatory experience because of their ethno-religious identity and where they can further familiarize themselves with the community and cultural values.

My findings also disclosed the fact that providing qualified education for free of charge or for lower charges than private schools played an important part in the decision-making processes of the parents. In the education year of 2020-2021 whereas the net minimum wage is 2.234 Turkish liras, annual tuition fees for primary and secondary schools change in a price range roughly from 16 thousand Turkish liras to 100 thousand Turkish liras and for high schools from 20 thousand Turkish liras to 167 thousand Turkish liras not including transportation and catering services. Considering high tuition fees of private schools and colleges, it is very unlikely for lower-middle or lower class families to afford the costs of these schools. According to teachers I talked to, that is why those who cannot afford to enroll their children to a private college opt for Armenian schools. In addition to their accessibility, the schools provide certain things that can only be found in private schools, such as small classroom sizes, student assessment procedures or psychological counseling sessions.

In addition to offering competitive means for future job prospects, private schools are often exhibited as the social tokens of reputation among parents who want to reimagine their class positions within the larger society. The entrance into qualified high schools and universities that have high scores in the ranking lists of the examinations is acknowledged as a momentous source of social mobility and reproduction of the

class (Kandiyoti, 2003, p. 23). As regards, private schools are not only perceived as gatekeepers for students to be able to access high-paid jobs while climbing the social ladder, by parents they are also regarded as a must for a desired social location. While the Armenian schools try to keep up with the new technologies of education such as new learning and teaching methods, and to offer tailored-made solutions for their students, they also endeavor to compete with private schools and colleges, and more importantly to assure the parents that choosing an Armenian school is equally prestigious. As my research showed, as a result of the disagreement between teachers and board members of the school foundations this endeavor can sometimes be easily misled into a situation where the concerns of the board members for the brand value of the school clash with the concerns of the teachers for pedagogic and intellectual development of students.

The reasons why the Armenian schools transformed and became constitutive parts of the overarching education system can be read in such a context that the Armenian schools put a great effort not to fall behind in the market of education. Rather than merely focusing on cultural elements which make them unique among their counterparts, they as well refresh their objectives and adjust their means- although not all of them could afford the means to be able to enter such a competition. As it can be imagined, keeping a balance between serving the requests that the neoliberal transformation of education requires and fulfilling liabilities of an Armenian school trying to withstand against culturally disruptive challenges like popular culture that global integration dictates is not an easy work in a context where the Armenian schools are expected to deliver both of these objectives even in times when they are in conflict with one another.

Having said that, the schools are exhibited as places where the familial culture of the Armenian community is sustained and intimate relations become quotidian part of the communal life. But this familial culture is interrupted, since the schools are instrumentalized as the means to govern this communal space by neoliberal educational policies. As the schools are the meeting points between the body and the polity or the

individual and the state (Herzfeld, 1993), the governmentality promoted by the neoliberal education policies penetrate into this familial culture. At times when the schools are reluctant to embrace this neoliberal transformation at the expense of their role as cultural carriers, the parents keep them on track who are governed by the idea that their children can only prevail as competitive beings embracing the new success models of the era.

The schools serve as the places, where students are introduced and produced as neoliberal beings as parts of the larger education system which was constructed with the sole purpose of promoting the idea of the state. They still preserve a certain role for the Armenian community with some nuances that endorse some kind of variety among them. On a closer look the schools differ from each other considerably. In this difference, not only the financial capabilities of the schools are significant, also their diverse institutional objectives and missions are distinguishing and bring about different options to their target audience. These differences and visions understandably have an influence on the parents and students who make their preferences in accordance with the objectives and opportunities that each school is capable of offering. After talking to a considerable number of parents and teachers, I came to an understanding that the preferences of parents have some nuances in picking the right Armenian school for their children. Whereas some schools are chosen for their rather intensive Armenian language practices, which becomes only possible by the determination of their school principals, some others are preferred for their boarding facilities or all-inclusive free-of-charge education that they can offer thanks to their physical capabilities or larger budgets. I have seen that the school being the alma mater of the parents can also be regarded as one of the reasons why parents decide to register their children to a particular school. Based on the information that I gathered from my participants, I also learned that the location of the school emerges as a significant factor having an impact on the decision-making processes of parents. Considering the fact that the Armenian population of Istanbul is largely concentrated in older neighborhoods of the city where Armenian churches and schools subsist, parents usually

prefer registering their children to the schools that are in or closer to their neighborhoods.

That is to say, there are many factors mentioned during my fieldwork influencing decision-making processes of the parents when they conclude to the right school in accordance with their preferences and the needs of the student. In that sense, I can say that the reasons I underlined above are the most referred ones during our conversations and those that appear as a pattern. Deliberations of whether or not to choose an Armenian school is also a part of these decision-making processes. As I briefly discussed earlier in this chapter these processes have rather different dynamics, since deciding on registering the student either for an Armenian school or a private school hinges on rather more material reasons of which the income-level of the family appears as a crucial one.

Although the Armenian schools differ from each other based on their objectives, student composition, financial sustainability or opportunities they could offer, I will repeat what I underlined above; the schools predominantly speak to a certain income level. During my fieldwork, the school principals I talked to already stated that the students came predominantly from low or middle income levels of families. After I paid my visits to the schools, I had more chances to think about this topic and with the hope of receiving additional comments on the subject I conducted additional one-to-one meetings with people from different backgrounds. In those meetings, I asked targeted questions on the student compositions of the schools to my participants. One of these participants was an alumnus of an Armenian school who was also working as a teacher's aide in one of the Armenian primary schools at the time. He explained to me that with the accelerating pressure of the central examination system, relatively wealthier families turned to private schools for the future prospects that they could offer, and this made the socio-economic class divide between the students of Armenian and private schools get even sharper than before. This phenomenon brings about the perception that Armenianness gradually comes in the possession of lower and middle social classes and becomes almost their relic that they need to preserve:

“After the change in the central examination system, parents who can afford [private schools] started to prefer and send their children to private schools, and Armenianness became class-based.”¹⁴

From this perspective, I assert that while the schools seem to be reserved for a particular socio-economic class, the Armenian culture and Armenian language happen to address a certain social class.

As a result of the altering dynamics of the education environment in Turkey driven mainly by the central examination system and neoliberal transformation, the texture of the Armenian schools becomes appealing particularly to a specific socio-economic level of parents, composed mostly of low or mid-income families.¹⁵ The income level of the parents is a determinative factor of student compositions of the Armenian schools. Although this does not necessarily mean that upper class families almost never prefer Armenian schools, as my research reveals they only appear as an exception in those schools. It is fair to say that there are also high-income families who opt for Armenian schools because they want their children to grow up in a culturally and religiously familiar environment. However, the number of these parents is not an overwhelming majority. On the contrary, most of the time they are perceived as an exception to this end by the larger community.¹⁶

¹⁴ Citation from the interview I conducted with a former student in November 2019.

¹⁵ The socio-economic composition of parents may also considerably vary from neighborhood to neighborhood; whereas the schools in wealthier neighborhoods have students mainly from mid-income families, the schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods, where the income level of its residents are low, have students from families with comparatively lower income levels.

¹⁶ Contrary to what I learned from these meetings and contrary to the general view, I also encountered two schools that are not fully in line with this explanation. Although these two examples do not significantly invalidate the argument above, they do not explicitly confirm it either in the sense that it is rather difficult to argue that wealthier families do not prefer these schools. The schools as being located in relatively prosperous neighborhoods of the city appeal to families from various social classes. In that, the fact that the socio-economic levels of families in the neighborhood overall are relatively higher and the schools are managed with certain objectives and certain measures that put

I am well aware of the fact that delving into the relationship between the middle class and ethno-religious identity requires a thorough analysis including discovering the historical background of the identity production and emergence of the middle class in the Armenian community. Although unraveling the influence of the Armenian middle class on the production and preservation of the Armenian identity is a larger subject going beyond the limits of my study, cognizant of the importance of the social class I try to present a smaller part of this subject and exhibit as many points as possible from my interviews within the purposes of my research. In addition to briefly visiting the literature on the emergence of the Armenian national consciousness in chapter 1 where I gave a historical background on the Armenian schools, I will also show in the next chapter that people from different social positions impact processes of identity production in the schools by instrumentalizing their means and social capital.

The perception that Armenianness is becoming a relic of low and mid-income families is merely based on the perception of my participants. There is no quantitative research on the income levels of the parents who enroll their children in the Armenian schools. In addition to discovering the root causes of the perception of why people think this way, a couple of questions which need to be asked in this context can be the following; whether the ethno-religious identity of Armenianness is engendered by the low and mid-income families or this role is assigned to them, and what kind of outcomes these historical processes lead to. The limits of my research and the extent of my study did not allow me to answer these questions. Let's hope that the particular temporality and dynamics of the emergence of the Armenian national consciousness will encourage further research on the subject. In order to be able to present some nuances in that regard, in chapter 5 I will show how agendas of different actors shape the state of affairs within these schools and how we can make

them in competition with private schools are influential. But again, these two examples are not strong enough to support the above argument I presented or do not overrule the general view, yet again I find it necessary to mention here.

sense of this phenomenon, and in chapter 6 I will articulate some key aspects to address Armenian language and culture in their current context.

§ 4.3 Familiarity in Familial Culture

Apart from the material and practical reasons I mentioned above, I would also like to remind societal dynamics reigning in Turkey for such a long time now and elaborate more on what parents understand by Armenian culture when they raise it as one of the reasons for their preference to enroll their children to Armenian schools. Consolidated with the genocide, the imperial legacy of the Ottoman Empire took its shape mainly in the 19th and 20th century, and has built a body of *sui generis* sociopolitical structures in the Republic of Turkey (Suciyan, 2018, p. 21). Legal, political, cultural, economic and physical violence that prevailed in the last years of the Ottoman Empire have shaped the state and society of Turkey perennially (Suciyan, 2018, p. 40). In her inspiring book, Suciyan (2018) unravels the impact of the genocide on the societal dynamics in Turkey and describes Turkey's post-genocide habitus of denial.

In such a context, seeing Armenians as "foreigners and betrayers" is not only restricted to the state discourse, this understanding is also widely accepted by the wider Turkish society (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, p. 28). There are many incidents recounted demonstrating the explicit prejudice and discrimination in public schools where at times it takes a more complex form as teachers single out non-Muslim students (Göçek, 2015, p. 290). As a result of the Turkish nationalist rhetoric embraced and taught at schools marginalizing other religions and ethnicities, students especially of non-Muslim and non-Turkish origin are discriminated against (Göçek, 2015, p. 289). Up until October 2013, in public and primary schools students were asked to take an oath which started with the line "I am Turk"¹⁷, and non-Turkish students are still reminded

¹⁷ Following the bundle of democratization reforms declared on 30 June 2013, with an amendment on the relevant regulation the oath that was supposed to be read at the beginning of every school week was abolished on 8 October 2013. Turk Eğitim-Sen

of their non-Turkishness on many other occasions (Ekmekçioğlu, 2014, p. 673). I will quote Ekmekçioğlu's words where she subtly describes the paradox:

“Historically, many were reminded of their difference when they would have rather forgotten it, and found their difference overlooked when they would have preferred it be recognized.” (2014, p. 673).

In order to refrain from discrimination and maltreatment resulting from the negative image of Armenianness in the wider society, the Armenian community endeavors to remain concealed (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, p. 33). While the Armenian community in Turkey still has to face discriminatory practices targeting the cultural as well as physical existence of the community, the continuing trauma of the past along with the experiences of today keep the concerns of the community alive. Inevitably, parents try to find safe havens, sheltered environments for their children to protect them as much as possible from the hostile discourse of the broader society as well as the predicaments their children have to face on a daily basis. When I asked the motivation behind the parents' preferences in choosing Armenian schools, a chemistry teacher working in a high school put this situation very neatly as: “Parents opt for Armenian schools, because they want their children not to be bullied in other schools, or feel uncomfortable about their identity.”¹⁸

Although what Armenian culture stands for in today's context is a very loaded and difficult question, from my interviews with parents and teachers, I come to the conclusion that it mainly refers to a safer place

opened a court case against this amendment and the practice was reinstated in 2018 by the majority of votes of the Council of State 8th Chamber. However, the Ministry of National Education objected to this initial decision. In 2021 the case was finalized by the decision of the Plenary Session of Administrative Law Chamber and the student oath was abolished as I was writing this explanation. See <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-56429004> (Retrieved on 8 April 2021).

¹⁸ Citation from the interview I conducted with a high school chemistry teacher working in a high school in March 2019.

where the student is surrounded by other Armenian students and families who share similar concerns, and most vitally who perceive things in a similar manner. During our conversations, when I asked about the cultural aspects of the schools, the teachers illustrated the schools as environments of Armenian cultural values. These cultural values most of the time refers to a particular lifestyle, *modus vivendi*. The schools are primarily described as places where students are educated in an environment surrounded by their peers who are from a similar background or family culture. This environment allows them to be taken care of by the teachers who know their parents in person, and even have personal relationships with them. A school counselor who is a parent herself explained the currents of the situation with these words:

“The reason why parents prefer to send their children to an Armenian primary school in particular is to be able to raise their children in an Armenian cultural environment. Low classroom sizes, one-to-one communication and care, and knowing other parents in person are the main reasons.”¹⁹

In this sense, the stories that they shared with me tell that speaking the same language does not necessarily refer to speaking the Armenian language in this context. It means that people share similar concerns and perceptions while trying to keep their children within the imaginary but secure borders of the community. What parents understand by Armenian culture is by and large social networks and environments where Armenian religious practices are familiar to its members, where the marginalized identity can nest, and where solidarity among members of the community is not only likely but also encouraged.

Furthermore, I would also like to mention separately in this context the motivation of Anatolian Armenian families sending their children to boarding schools in Istanbul. Slightly different from *Bolsahays*, Istanbulite Armenians, Anatolian families see the Armenian schools as the only

¹⁹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a school counselor working in a high school in March 2019.

chance for their children to meet the wider community, adopt cultural practices, and most importantly learn the Armenian language. Since in Anatolia there is no school left and the Armenian population is so low in number, they lack places that can sustain cultural practices. The school counselor whom I quoted above also added that the Armenian boarding schools were often regarded by those parents as the only option for their children to meet their identity:

“Students coming from Anatolia prefer boarding schools. Families who have difficulties in sustaining their culture and language in their cities send their children to boarding schools, so that their children can be familiar with the Armenian community.”²⁰

Additionally, as the teachers and counselors working in the boarding schools described, some Anatolian families also consider the Armenian schools as a great opportunity to access educational facilities in Istanbul, especially when the income level of the family does not allow the child to receive promising education, or procure daily essentials for the continuation of education. Since boarding schools cover the everyday essentials of their students, families are eager to take that opportunity and ensure qualified education for their children at least until they enter a university.

Despite the Armenian schools being regarded as opportunity providers by these families, the families might act hesitant in sending their children to Istanbul at younger ages. The school administrators of boarding schools whom I talked to explained that sometimes incoming students come to Istanbul later years in their education after completing initial two or three years in their hometowns. In these cases, after completing initial years of their primary education, usually in a public school, students are transferred to an Armenian school without any knowledge of the Armenian language. This in turn often causes some problems for the receiving schools which makes it very challenging to hold the classes in

²⁰ Citation from the interview I conducted with a school counselor working in a high school in March 2019.

Armenian, or sometimes impossible if one or two students have no competency in the language. In order to overcome these drawbacks Armenian language teachers develop *ad hoc* solutions, and provide one-to-one tutoring to close the gap between students. However, as those teachers expressed, in some cases these kinds of measures were not sufficient to keep the curriculum in Armenian. In order to describe the situation of the Anatolian parents in a nutshell, the school administrator of one of the boarding schools I visited summed up the perspective of Anatolian parents as such:

“Those families, who cannot seek Armenian language education for their children in Anatolia, or those who are in Istanbul but economically challenged, send their children to boarding schools. And this pattern undermines cultural production in boarding schools. The moment a student has a connection to Armenianness, her or his parents send the child to one of the boarding schools, because they desire to seize the opportunity that these schools can offer; free of charge education and security.”²¹

In this regard, I invite the reader to consider the Armenian community composed of families who are in relation to one another. When I suggest visiting the Armenian community as a family, my only reference point is not the sole fact that these families share similar concerns and desires and that is why they form a larger family. Rather, I suggest discussing the dynamics of the Armenian community with respect to familial culture, because of its idiosyncratic governmentality. This idiosyncratic governmentality I believe is bolstered by two main sources; whereas the schools endeavor to be in line with the whirlwind of changes that neoliberal education policies demand, they are also obliged to be vigorous in ensuring the tenacity of Armenian culture and providing a safe environment that is tantamount to a familial culture. This familial culture unveils the complexity of the relationships in a communal space which has its own particular ways of governmentality.

²¹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a school administrator in April 2019.

§ 4.4 Familial Culture as a Safe Space

Durkheim depicts the family as a complete society whose influence extends its borders and impacts on numerous areas from economic activity to religion, politics or science; therefore, everything we do outside the home that has any importance has repercussions upon the family whose members share their existence (1933/1997, p. xliv). When we talk about the family, we often refer to a shared destiny and history where joy and pain are experienced in collaboration. When people have a shared history of traumatic experiences, the perception that members of the family share the same past can even be stronger. Volkan states that every large group which suffered loss in a conflict share the mental representation of that traumatic past event; in this way, all members share the mental representation of the tragedy of the past through sharing a “chosen trauma”, which link members of the group across generations together (2011, p. 87, 88). The mass trauma, which is significant and constitutive to relations and dynamics of that particular group, enhances the feeling of togetherness by producing intergenerational mental structures. That is to say, by dealing with transgenerational impacts of the Armenian genocide, we can actually gain some insights in imagining the impact of the traumatic past on the feeling of the togetherness in the Armenian community in Turkey.

Without delving into the dynamics of the genocide and especially of the post-genocide Turkey, studies trying to understand currents of the Armenian community cannot be complete or comprehensive. Knowing that there is an entire corpus of literature on the impacts of the Armenian genocide on individuals and societal dynamics, coping mechanisms with the past, and resilience of Armenians as well as oral history studies through which we can read experiences and narratives (Alayarian, 2008; Balancar, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2015; Beukian and Graff-McRae, 2018; Bilal, 2006, 2019; Haladjian, 2020; Kalayjian, 2009; Kalayjian and Weisberg, 2002; Kalayjian, *et al.*, 1996; Kalayjian, *et al.*, 2010; Kupelian, *et al.*, 1998; Miller & Miller, 1993; Neyzi and Kharatyan-Araqelyan, 2010; Smith, 1989; Suciyan, 2015; Yacoubian, 2009; Zeytinoğlu, *et al.*, 2012), I will not further

discuss it and say that analyzing generational and continuing effects of the mass trauma in post-genocide environments is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, as a minor contribution to the literature, I will briefly show how my research in the Armenian schools contributes to discussing the sense of togetherness in a space whose constituents delineate it as an internal space fortified against what is described as the outside, a non-Armenian space.

In a political conjuncture, where ‘us’ and ‘them’ discourse is exacerbated by national discourse, and where the predicaments and problems experienced by a group can almost never make it through the national level and stay only as pertained to that particular group, not very unpredictably these groups build their own endogenous formations with the purpose of establishing or multiplying “safe” spaces. Suffice to say that the hostile and exclusionary environment built by the wider society easily brings about its response in its surrounding groups, and results in these communities to reproduce their inside arenas in various forms. For many years, as hostility towards Armenians either by the state or by the society became both complementary and an integral part of the Turkish identity (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, p. 26), it is not perplexing to see the way communal spaces are fortified, and this not only applies to Armenians in Turkey, but to many communities that feel excluded because they do not “fit” into this fictitious category of Turkishness.

Considering the discriminatory discourse promoted by institutional practices, and the historical position taken on by the state institutions towards the Armenian schools, I was prepared to see that the schools might act very protective against visitors trying to explore the inner dynamics of the Armenian schools. However, I want to foreground that this reaction by itself tells so much about the political climate of Turkey; the uneasiness that Armenians feel in Turkey, in their homeland. These reactions emanate from the context where Armenians in Turkey were forced to leave the social sphere of Turkey vis-a-vis exclusionary and discriminatory policies in the post-genocide period, and to maintain their existence by a reflex of withdrawing as a voiceless community (Özdoğan *et. al.*,

2009, p. 25). The devaluation they experience results in dissociating themselves from the wider society.

During my research many of my participants expressed the feeling of sorrow and grief that was something to be shared only by Armenians because these feelings were inherent to their common past. They were dealing with the sorrow of the past by addressing these feelings from a “we” framework. This was what Kalayjian, *et al.* (1996) described as a coping mechanism that became inherent to Armenian culture. In order to share the pain and suffering experienced in the past, Armenian culture adds value and emphasis on togetherness as a coping mechanism (Kalayjian *et al.*, 1996, p. 92).

In a rather small sampling size of students who were randomly contacted during my fieldwork, my research confirmed that Armenian culture emphasized togetherness when dealing with the past and expressing past events of collective loss. Through similar expressions, I realized that the students regarded themselves as witnesses to a common past and fellows of shared sorrow, and saw the rest of the society as in a way outsiders to this feeling who could not possibly imagine how it felt to carry the burden, and shared it over generations. Especially in a country where denial of the genocide reigns over societal dynamics, it did not perplex me to see Armenian citizens to feel marginalized and undervalued because measures of reconciliation are not introduced to tackle with the trauma. That is why it should not be startling to read what a high school student shared during a conversation with a group of students when they were talking about dealing with the past atrocities: “No one but Armenians can understand us because only an Armenian would know how it feels [to be the outcast].”²² This feeling is one of the many which bring people together and give the idea that they all share something in common, even if there are fractions and different perspectives among Armenians across boundaries of social class, gender or age.²³

²² Citation from the interview I conducted with a high school student in August 2019.

²³ I do not argue that the trauma of the past is the only aspect which keeps Armenians together today or Armenian cultural traditions to ride out in different settings; however, it is an important one.

The collective past and shared narratives of this past is not the only source carving out a space for the familial culture. This familial culture is also undergirded by the physical spaces breeding a nurturing soil for solidarity and communal cognizance. My observation shows that while the physical accessibility and proximity of members empower the feeling of togetherness and create its own arenas of communication, in a school environment this accessibility also allows teachers and school administrators to actually know their students individually. In my interviews, the teachers and school administrators frequently expressed that they could keep up with the individual development of each student, since the school population and school culture encouraged them to do so. This also means that if a student has a problem at home, academic difficulties or learning disorders, experiences peer pressure, is bullied or has any form of problem in or outside the school environment, it is very unlikely that these problems go unnoticed, or are not taken action against. The teachers and the school administrators very much have a sound grasp of the details of their students' lives. One of my participants who works as a high school principal briefly described this situation as:

“In this school, each student is known by each teacher. It is next to impossible for a student to get lost in the crowd here. It is a very secure social environment. In a way, it is like a closed fish glass but at least students spend their most fragile years here. After graduation, they miss the attention they have found here.”²⁴

These support mechanisms can even be stronger when the student has teachers who are also a relative, neighbor, friend of a family, or even a parent. The schools embody a familial culture where intimacy is cherished as a part of daily life interactions. This situation often blurs the line between private and communal spheres. My field visits show that it is not very uncommon that immediate or distant family members share the same school environment, or the students attend schools where their rel-

²⁴ Citation from the interview I conducted with a high school principal in April 2019.

atives or immediate family members work. This situation can be observed even more vividly especially when the teacher works in the same school with their child.

I further argue that the feeling of safety expressed by the students and teachers does not only stem from the fact the Armenian schools are reserved for a community whose borders are well-defined, but also because of the familiarity enjoyed by all constituents of the schools while these constituents are connected to each other in many different ways in their private or public spheres. Having familiar faces around, and a strong sense of safety in the schools, the students and teachers state that they feel at *home*. During our conversations, many times my interviewees mentioned that they felt at home while referring to their presence in their schools as teachers or students, whereas they described outer venues of Armenian institutions or communal spaces as unknown and unpredictable places to be, substantially detached from their personal relationships. One of the school counselors that I already quoted above shared her experience of entering these rather unknown spaces when she was younger, and how this made her feel:

“In the Armenian schools, students are in a closed environment. I was challenged during the time when I went to a private teaching institution for the central exam preparation and when I started university. We feel like a bird flying out of her cage for the first time.²⁵

My interviews reveal that this feeling is very familiar and shared by others:

“In the past years, we had a couple of gifted students with high IQ-levels in our school. However, their parents did not want to take their children and register them to a school for the talented and gifted, because the students feel at home here.”²⁶

²⁵ Citation from the interview I conducted with a school counselor in March 2019

²⁶ Citation from the interview I conducted with a math teacher working in a primary school in May 2019.

“We [as teachers] can be in the school with our family members. On the other hand, we do not want to enroll our children to the same school where we work, because when the teacher is from the family circle of the child, the student has difficulty in seeing that person as a teacher. Here, we are not co-workers, we are family-friends.”²⁷

“When our students graduate from the university, they come back here [as teachers]. This does not happen because of some practical reasons; rather, they have a bond of affection, and they want to come here and give back what they have gained here. Instead of thinking that it is rather difficult and not preferred to work at other schools, we see them as coming back to their homes.”²⁸

During my interviews, alumni also expressed that the feeling of being safe and at home sometimes caused them to be very eager to come back to their alma maters and work there as teachers or administrative officers. The piece I quoted below from one of my teacher participants describes the general framework of how she missed to be in a familiar environment and how otherwise she felt like she lost her identity:

“Throughout the university, the competency in the Armenian language suffers from erosion. After I graduated from the university, and started to work in an Armenian high school, my cultural development continued to be enriched. The schools have a particular sense of cultural foundation, and wherever you go, you seek for it. I wanted to come back to teach here both to enrich myself culturally, and to serve my community.”²⁹

²⁷ Citation from the interview I conducted with a group of teachers in the teachers' lounge in an Armenian primary school in May 2019.

²⁸ Citation from the interview I conducted with a group of teachers in the teachers' lounge in an Armenian high school in April 2019.

²⁹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a math teacher working in a high school in March 2019.

Needless to say, the students, teachers or alumni feel at home in the schools not because this environment is shared with family members, relatives or close friends, but because familial culture is inherent in the nature of relationships replenished in the conceptual confines of the schools. The main reason behind this feeling is the fact that people consider communal spaces as highly safeguarded. In the schools, the students and teachers are not marginalized because of their ethno-religious identity as opposed to the larger society in Turkey.

I further saw that the feeling of being at home was shared more powerfully in boarding schools where students shared every moment of their daily lives together. As aforementioned, Anatolian families mostly prefer to register their children to boarding schools because there is no school with Armenian language education in their cities. In addition to Anatolian Armenians, some Istanbulite Armenians also prefer boarding schools for their children's education. These schools offer large benefits at times especially when the parents have financial challenges to afford the educational expenses of their children. During my fieldwork, I visited one primary-middle and one high school with boarding facilities. I happened to see that beside the exhaustive guidance of teachers and administrators, the students additionally had the chance to develop more intimate relations with alumni, who often provided external financial support and assisted the students with their central exam preparations or tutoring.³⁰

The boarding schools are isolated places providing a fully preserved surrounding for their students. The teachers mentioned that as one of the shortcomings of this high protection, the students felt more insecure when they were outside of these protected havens and when they entered environments where Armenian culture was not familiar to people or not welcomed by them. One of the many examples I learned during my field study that can describe the state of uneasiness of the students is that the students often prefer to use pseudonyms when they are outside of

³⁰ Although these support mechanisms provided by the alumni are also functional in day schools, it would not be inaccurate to claim that this feeling is relatively more intense in the boarding schools where the students are physically detached from their immediate families and spend more time in the school.

the safe borders of the Armenian community. They try to stay away from the spotlight which may result in creating uncomfortable situations in their new environment. The students and alumni stated that in the private training institutions that they attended to get prepared for the central exams, they preferred to use pseudonyms to refrain from receiving questions like “*Why is your name so different?*”, “*Where are you from?*”, “*Did you come from Armenia?*”. In her article, Bilal (2007) gives an extensive selection of these questions that Istanbulite Armenians hear in their everyday encounters. She explains this pattern as an obligation to constantly rearticulate belonging in different forms of everyday resistance against invisibility (2007, p. 59). Even a non-Armenian chemistry teacher working in a high school said that she could easily observe the discomfort engulfing the students when they were outside their safe environments: “Outside, students use pseudonyms; they only feel comfortable when they are with their friends.”³¹ Having experiences and practices like this, the students develop a strong sense of distinction between what is inside and what is outside. These experiences undergird the understanding of the inside and edge the salient boundaries of these domains.

My conversations with the students and the alumni also showed that “feeling at home” in the school environment does not always create desirable outcomes. Especially in cases, where immediate family members work and study at the same school, it might bring about undesirable outcomes for each party. The teachers and the parents said that they often prioritized physical proximity to their neighborhoods when they decided on the schools both to work and enroll their children. Having a low number of Armenian schools, usually there are not many options in neighborhoods or even in districts. This limited supply frequently results in teachers and their children attending the same schools, and compels them to share the same environment. According to the parent-teachers I talked to, this situation often narrows down the elbow room, or realm of freedom one might say, of the student.

³¹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a chemistry teacher working in a high school in March 2019.

I witnessed some diverse experiences in this regard. Some students cherish the comfort of attending the same school where their parents work. However, some others experience this status contrariwise. They are put under scrutiny by their parents even harsher than their peers because their parents want to feel certain that their children are not favored as a result of having their parents around. Throughout the chapter, I keep repeating that the spheres of family and school intertwine. For these students the influence of this intertwinement is even more prescriptive and evident. Although my interlocutors experiencing the latter situation see it as not fair to their children at all, they accept that it is often their kids who make a compromise on keeping a low profile in comparison to other students.

Being in a familiar environment where members of the community know each other from many different occasions results in vanishing anonymity. Although the students live in a very big city where mingling in the crowds is very easy and keeping someone's identity obscured is effortless to achieve, for Armenians it is not a very attainable option. The students as well as the teachers are very much in the limelight and almost public figures as a result of this network of intimate relationships. In that sense, buttressing networks of solidarity and multiplying moments of intimacy, the familial culture works as the catalyzer of practices of rumor mongering, gossiping, whistleblowing or comparing peers which function as control mechanisms pressuring members of the community just like a family.

Especially the teachers I talked to expressed that the network of intermingled relations oftentimes created pressure on teachers and school administrations. The teachers and principals have already-established relations with parents as neighbors, friends, relatives, church-goers or schoolmates, and know each other in different ways. In those cases, they do not meet for the first time in the schools as parents and teachers. The personal relationships and network of communication developed outside the school environment create the perception on the side of the parents that the schools are areas in which they can be actively involved with

their requests. At times when the parents have close personal relationships with the teachers, they feel comfortable enough to ask teachers on a daily basis to alter things according to their suggestions. During our interviews many teachers shared their discomfort and concerns about this pattern. They shared that instances to these requests included requests for the decrease of the intensity of speaking Armenian, the lessening of homework loads, or the reevaluation of grading results. The teachers think that, although the parents could not even imagine making these requests in a private school, they are not timid about insisting in the Armenian schools where the teachers are regarded as easily approachable.

As now the schools are in a competition with private schools, the teachers believe that this situation gives more leverage to the parents. Some teachers mentioned during our interviews that the parents demanded certain student clubs to be introduced, school excursions to be planned or even the curriculum of some courses -Armenian language in particular- to be simplified so that students were not challenged in areas where there was no practical return for the central exam. As they expressed, this intervention caused in some cases the teachers to go cold on their educational methods or even the education profession itself. In almost all of the interviews that I had with teachers, this subject came up. The below excerpt from an interview I had with an Armenian language teacher explains her exhaustion on the larger matter of parent-teacher interaction:

“The pressure on teachers and school administrators is a lot; we are too easily accessible by parents. We live in the same neighborhoods, and go to the same vacation places. They can easily come to me, and complain about anything. They can send long WhatsApp messages in the middle of the night. This pattern of behavior hinders us to be the educators we want to be, to do what we think is right. These schools are like a family; we take care of every student one by one. This is an advantage, but parents interfere with everything. They constantly demand things, and this turns the whole situation into a disadvantage for us. Since they

know very well that we want to keep these students in the Armenian schools-and since the Armenian population is low in number in Turkey, this is crucially important- they take the liberty to interfere in many things.”³²

As I was privy to the stories of participants, they raised certain other aspects intensifying the sense of togetherness experienced in the Armenian schools that is worth mentioning here. Channels of communication and networks of solidarity grounded in the historical edifice of the community were also mentioned as practices cementing the familial culture. These networks were often mentioned with respect to personal and communal initiatives that made the operations of the schools durable and attainable. Since specific needs of the Armenian schools are not addressed or provided by the Ministry of National Education or its district directorates, the schools are obliged to fulfill their needs and provide the means with their own resources. The school administrators I talked to during my visits underlined the fact that since there was no commission dealing with the educational needs and recurring needs of the Armenian schools, administrators of the schools and school foundations had to develop their individual solutions, such as preparing curriculum for Armenian language and literature classes, providing professional Armenian language training for their teachers or developing course materials as I concisely described in the earlier chapter. Especially the Armenian language and literature teachers I conversed with attracted attention to a need for the transfer of knowledge and expertise from experienced teachers to overcome the inadequacies of teaching materials and content development in Armenian in accordance with the altering pedagogical needs of the last decade. With this purpose, the schools create intra-school academic advancement mechanisms to equip their teachers with the experience of their seasoned teachers. Whereas some schools encourage master-apprentice relationships, which also provide the ground for the accumulation of resource materials, in some schools experienced

³² Citation from the interview I conducted with an Armenian language teacher working in a primary school in May 2019.

retired teachers visit schools on a regular basis as advisors for the younger generation of teachers.

The absence of a commission of education also necessitates educational materials to be prepared by individual initiatives of teachers³³ or a cohort of them. During my fieldwork, I encountered one of the clear instances of this situation. Whereas the curriculum of the Turkish language and literature classes are renewed by scrupulously designed commissions composed of teachers working in the tenure positions of the Ministry, for the Armenian schools this task is assigned to the schools itself that have no financial or academic resources to manage this process. At the time when I conducted my fieldwork, since the Ministry of National Education renewed the curriculum of Turkish language classes, the Armenian schools were expected to alter the curriculum of Armenian language classes in line with those changes. However, without providing any financial or intellectual resources for the formation of a task force, the Ministry expected this alteration to be implemented by the ardent initiatives of the teachers. Ultimately, the teachers prepared the curriculum cognizant of the fact that was the only solution available to them.

Within the same framework, when I asked how the schools found solutions that required the involvement of a rather central organization to address their recurring needs, some of their answers pointed to the Turkish Armenian Minority Schools' Teachers Foundation (*T.E.A.O Öğretmenleri Yardımlaşma Vakfı*). As long as its area of expertise allows, the foundation works like a hub in bringing the teachers together on different occasions, promoting their professional development by offering ad-

³³ Although Turkish course-materials are provided by the Ministry of Education, minority schools are expected to prepare their own materials and books in the Armenian language, and publish them following a long process of auditing. The Armenian materials are also expected to be the exact translations of Turkish materials. Similarly, the curriculum of the Armenian language and literature course is obliged to be the translation or adaptation of the curriculum of the Turkish literature course. Considering the fact that there is no committee appointed for this position, the development of such a curriculum often requires the teachers from each school cluster, and form a task force ad hoc.

vanced Armenian language classes, and keeping the archival and statistical data regarding the schools. Since the teachers of the Armenian schools work on contract-base, they are not entitled to the retirement benefits that the Ministry offers to its tenured teachers. In such a climate, one of the objectives of the Foundation is also to develop certain mechanisms that may assist retirement plans of the teachers or support them when needed with emergency funds that become possible by membership fees.

In addition to the support mechanisms of the Foundation, with the objective of bolstering the professional development of its teachers, the schools launch *ad hoc* measures. The schools with a sufficient budget reserved for academic development send their teachers to summer courses. Most of the time, the academic development of teachers is supported by organizations administered by the financial and intellectual support of Diaspora Armenians. In addition to language advancement, these courses also offer new learning techniques and trends for alternative education modules. Regarding this subject, the teachers also highlighted the fact that as the means of communication and transportation become accessible, the frequency and intensity of cooperation with the educational and academic institutions in Armenia increase. That is why instead of regarding these processes as contributions to the professional development of the teachers, it is also crucial to evaluate them as networking events bringing Armenian teachers, educators, academics from different backgrounds and geographies together.

In addition to seeking support mechanisms for their professional development, some of the schools also seek financial assistance from benefactors to be able to sustain their physical existence. When they need financial support, the schools go to the one who is able; their board members, their alumni, or businesspersons within the community for their individual donations, who are well-known as benefactors and who happen to be almost always the same handful of people.³⁴ In addition to

³⁴ In order to have a clearer picture, it may be helpful to state here that while schools vary in their objectives and methods, they also massively vary in their financial resources. In this regard, which school needs donations from the wealthier few may depend on the

ad hoc calls for endowments, the schools organize fundraising dinners, known as *madağ*, to bring the notables and potential benefactors of the community together with the school administrators and teachers. For some schools, these events are the only means to raise an additional financial budget to be used for their year-long expenditures. However, these donations most of the time pave the way for an exchange of powers through which the benefactors get involved with educational decisions. By making donations, on certain occasions benefactors buy their say on the table, and the right to intervene into school politics. I will talk about the role of benefactors and boards of the foundations in school affairs further in the following chapter.

Last but not the least, the schools promote the values that breed a nurturing soil for the sense of togetherness among its students and alumni by undergirding their alumni associations as integral parts of their cultural continuity. The majority of my participants coming from different age groups, occupations and schools shared their memories from social gatherings and described the events they organized in the meeting places of alumni associations when they were still students or in later years after their graduation. However, I did not hear anyone talking about currents of these associations. Although today they were regarded as off the boil, alumni associations were described as having their palmy days predominantly till the 2000s.³⁵ In this regard, I have to state that the 2000s marked a turning point on many occasions.

Bilal points to a fact that might be explanatory for this context as well. Starting in the 1990s with an intellectual and activist opposition against

properties of the foundation the school is attached to. Although the schools whose foundations have enough properties cover school expenses and create additional facilities for students, how these properties are managed can also turn into a controversial issue in these foundations because it is always the board members who decide to whom these properties are rented to.

³⁵ According to the statement of interviewees, the impact of the popular culture and assimilation to Turkish society are heavily felt after the 2000s mainly. In this sense, popular culture is interchangeably used for the assimilation to Turkish popular culture.

the nation state, globalization and various grassroots movements introduced a new concept that was already circulating in the global scale; multiculturalism -that fashioned a new discourse towards the minorities in Turkey by presenting the minorities as “vanishing colors of Anatolia” (Bilal, 2006, p. 74). Although this discourse portrayed, and still does, the minority culture as an object of desire almost as nice to have souvenirs, it also made the public sphere a “safer” place for various identities to socialize outwardly. Additionally, dynamics of the socio-political context were altered with the AKP coming into power and the reform packages introduced with the acceleration of the EU integration process dictated certain advancements for ethno-religious minorities in Turkey. As I understand it, the 2000s marked all of these changes for my participants by which Armenians started to incorporate daily cultural practices into spaces located outside the communal spaces.

One of the school counselors who was at her 30s at the time of our meeting described her viewpoint by giving an example from her times of being a member:

“We used to attend the parties organized in alumni associations, because they were the only places our parents would let us go. But it has changed now; popular culture is very dominant now. The patterns of socialization have changed. Students do not need the schools to socialize. They have social media. Yet they do not take advantage of social media to connect to students in other Armenian schools, or to build a network.”³⁶

According to recollections of my participants, alumni associations aimed to provide a space where the alumni and students could come together, and collectively organize seminars, concerts, movie screenings as well as game nights and parties. In order to encourage communication and coordination among their students, the schools also have inter-school events and competitions or sport tournaments under different

³⁶ Citation from the interview I conducted with a school counselor working in a high school in March 2019.

fields and subjects. Apart from inviting alumni to be the integral part of the schools, by offering extra-curricular courses for parents, the schools additionally promote ways for the amelioration of the communal dialogue. For its members, these associations not only ensure the transfer of experiences, or inter-generational communication, but also support cultural development of their participants by providing a venue to meet intellectuals of the Armenian community. That is why I believe the alumni associations, like many other communal spaces, should be read as important cultural fields fortified for the continuity and preservation of intimate networks which are usually peculiar to a family atmosphere.

Because of the restrictions on the reproduction of cultural materials of different ethnic groups, for such a long time Armenians could not openly express or embrace their cultural heritage in Turkey (Bilal, 2007, p. 59). Therefore, they see the cultural field as a space of resistance against forms of assimilation (Bilal, 2007, p. 59). In such a context, the alumni associations and many other solidarity networks that I mentioned above were regarded as the crucial aspects of cultural and communal resilience. The networks and spaces that the schools promoted and preserved enhanced the sense of togetherness and undergirded intimate networks of relations standing between the individual and the state. They mediated the spaces between the body and the polity while producing the individual as a familial subject. As the forms of intimacy constituted the Armenian communal space, they also introduced a particular way of governing for their familial subjects. People around the Armenian schools are governed within this *sui generis* space, albeit cultural resistance practices they collectively carved out.

§ 4.5 Teaching as a Gendered Division of Labor

As I introduced at the beginning of this chapter, one of the main reasons why I prefer to use a family allegory to explain the culture engulfing the Armenian schools in Istanbul is to foreground the teaching profession with respect to a discussion on gendered division of labor. Although the teaching profession is more gender balanced in Turkey, with women

making up 56% of teachers at all levels of education compared to 70% on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2019), in the Armenian schools this ratio is rather unbalanced for the favor of women teachers. In the 2022-2023 academic year, of the total 393 teachers working in the Armenian schools 352 teachers are female whereas only 41 of them are male.³⁷ This means that while the Armenian schools are regarded as one of the essential places of the preservation of Armenian identity, the cultural sustainability is handed over to women with an overwhelming rate of women teachers working in the Armenian schools (Kouyoumdjian, 2000, p. 2000).

Why I approach the teaching profession with respect to its gender dimension is not merely because of the overwhelming ratio of women teachers. Rather, my argument hinges on the reasons why this role is regarded as tailored for women, while the Armenian schools are seen as carriers of Armenian culture. That is why before delving into the role of women teachers as regenerators of the Armenian culture, I will present the dynamics of the time frame when the new concept of woman was developed in accordance with the articulation of the nation state, and show how these two processes grew hand in hand in the context of Turkey.

As I already gave reference above to the oft-quoted book of Chatterjee (1993) with respect to his articulation of categories of the material and the spiritual, the outside and the inside, I want to go back to that discussion here and add some of his remarks that are relevant to the social construction of gender and the role assigned to women during the times of the national struggle when there is a crucial need for cultural sustainability to survive against the daily forms of colonization. He asserts that since during the times of the national survival, there is a vital need for the spiritual essence of the inner core to persevere, the inner sanctum, the home of the national culture, has to be fortified against the penetration of the colonizer (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 121). The protection and preservation of the inside, which is tantamount to one's very identity, is constructed as

³⁷ According to the data received from TEAOV (*Türk Ermeni Azınlık Okulları Öğretmenleri Yardımlaşma Vakfı*) on January 2023.

the domain of the female, and women become the representation of the spiritual essence (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 120, 121). Chatterjee summarizes these domains very well as:

“Applying the inner/outer distinction to the matter of concrete day-to-day living separates the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*, the home and the world. The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents one’s inner spiritual self, one’s true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home is its essence and must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world - and woman is its representation. And so, one gets an identification of social roles by gender to correspond with the separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*.” (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 120).

While nationalism situated the women’s question in the inner domain of its national culture, it actually kept it far removed from the political contest taking place against the colonial state (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 117). However, this assignment did not necessarily mean the chances of the woman going beyond the physical confines of the home were eradicated; rather, a new image of woman was articulated in the world outside the home as goddess or mother that would not threaten her femininity but would erase her sexuality (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 131).

Gender dynamics are regarded as one of the major forces in the historical construction of the state (Connell, 1990, p. 519). Taking into consideration the hierarchical structure of the state, male domination in decision making processes, male supremacy and female submission in the internal operation of the state, and the arrangement of women sexuality and labor, the nation state is described as a male institution in which women play a pre-designed role as thought fit for them (Nagel, 2000, p. 79). The patriarchy as promoted by nationalism produced women with certain social responsibilities and put them in a secondary position

where the emancipation of women is dissolved in a narrative of national sovereignty (Chatterjee, 2000, p. 121).

Nationalist movements invited women to participate in the social life as national actors; however, they also established the limits of culturally acceptable behaviors and compelled women to articulate national interests with a rhetoric provided by a nationalist discourse (Kandiyoti, 1996, p. 169). When I talk about the high rates of women teachers in the education system, I read those numbers with respect to the roles tailored for women in the articulation of the Armenian identity and aim to unfold the interconnectedness between the individual, the community and the state through the gendered division of labor in the particular context of the Armenian schools.³⁸ The objective of this chapter or of this project is not to track down how the gender hierarchies in the Armenian community of Turkey were constructed or replenished; however, touching upon this subject briefly in the particular context of the Armenian schools is significant to be able to make sense of the familial culture embodied in the schools. With this purpose, I intend to explain the social context and practices which have key impacts on the gendered construction of the teaching profession in the Armenian schools along with certain momentous points in the history of the Turkish Republic.

The processes of the construction of the nation and woman followed a similar path in Turkey to what Chatterjee described (1993). The emergence of the nation intensified the interest in women as it produced them as mothers and protectors of the nation (Kandiyoti, 1989, p. 135). Women became constituent parts of the nation state with their role in reproducing the national culture as the guardians and representatives of the sacredness of this inner core. Sirman states that women were incorporated

³⁸ Kandiyoti asserts that while the women are articulated as the privileged carriers of the collective identity, the social construction of gender has a key importance in the expression of cultural identity and distinctiveness, which is why she foregrounds the need to analyze social institutions and practices to have a grasp of the way gender hierarchies are constructed (1996, p. 182).

into the nation through the control of their bodies; the definition and control of their femininity overlapped with the cultural boundaries of the nation in which the correct form of femininity was portrayed as the virtuous mother of the nation (2005, p. 150). There are many seminal works written on the subject analyzing the Turkish state as the central institutionalization of gendered power, and handling with the question of how the role of the women was produced during these processes (Abadan-Ünat, 1979; Altınay, 2000; Arat, 1997; Göle, 1997; Kandiyoti, 1989, 1991, 1996, 1997; Sirman, 2005; Tekeli, 1979).

Although with modernity initially it seemed like the rhetoric on women was altered, the desired position and behavior of women were designed in accordance with both the nationalist and Islamists motives that did not threaten the “authentic” core (Kandiyoti, 1996, p. 147).³⁹ Women were invited to the public world of work and put in front of a formal equality; however, “state feminism” that was promoted by the Turkish nation state did not bring significant changes in domestic division of labor or sexual morality as primary roles of the women were continued to be defined as enlightened motherhood and child rearing in the nationalist rhetoric (Tekeli, 1990 in Kandiyoti, 1997, p. 126). To this end, Kandiyoti underlines the dual role of women as; on the one hand with the modernization of nationalist projects women were invited to partake in the public sphere of the new republic as equal citizens, on the other hand they were burdened with the responsibility to preserve untainted national culture (1996, p. 17). While the discourse of modernity had a grip on family, sexuality and gender identities, it produced womanhood and

³⁹ In order to give examples of the Turkish state as a patriarchal state, Arat (1997) gives examples from the Civil Code where the husband is designated as the head of the family (Art. 152/1), representative of the marriage union (Art. 154), the decision maker on choosing the place of residence (Art. 152/2), and the provider for the family (Art. 152/2), whereas the wife is expected to play a secondary role (p. 105). With these gender relations, the state is constructed as patriarchal while endorsing and legitimizing its patriarchal institutions of which the family, the media, and the education system become most prominent in sustaining this gendered construction (Arat, 1997, p. 105).

manhood as the uncertainties of modernity were perceived to be situated in the altering patterns of women behavior (Kandiyoti, 1993, p. 17, 20).

As modernization required new means, women were regarded as lacking behind, since uneducated mothers would not be considered as sufficient in providing the moral qualifications that the Turkish reformers would desire while the reasons of trouncing in the Balkan Wars were regarded as situated in this insufficiency (Mardin, 1992/2005, p. 75). By gaining the consent of radical conservatives based on the requirement of educating new generations, the principle of the emancipation of women was adopted during the 19th century among the cadres of Young Turks, who also did not hesitate to interrupt and downgrade those principles whenever fell into political turmoil (Mardin, 1992/2005, p. 75). As the number of women in the public sphere increased consistently and massively, women were employed in “woman’s jobs” as public officers, secretaries, telephone switchboard operators, nurses or teachers (Kandiyoti, 1996, p. 46).

When the country was at the incipient stages of a transformation from a multiethnic empire to a nation state, the modernization project of Kemalist reformers went far beyond modernizing the state apparatus, they also got involved with the lifestyles, manners, behaviors, and daily customs of people (Göle, 1997, p. 83). As the image of the ideal woman became the symbol of Kemalist reforms and was presented as tantamount to the nation’s progress, Kemalist feminism promoted taking off the veil, establishing compensatory coeducation, acknowledging women’s suffrage and social mixing of men and women as requirements for the participation of women in the public sphere while creating a radical reappraisal of what constituted the private and public realms (Göle, 1997, p. 86).

While the state promoted the values for the public visibility of elite women, the message sent to an increasingly large number of “other” women was different (Arat, 1997, p. 100). They were expected to stay in the physical confines of the private sphere by being housewives in the Western style bringing order, discipline, and rationality to homemaking

(Arat, 1997, p. 100). Arat says that women were assigned with implementing the task of modernization at home by using the methods of Taylorism to housekeeping as a part of their national mission (1997, p. 100). In such a context, the image of the professional women was unidimensional excluding different experiences and identities struggling to surface. Arat describes the newly designed image of women as:

“These professional women perceived themselves as the representatives of Turkish women, used in the singular without reference to regional or other differences. A disregard and distaste for difference was in harmony with the populist custom of the day, which assumed all existing cleavages to have melted in the nationalist pot.” (1997, p. 100)

Meanwhile, the experiences of Armenian women were very much similar, as they were regarded as the preservers of the internal domain in an age when the preponderance of nationalism was widespread at the demise of the Ottoman Empire. With reference to the internal domain as the core of cultural values, in order to explain the significant meaning of the family in the Armenian culture, Pattie lays stress on the dispersion of the domestic realm as a result of deportations or immigration establishing the conditions for the future of the Armenian nation (1995, p. 137). While healing the losses, reconciling conflicts, manifesting identity, and giving voice to deeply held beliefs, the significant contribution of the continuation of family rituals was the articulation of the boundaries of the community; who was in and who was out (Imber-Black, 2002 in Manoo-gian *et al.*, 2007, p. 571). Especially after the post-genocide period, in spite of the conflicting ambitions and desires within the community, the continuity of central values passed on between generations remained constant as the family stayed at the core of Armenian values albeit different reinterpretation of the family with each new generation (Pattie, 1995, p. 141).

To the extent that the familial culture became the means for the expression of the collective identity grounded in history and culture,

women were burdened with the responsibility of kin-keeping as a cultural necessity (Fiese *et al.*, 2002; di Leonardo, 1987; Rosenthal, 1985 cited in Manoogian *et al.*, 2007, 571). Women became the bearers of Armenian culture especially at times when the physical survival of the family became an important matter as men were killed and transported away (Pattie, 1995, p. 137). The Armenian women dedicated themselves to the national welfare and cohesion of the community while preserving the heritage of the Church as a national institution, despite cases of open discrimination against women or subordination of equal justice for the sake of solidarity with men (Zeitlan, 1995, p. 83, 87). That is why Zeitlan argues that the concepts of family, nation and church became inseparable to uphold the faith of the nation (1995, p. 83).

In accordance with this gendered division of labor, women were expected to stay at home in charge of continuity and to pass on tradition by telling the stories of the past, while men were encouraged to go out and change the world (Bateson, 1995, p. 5). Ekmekçioğlu argues that the construction of womanhood should be read as a gendered and age-conscious legacy of the genocide which was itself a gendered and age-conscious event (2016, p. 10). Whereas the nineteenth century discourse and practices challenged men to keep pace with the era and change in the name of “progress” and “modernity”, women were expected to continue their roles as preservers of a national culture (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 10). That is why in the post-genocide period, gender was regarded as a key to the survival of Armenianness after major catastrophes (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 9):

“The nationalists perceived women as the storage vessel for an inner core, which made mothers constitutive elements and transmitters of the nation’s critical difference, a common good otherwise known as culture, constructed as a fortress against penetration from the world.” (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 10)

In the current context, the research conducted by Komşuoğlu and Örs shows that the reproduction of the community culture is still mostly car-

ried by women who share common cultural values and practice communal rituals by mostly staying within the confines of the community, while men work outside the community and frequently have contact with non-Armenians (2009, p. 342).

As one of the caregiver duties, teaching had a crucial role for the Armenian community trying to sustain its existence in a post-genocide context where the continuation of culture mattered highly. Having the role of the perpetuation of cultural practices mainly in the framework of their family units, women were invested with an educational power as well (Hovanessian, 1995, p. 123). Women as the heart of their families were expected to spend their uniquely female energies conserving that which made Armenians different; however, this conservation duty did not necessarily chain women to home because teaching at Armenian schools remained also equally desirable (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p.122). Teaching was regarded as the most suitable profession for educated women, because this profession allowed them to take care of the house simultaneously while working as teachers (Kouyoumdjian, 2000, p. 297). Armenian women partook in the teaching profession as an extension of their role in the preservation of the culture. The path brought them to this assignment was very similar to what designed the role of Turkish women in the public sphere.

My research confirmed that the role of women as carriers of Armenian culture still holds truth. The obstacles effacing gender normative expectations and roles endures in the Armenian schools. Especially young women professionals view the role assigned to women in the community highly problematic because this assignment asks women to be passive recipients as opposed to their male counterparts. As Bilal puts it, the women feel a strong responsibility of sustaining Armenian identity and culture (Aslan, n.d.). The community gives this duty mostly to women; reproduction and regeneration of the community is regarded as the role of women. Women are in a responsible position when it comes to preserving Armenian culture and providing children with an Armenian education (Kouyoumdjian, 2000, p. 298). During my interviews, many teachers, man and woman, emphasized the perception within the community

that women were still regarded fit for the teaching profession not only because women were accepted as caregivers apt for the continuation of Armenian culture, but also the working hours of the schools could give women teachers enough time to take care of their households and children that were regarded as their task to deliver. They also underlined the fact that in the past years female students were encouraged to enter the faculties of education in universities with the scholarships provided by the school foundations. One of my participants who is a journalist and editor summed up this pattern simply with a sentence: "In the Armenian community, the women are asked to be teachers, because their husbands only allow this."⁴⁰

Sirman's account of familial citizenship (2005) is also suggestive here to decipher the familial culture cognizant of gendered aspects of the teaching profession in the Armenian schools. Women undertake the role of teaching and raising the children of the community for the preservation of culture. I argue that sustaining the gendered division of labor constructs women as desirable citizens for both the state and the community, since the role assigned to women by both the state and the community overlaps albeit their diverse motivations. However, communal affinities do not only shape womanhood in a similar manner with the nation state, but also intensify this gendered construction by repeating forms of power constructed at the state level. The forms of intimacy pertaining to the nuclear family does not only create the apt citizen as the subject of the modern nation-state as Sirman asserts, but these forms also produce them as the members of the community. Isn't it precisely for this reason that desirable Armenian women are depicted as those who commit themselves to the preservation of the culture and regeneration of the community? By being desirable Armenians, Armenian women become the subject of not only the community but also the nation-state since this assignment is not only relished by the community but also by the nation-state. When we talk about the reasons why the emancipation of Arme-

⁴⁰ Citation from the interview I conducted with an Armenian journalist in August 2019.

nian women is highly dubious in practice, we have to look at the conundrum encompassing women whose affinity lies somewhere else other than the nation-state. When I refer to a familial culture, I allude to loci shared by the family, the nation and gender (Sirman, 2005). However, different from Sirman I believe these loci where power is constituted are also shared by the community. Thereby, nationalism acts also as the producer of the interactions among the individuals, community and the state. The power is infiltrated into the subject not only by the nation-state but both the community as well. Although these two spheres do not necessarily overlap, they still have similar gendered constructions.

As the schools undergird the sense of togetherness and buttress the gendered division of labor by keeping the teaching profession predominantly female, they act as spaces where the private and communal spheres meet in the form of a familial culture. Being vigorous members of the community does not conflict with gendered constructions in the sense that forging the forms of intimacy pertaining to the nuclear family in the communal space is actually what makes Armenian women the subjects of the communal space. By maintaining their caregiver duties these teachers continue to stay within the confines of the community, whereas men work outside confronting external challenges. This role does not conflict with the expectations of either the state or the community in the sense that as women ardently work and contribute to the regeneration of the culture and the community, they stay within the boundaries of an extended private sphere.

I argue that the Armenian communal space to which the state was not quite sure how to penetrate has a different form of governmentality, because it embraces familial aspects of Armenian nuclear families but at the same time follows the expectations of the nation-state in certain areas. Özyürek underscores the responsibility of teachers as so important for the nation-state; for them to the extent that the Turkish army fought against imperialists, the women teachers became crucial fighters struggling against ignorance while embodying the principles of the educating, disciplining and eyeing state (2007, p. 54). In a similar manner, women

teachers are crucial fighters for the continuation and preservation of Armenian culture and linguistic existence while embodying the principles of the educating, disciplining and eyeing state tailored for women.

§ 4.6 Contested Spheres of Individuality

The schools sustain cultural practices by offering spaces for the reiteration of these practices, and endorse communal empowerment by nourishing cultural values of unity and solidarity. While we were talking about the significance of the Armenian schools for the Armenian community, my participant who was an English language teacher captured the prevailing understanding with the following words:

“By means of the Armenian schools, the youth can still keep a common understanding; they feel a belonging to a particular place and community. I felt very distant when I started university until I came back to work in an Armenian school.”⁴¹

In addition to approaching the schools as an internal space of the community, I also want to present an alternative angle that manifested itself during my interviews. As our conversations deepened, the participants shared some experiences in which those support mechanisms had certain detrimental impacts on subjectivity that individual voices got lost in this unity. In this sense, I want to link this familial culture to renunciation of personal tastes and distaste, and touch upon echoes of the communal surveillance derived from solidarity networks. Although the schools provide engaging, safeguarding and familiar environments for their students, they are also seen as very isolated places by their constituents. Thinking that this situation brings some predicaments for the students in the long run, school administrators and teachers frequently mentioned their efforts to open up the schools with the purpose of increasing communication among different parties and to build channels of

⁴¹ Citation from the interview I conducted with an English language teacher working in a high school in March 2019.

inter-communal and intra-societal dialogue, but to no avail. These attempts hardly make their way to success mostly because of the timidness and reservedness that this familial culture endorses. When I asked a Turkish literature teacher about her observations of working in an Armenian school, she described the schools as an enclosed environment:

“The Armenian community is very reserved. Students go to school from primary school to high school together. Even their teachers graduated from the same schools. It is physically an enclosed environment. It is not quite possible for the students in the Armenian schools to compare themselves with other students in general. That is why their imagination, dreams as well as ambitions for the long run are very limited. That is why teachers develop a new meaning for ‘successful’. Students need to widen their point of view”⁴²

Similarly, a Turkish history teacher who was working in a high school at the time of my field study described this enclosed environment by accentuating that the students and teachers stayed within the physical confines of communal spaces while switching from one Armenian school to another as they got older. As a matter of fact, this situation is even more dramatic for the teachers because after their graduation from university, they came back to the schools to work with their former schoolmates and teachers. That is why, he furthered, this state of being together surrounded by the same people left no room for the students to change, or even to shift their perspectives. Sometimes this situation functioned like a surveillance mechanism by which even the slightest change could be noticed and tracked down:

“Students know each other from preschool years, because they started to go to school together in preschool. Since they are always around the same people, they could not find a chance to change. It is out of concern that parents want to protect their children and

⁴² Citation from the interview I conducted with a chemistry teacher working in a high school in March 2019.

keep them within the Armenian community. In the long run it affects children in a negative way. Other students alter their appearances and tastes when they are transferring from grade school to secondary school, from secondary school to high school. They can turn into totally different persons. However, it is not quite possible here.”⁴³

The protection of the inner core does not only produce the communal space as a reserved area, it does also nurture the soil for an overwhelming atmosphere for individuals, where it gets difficult to hear individual voices or personal preferences as they melt in a communal pot. In some occasions, familial culture expects individuals to forgo certain traits that could engender their novelty. This can be regarded as the survival instinct of the community in the surfeit of cultural dissolution that permeates in everyday Turkey. In such a context, the individual can pursue self-expression to the extent that their willingness to oppose customs of the community. The individual carries an emotional burden trying to find a balance between going after personal choices and fulfilling responsibilities towards the community. In this manner, my findings confirm Bilal (2007), as she explains that many Armenians consider it as their responsibility not to leave Turkey so that they can protect the Armenian cultural heritage and sustain it (p. 57). I heard similar concerns during my fieldwork especially from the younger generations, who embraced the role of protecting Armenian cultural customs because they said that only a few people were willing to do so. They stated that they were more eager to attend certain events, communal gatherings, church choirs or theater groups that they thought could keep the cultural sharing vibrant. That is why when I asked them about their motives, they answered with the words *“If not us, then who?”* referring to their responsibilities as inalienable members of the Armenian community.

We see an example of this conundrum in its starkest form in the post-genocide context. In the aftermath of the war, the women who could found their way to the capital as survivors of the genocide and sought

⁴³ Citation from the interview I conducted with a history teacher in March 2019.

support from *Bolsahay* relief societies had to yield to the demands of the Armenian authorities and relief institutions in their disempowered state (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 23). Although some of these women did not want to give birth or mother babies that conceived during their captivity as a result of rape by their enemy, Armenian authorities and institutions viewed all children, regardless of how they were conceived, as the future of the Armenian nation and accepted them as the hope for repair as a nation (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 23). The bodies that symbolized the hope for repair, remembrance and revenge to *Bolsahays*, had completely different meanings for women who had been kidnapped during the war (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016, p. 23). However, as the welfare of the nation predominated personal preferences, in this case the basic personal well-being, individuals were seen as those that can be sacrificed for the larger goal. For that matter, often we do not even hear the stories of these people while their voices were submerged or they were pushed aside as misfits. In that regard, Ekmekçioğlu (2016) adds that the stories of those women even would not have been written about, if feminists had not covered their stories or included them in their memoirs (p. 23).

In another context, with her research Yumul (1992) attracts attention to the social audit mechanism among Armenians, and states that 97.7% of her interviewees expressed that they strongly felt the social audit of the community, where having a good reputation highly matters to the members of the community to play along desirable codes of behavior (Özdoğan *et. al.*, 2009, p. 363). In the context of the Armenian schools, it is the teachers and school principals who had to face the strictest form of this social audit mechanism while they are under the scrutiny of both the parents and the school administrators, in addition to being audited professionally.

The teachers who are known as being critical to the status quo are not always welcomed by boards of the foundations, albeit their professional success. There are cases in which teachers were dismissed from their teaching positions because of their critical temperaments. The names and incidents of those teachers came up during the interviews as an ex-

ample of execution and enforcement power of authorities. Arbitrary discharge from teaching and administrative positions in the schools are regarded as recurring incidents and clearly stated as such by my participants. Not only from Armenian teachers hired by their school administrations, I also heard from teachers appointed by the Ministry of National Education that termination of contracts and displacement were not individual cases for teachers working on a contract-base. Particular school foundations were notorious in the regard that they did not hesitate to dismiss teachers when they saw those teachers challenged the status quo. As these incidents found media coverage in community newspapers, they drew attention of the Armenian public and even in some occasions required the involvement of different actors, including as high as the Patriarchate.⁴⁴ In the next chapter, where I will talk about the power and influence of Armenian notables, I will also cover how these processes are governed.

In this context, constituents of the schools are not only in a power structure encompassed by the state as I described in the previous chapter but also being a member of the Armenian community composed of familial relationships they also stay under the constant scrutiny of this over-protective family. Having said that, I will underline what Oran expresses; as Armenians protect their minority sub-identity against the supra-identity of the state, it is also vital that they have the opportunity to keep their individual identities free from the oppression of the minority sub-identity (Oran, 2004, p. 40).

Acknowledging their contradictory character I describe the schools as a part of the public sphere with reference to the preponderance of the

⁴⁴ To look up some of these incidents that found media coverage, please see “Pangaltı Lisesi’nde Bir Garip İşten Çıkarma” (Agos Newspaper, 17 June 2016), (<http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/15673/pangalti-lisesinde-bir-garip-isten-cikarma>); “Satenik Nişan: Önce istifamı istediler, sonra da görevime son verdiler” (Agos Newspaper, 16 May 2020), (<http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/24032/satenik-nisan-once-istifami-istediler-sonra-da-gorevime-son-verdiler>); “Esayan’da iki eğitmenin görevine son verilmesi tepki yarattı” (Agos Newspaper, 16 May 2020), (<http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/24031/esayan-da-iki-egitmenin-gorevine-son-verilmesi-tepki-yaratti>).

state narrative on the one hand, and on the other I describe them as spaces of familial culture where the relations of the private sphere is sustained mainly by collaborative networks and solidarity. In that regard, I argue that it is not possible to draw absolute lines separating private and public spheres as familial culture is embodied in the schools that are a part of a communal space standing between the individual and the state; rather, they accommodate characteristics of both private and public by having an idiosyncratic liminality and that is why a specific form of governmentality. In the following chapters, I will talk more about the specific characteristics of the space in which Armenian schools reside.

Rethinking Armenian Schools in Intersecting Fields of Power

While I was writing my dissertation in 2020, an incident came to the fore and heated up the discussions around the legitimacy of the authority of the boards of the community foundations and the intensity of their involvement in the educational affairs. Although the incident was not regarded as so unique to the context, it was a vantage point to revive the disagreements regarding the legitimacy of the boards over educational preferences.

It started in May 2020, when the board of the Beyoğlu Holy Trinity Church¹ Foundation abruptly dismissed the principals of the Esayan School -one being the principal of the primary and secondary part and the other being of the high school part. In order to show her frustration and give a context to the event, one of the principals later explained that for a while ago the board asked her to resign, and since she did not even consider quitting her job, she declined their request (Agos, 16 May 2020). Failing on getting what they wanted, the board developed another solution to meet their wish and notified the principals about the decision not to renew their contracts for the coming education year. As this news cir-

¹ ՊԵՅՕԴՆԼ ՍՈՒՐՔ ԵՐՐՈՐՏՄԱՐԻՆ ԵԿԵՂԵՑԻ [Beyoğlu Surp Yerrortutyun Yegeğetsi]

culated in the school and among the teachers, it swiftly created controversy and the situation escalated exponentially in social media. The students, alumni, teachers and many members of the community challenged the decision on the grounds that it lacked a fairground of judgment. In order to demonstrate their solidarity with the principals and their dissidence towards the decision, they raised their voices against the decision by different means. One of their methods was to pen a public statement. Expressing their distress and perplexity towards the outcome and sharing their solidarity messages with the principals, in this public statement they stressed on the lack of the accountability of the board members:

“In an environment where the articles of the regulation on the elections and responsibilities of the community foundations’ boards are annulled and new ones are not introduced yet, the board of the foundation which has only two members left has to explain to the whole community the root causes lying under the radical decision about our school.”² (Bolsohays News, 16 May 2020a)

With the rapid escalation of events and the involvement of all constituents of the school, the Patriarchate promptly saw a need to intervene into the situation. With this manner, while the Patriarch described the incident as unacceptable, he wrote a letter directly addressed to the chair and informed the board about the necessity to review their decision (Türkiye Ermenileri Patrikliği, 1 June 2020). In his letter, the Patriarch Sahak Maşalyan of Istanbul³ also reminded present communal priorities in the area of education and questioned the legitimacy of the preponderance of those who were not experts on educational matters in the first place. Here, to give the gist of his latter, I will share an excerpt from it:

² "Cemaat vakıflarının yönetim kurullarının seçim ve görevlerine ilişkin yönetmelik hükümlerinin ilga edildiği ve yeni hükümlerin henüz düzenlenmediği bir ortamda sadece iki üyesi kalmış olan bir yönetim kurulunun, okulumuz hakkında almış olduğu bu radikal kararın altında yatan sebepleri tüm topluma açıklaması gerekir."

³ Պատրիարք Սահակ Բ. Պոլսեցի Մաշալեան

“Even though it is just formality, disregarding the labor of those who serve for education with an attitude that is essentially inappropriate not only tarnished their honor but also the community’s. No one has the right to treat those who serve for education in this way. In the current conditions where expert opinions and discussions particularly with large turn-outs are highly regarded, how much value can the decisions of those who are not knowledgeable enough about the harmony of the education system create? The Esayan School is not personally-owned. We want to emphasize that it is not a personally-owned store and definitely not a workplace. Hence, this historic educational nest gives to no one the right to run its administrative and educational matters like a personally-owned workplace.”⁴ (Bolsohays News, 16 May 2020b)

As a response to such a public debacle, the chair of the board also thought that it would be appropriate to explain themselves by a public statement. In his statement, he briefly mentioned the reasons behind this decision and argued that the principals were dismissed based on their weak performance evaluation results in the following words:

“The decision of not renewing Ms. Satenik’s contract is completely based on facts. It is unacceptable to accuse or imply that there is any personal gain or interest lying under this outcome. There are certain drawbacks and problems in our school whose ultimate purpose is to prepare our youngsters for the future. Ignoring these

⁴ “Resmiyet görüntüsünde olsa dahi, özünde yakışıksız bir tavırla bu değerli öğretim hizmetlilerinin emeklerini yok saymak sadece onların değil. Cemaatin de onurunu zedelemiştir. Eğitim hizmetlilerimiz hakkında bu tarz davranışta bulunmaya kimsenin hakkı yoktur, çünkü eğitim hizmetlileri kolay yetişmiyor. Uzmanların fikirlerine ve özellikle geniş katılımlı müzakerelere önem verildiği günümüz şartlarında, eğitim sisteminin düzeni hakkında bilgi sahibi olmayan kişilerin bu tarz kararlar oluşturmaları ne derece değer ifade edebilir? Esayan Okulu bireysel bir okul değildir. Özellikle de altını çizmek isteriz ki bireysel bir dükkân veya bir işyeri asla değildir. Dolayısıyla bu tarihi eğitim yuvası, yönetimi ve eğitim sistemi hakkında bireysel işyerlerini yönetir tarzda yaklaşma hakkı kimseye verilmemiştir.”

problems is a betrayal to our youngsters. The fact that Ms. Satenik has performed this profession for years or the relationships that she has built up her entire life do not overshadow the fact that our school's academic success has declined over the years.”⁵ (Western Armenia and Western Armenians Research Center, 22 May 2020)

Putting the criteria for this professional evaluation or the competence of the persons who did this evaluation aside, the words of the chair did not quite resonate with the parties involved that his words were not enough to tranquilize the public. In the following days and months, the event has proceeded further with multiplying consequences and rami-fied the public opinion. Nevertheless, it is worth clarifying that business-as-usual is not interrupted by this event as it is a quotidian part of the educational sphere to begin with. Although the disputes flamed the ire of certain segments of the public, their ardent position did not bring any short term solution to the motley array of challenges in the administration of educational matters.

As this incident was representative in unraveling certain patterns and bottlenecks in the educational space, it also underscored the importance of unpacking the complexity of communal relations for understanding the multilayered texture of governing the Armenian schools. Analyzing and telling the story of the Armenian schools in Turkey, one of my goals came to capture the schools in a way cognizant of variegated aspects of its milieu as comprehensively and yet nuanced as possible. Thereby, my readers would not be oblivious of different layers shaping the milieu that the schools reside in. With this objective, this chapter is shaped around

⁵ “Satenik Hanım’ın sözleşmesinin yenilenmemesi tamamıyla verilere dayalı alınmış bir karardır. Bu sonucun altında herhangi bir kişisel çıkarın ya da menfaatin bulunduğunu itham ya da ima etmek kabul edilemez. Yegâne amacı gençlerimizi geleceğe hazırlamak olan okulumuzda bariz eksiklikler ve problemler bulunmaktadır. Bu sorunları görmezden gelmek, geleceğin anahtarı olan gençlerimize ihanet etmektir. Satenik Hanım’ın bu mesleği yıllardır yerine getiriyor olması veya hayatı boyunca bireylerle kurmuş olduğu ilişkiler, okulumuzun akademik başarısının yıllar içerisinde ne kadar zayıflamış olduğu gerçeğinin üzerini örtmemekte.”

the questions of what the administration of the Armenian schools tells us about the schools and even more broadly how power performs in the schools as the notables influence the educational field by their involvement.

With these objectives, this chapter avoids a potential misjudgment of portraying the Armenian community as monolithic, which is a common misunderstanding among people in the larger Turkish society who have the propensity to see constituents of the Armenian community as sharing similar viewpoints, if not the same. Dismantling the edifice of the Armenian community does not quite fall within the scope of my research. However, in order to decipher the relations within and around the schools, I believe it is my obligation to unriddle the opaqueness of the Armenian community on this particular matter and to construe certain disagreements, factions or conflicts to be able to adequately include the diversity of perspectives of my interlocutors. Having said that, the purpose of this chapter is not to accentuate a disunity within the Armenian community; rather, to foreground different layers and nuances emanating from the existence of a motley array of actors to unravel vigorous characteristics of the schools from past to present.

On that note, this chapter is an addition to the former chapter as it aims to add certain dynamics that are left out in the former discussion. In the previous chapter, I delineated the relations among diverse constituents of the Armenian schools by using a family allegory and discussed a myriad of aspects of this familial culture. Employing a family allegory was in that sense very helpful to present a broader picture while underscoring certain different aspects inherent to this familial culture. However, describing close-knit relations with reference to a familial culture was not yet quite sufficient to unravel communal dynamics or influences of certain individuals on the administration of the schools. I contend that understanding the circumstances of the Armenian schools requires the contribution of more finely-tuned analyses including touching upon larger issues than merely school affairs. This chapter is written with the purpose of addressing this need. Although my intention is not to give a thorough review of the Armenian institutions as a dispute about prior

discovery is not a part of the intention of this chapter, I cannot completely refrain from touching these subjects if I want to unravel as many issues as possible regarding the Armenian schools. Therefore, I articulate some themes that ostensibly fall beyond the scope of studying the Armenian schools but in practice entail palpable ramifications for their operation and sustainability. Thereby, the primary purpose of this chapter is to add another layer to my previous discussion and break down the dynamics at play within this familial culture even further.

During my fieldwork, especially teachers and principals among my interviewees foregrounded the importance of capturing individual influences of communal figures on the present practice and future prospects of the schools. They underlined the significance to understand the impact and operation of the foundation boards, administrative networks as well as communal dynamics. Their input taught me that the dynamics shaping the communal edifice cannot be treated as an exclusive subject. Rather, these dynamics encompass the schools in many aspects from their quotidian practices to more structural matters. During those meetings, when we talked about what the schools signified in the operation of power, the schools were frequently portrayed as epicenters of the communal politics since they performed as access points for communal figures or notables of the community to procure symbolic power or amplify their good reputation.

Throughout the chapter, I exhibit that paying attention to different perspectives within the Armenian community matters, because communal politics have straightforward repercussions for the schools. While nuancing the family allegory, this chapter aims to uncover elements and factors impacting the administration of the Armenian schools and unriddle certain factions within the community shaping the education environment. Building on my fieldwork notes, I scrutinize communal dynamics, the practice of the Armenian community foundations and their boards with the purpose of capturing the milieu engulfing the schools as thoroughly and subtly as possible. With the objective of portraying the habitus around the schools through narratives of my participants, in this

chapter I also foreground the significance of visiting the historical backdrop of the formation of the foundational boards to grasp the conditions entailing the current context.

As I probed on decision-making processes of the foundation boards regarding educational affairs and asked further questions about their impact on Armenian cultural sustainability, the notables or board members were frequently described as the bourgeois class or elites who carved out new spaces for neoliberal precepts where their economic gains could also be multiplied. The predominant narrative among my participants was to see them as intermediaries between the state and the Armenian community as they conveyed the educational agenda of the government into the Armenian schools and even kept the schools in line with the developments that the neoliberal transformation would request.

As I argue that these notables reproduce new forms of governing in accordance with neoliberal precepts by participating in the governing of the institutions consolidating these precepts, unraveling the milieu of the Armenian schools should be more nuanced. Contrary to the popular belief, I suggest not to see the board members of the Armenian community foundations simply as intermediaries between the Turkish state and the Armenian community or state agents keeping the political agenda of the state in the Armenian community intact. Although I acknowledge that they contribute to the reproduction of governmentality within the Armenian community or within the Armenian schools in particular by internalizing the precepts of the nation state and neoliberalism and promoting these precepts in the schools by their involvement in educational affairs, I rather prefer to see them as a social force who produce this space as a power field by reproducing a parallel discourse to the state similar to the Armenian notables of the former century.

I contend that we can explain the acts and preferences of the board members and notables of the community by elucidating them as a social force; a term which allows us to acknowledge their weight in the operation of power without added connotations and to construe them with their rather amorphous characteristics. In order to pinpoint those amorphous characteristics, I suggest that capturing the role of the notables in

circulating power in the Armenian schools requires to see their influence as a continuity of the past and a rupture from it. It is the continuity of the past because the formation of communal institutions and processes back in the Ottoman Empire elicited the historical role of these notables. It is a rupture from the past because centralization reforms with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey crippled certain communal practices, gradually abolished communal institutions and thereby empowered the notables as a social force over communal decisions. Their social force was even further consolidated with the whirlwind of changes after the introduction of neoliberalism as the meaning of education started to be associated with competition that could only be ensured by affluence of financial resources. While visiting both past and present of the administrative networks of the Armenian schools, this chapter unravels how notables as a social force participate in governing the schools as their involvement in educational affairs undergirds the consolidation of neoliberal precepts.

In that regard, as my chapter title implies, the theoretical framework of this chapter owes a great deal to Bourdieu (1998a, 1998b) in comprehending the ways the economic field and the educational field intertwine in the Armenian community as the economic capital of the notables provide them the means to be involved in the educational field by the board seats of the school foundations. As a reading of Bourdieu's theory, this example demonstrates the intertwinement of these two fields at a smaller scale where interactions of people are more salient and institutions operate at their own rhythm and resources. We see the overlap of the economic field and educational field in the Armenian community through board memberships on the one hand, and the overlap of the governmental field and communal field through the adoption of neoliberal precepts in education on the other. I argue that it is possible to decipher the very role of the Armenian notables in governing the schools by probing communal resources and cultural processes. While visiting the past and present of these schools I will show that by maintaining a structure in which the notables are integral parts for the perseverance of the Armenian institutions, cultural practices actually preserve the hierarchies of domination where wishes of these notables almost always prevail, or

have prevailed so far. With the maintenance of cultural practices, Armenian notables find themselves in an integral position, the lack of which can jeopardize the very existence of the Armenian institutions. In what follows as I spell out the processes of how voluntary work as board memberships turn into political leadership shaping the conditions of the Armenian schools, social struggles within the Armenian community will become more apparent and comprehensible.

Throughout the chapter, first I will explain why we need more nuanced perspectives in this context to address the collective impact of certain individuals over the educational sphere. In order to clarify the dynamics of this narrative, I will unriddle the current administrative edifice of the schools by thoroughly visiting the backdrop of the historical formation of the foundation boards as the administrative institutions of the schools. Later, along with some concrete instances and narratives I will elucidate how board members and other personal figures as a social force influence educational matters and further play a role in the consolidation of the state effect by promoting its values in this particular context.

§ 5.1 Revisiting the Communal Field

During my fieldwork, a social group of people, which I will prefer to refer as notables throughout the chapter borrowing the term from my interviewees, were described as the bourgeoisie who sought the ways of pursuing their class interests in the Armenian community by either maintaining the malfunctioning status quo in educational affairs or proliferating principles of neoliberal education in the Armenian schools. The notables were referred to by my participants and pointed out in the public discourse as potent and influential within the Armenian community especially through their network of relationships. They designate the structure of community affairs and have social leadership in community politics. This common narrative is based on the fact that these notables owe their say and influence on communal affairs mainly to their material wealth. In that sense, material wealth is perceived as having a significant

role for notables of the community to participate in the foundational boards, to take part in school administrations, or to intervene in school affairs by different means. It provides the means for the maintenance of their influence and impact over decisions regarding the schools and for their favorable positions to be further consolidated. While their material wealth is perceived as conducive to their political clout, these people are also regarded as highly significant in promoting acquiescence in governing the foundations and schools.

In that sense, education or the Armenian schools in particular are portrayed as the means through which the notables carve out spaces for their political clout or personal satisfaction while they also attain communal prestige and consent of their audience by their roles as beneficiaries. Especially during our one-to-one interviews, the notables were referred to with respect to their interference to educational affairs. They are known to emphasize the need for promoting values to produce new subjectivities in line with neoliberal precepts and sustaining codes of Turkish nationalism already deeply rooted in the education system and curriculum, instead of challenging them in the communal field. I have to say, although these narratives do not address all board members of the community foundations or beneficiaries who are eager to contribute to the schools, the leverage of these notables over communal affairs are frequently mentioned during our interviews based on the fact that their influence is accepted as a significant force in the educational field. In order to be able to paint a rather comprehensive picture and be faithful to the veracity of the social world of the schools, in addition to elucidating the narratives around these notables, I will also try to unpack their subtle differences from the others throughout the chapter.

Discussing the educational space in a similar vein, in his study on Palestinian students in Israel, Makkawi (2008) argues that the formal education system aims at manipulating national identity among Palestinians and molding students in a way that they do not challenge the status quo (2008, p. 28). In that framework, the formal education system is regarded as the instrument of the ruling class to pursue domination over minorities. My fieldwork shows that Makkawi's argument can also be suggestive

in understanding the educational space surrounding the Armenian schools. The education system in Turkey is also viewed as the means through which the state ideology and cultural domination over minorities prevail. However, I argue that analyzing the phenomenon predominantly from institutional mechanisms such as the formal education system, state curricula or textbooks does not provide a looking glass to capture the dynamics of communal and cultural practices shaping the edifice of the schools today. For similar reasons, the existing scholarship on the educational milieu of Armenians falls short to comprehend the totality of the picture as certain sets of social relations such as the place of Armenian notables in governing the Armenian schools are disregarded in such a framework.⁶

Based on my research, I suggest that arguments that accept the notables as state agents are not quite sufficient to include communal dynamics in schooling. Instead, these arguments settle on an understanding which views society and state as two separately operating entities. Acknowledging a unidirectional impact running from the state to the Armenian community disregards communal politics. I contend that the arguments which center the concept of a reified state are not successful enough to regard the nuances in the communal field. There are not binary oppositions of victim and perpetrator, society and state, individual or community but rather an interwoven network of relationships. These relationships tone up each other as power infiltrates into quotidian practices of the Armenian institutions. I aim to highlight the nuances which carry weight in this particular context and understand how power performs in the Armenian community. That is why I renounce the arguments

⁶ Here, it is worth mentioning Kırılmaz's MA thesis (2014) which problematizes the forms of patrimonial governance of the Assyrian community. He argues that as opposed to the state's attempt to govern minority subjectivities, the community leaders reproduce a "threatening outside" discourse which becomes a technology of governmentality for the community (Kırılmaz, 2014). Whereas his work challenges the monolithic and static representations of Assyrian community, it strenuously takes power relations within the community into account.

regarding the notables as the intermediaries between the Armenian community and the state. Instead, I argue that discussing Armenian notables with respect to their moral and social leadership in constructing a particular system of values within the community requires scrutinizing social roots of their influence. That is why rather than seeing the notables as intermediaries, I prefer to describe them as a social force who struggles to shape the educational field by the use of their economic or political capital.

I suggest looking at the spaces of power outside as much as within the Armenian community. With the lenses Bourdieu offers, throughout the chapter I underscore the significance of exploring how cultural resources, processes, and institutions hold individuals and groups in competitive and self-perpetuating hierarchies of domination (Swartz, 1997, p. 6). He argues that unraveling hierarchies of domination requires to look at the ways how cultural socialization places individuals within competitive status hierarchies, how actors struggle and pursue strategies to achieve their interests, and in doing so how they unwittingly reproduce the social stratification order (Swartz, 1997, p. 6, 7). Following these questions, this chapter discusses the ways cultural socialization around the community foundations creates status hierarchies within the Armenian community and thereby certain Armenian notables have leverage over educational affairs of the community.

Borrowing Bourdieu's framework (1998a, 1998b), I argue to see the governmental field and communal field together as they act in coordination as power fields. I contend that discussing the set of social relations and their historical formation within the community can reveal the Armenian community as a field of power where different actors struggle for their legitimacy in eminence. Instead of using the terminology of a dominant class, conceptualizing this space as Bourdieu suggests as a field of power would offer the lenses to help us understand not only the relations of power in the Armenian schools but also the historical formation of the communal field. As I unpack these status hierarchies, I also intend to remind that the communal field as a field of power does not appear out of

thin air but has roots in the past and still holds residues of this past. Despite their differences, the notables of the Armenian community are reminiscent of the *amirās* of the past century as they both represent the entanglement of the economic capital in the educational field.

Based on Bourdieu's work, Wacquant foregrounds that the real object of analysis is not individuals, classes of individuals or institutions but the space of positions (1993, p. 21). Instead of focusing on a dominant class, analyzing the relations of power by the notion of a field of power let us comprehend different forms of power and their opposing struggles subsisting simultaneously (Wacquant, 1993, p. 22). As much as variegated forms of capital are incorporated into the recipe of domination, unpacking social relations by the concept of field of power allow us to reckon their different tenets of legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. xi). Bourdieu describes the field of power as a gaming space in which agents and institutions possessing various kinds of capital compete over dominant positions in their fields and structurally determine the relations of power (1998a, p. 264). It is a space of relations where agents with different kinds of capital struggle for the domination of the corresponding field (Bourdieu, 1998b, p. 34).

As those agents struggle to prevail in their fields, they also invest their capital in other fields. Domination requires wielding several forms of capital simultaneously to operate effectively and to justify itself (Wacquant, 1993, p. 25). Like the economic capital can be converted into cultural capital by the purchase of artworks (Wacquant, 1993, p. 23), the economic field integrates with the cultural field. That is why Bourdieu further explains that the genesis of the state can only be understood through the notion of the unification of different kinds of fields taking into consideration certain practices and representations (1998b, p. 33). The framework that Bourdieu offers is richly suggestive in unpacking the Armenian communal field as the administration of the Armenian schools stands at the intersection of economic, political and educational fields of power. In this particular context, the Armenian schools can be discussed as a space of

relations of power where the economic field is incorporated into the educational field through the conversion of the economic capital of the notables into an educational and symbolic capital.

The Armenian schools are also illustrative of the coexistence of the governmental and communal fields. As aforementioned, Armenian notables are frequently depicted as having a role in promoting the precepts of neoliberalism and maintaining the status quo. In the former chapter I already shared some examples of the boards' attitudes towards dissident voices in the schools for the sake of preserving the status quo. They use certain measures for silencing discordant voices by discharging those teachers or, as in the example I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, they do not renew the contracts of those teachers and administrators who do not necessarily promote the values favorable for the board members.

The board members are often regarded prioritizing marketable qualities over pedagogical preferences as they pave the way for the acceleration of the neoliberalization of the schools by introducing performance evaluations based on competitive measures of neoliberal education, prioritizing foreign language education that might add value to students in the job markets or investing in methods to step up strategies for central exam preparations. All these measures are implemented to ensure the durability of the schools while they struggle to survive in a setting where private educational institutions overwhelm the educational space with their new standards. These acts irrevocably transform the schools in line with the demands of the neoliberal era oftentimes at the expense of their basic tenets and cultural practices. The notables through their board memberships are mostly ardent supporters of updating the schools with certain changes which can equip their students with most competitive qualities and thereby contribute to their embodiment of new neoliberal subjectivities. They see the schools as marketable products which need to attract the attention and support of the parents who have a tendency to gravitate towards private schools.

That is why I also suggest that unpacking communal politics points out how governmentality performs in an educational sphere as aspects

of the sovereign power and governmentality coexist and consolidate one another as I thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3. While ruminating the political clout of certain communal figures, the administrative operation of the foundations or communal politics, the examples this chapter offers serve the purpose of analyzing the ways power operates and circulates within the Armenian community. In that sense, this chapter also adds another dimension to my previous argument back in Chapter 3 in that it contributes to understanding the operation of power by incorporating aspects of communal politics into the argument on governing the Armenian schools. It shows how governmentality performs as precepts of neoliberal education are increasingly incorporated into the Armenian schools on the grounds of their durability and progressiveness. For this reason, I articulate that the Armenian schools stand at the intersection of the governmental and the communal fields as it is influenced by the educational system of the former and political-economic practices of the latter. In that regard, Bourdieu's work is illuminating since he depicts the state not only "out there" in the guise of bureaucracies, authorities, institutions or spectacles but also "in here" engraved in the ways we feel, think, talk or judge (1998a, p. xviii). We construct the social world around us by the categories inculcated in us via our education as the school is the most robust conduit of the state (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. xviii).

On a secondary note, regarding the portrayal of the notables by my participants, I elucidate that Navaro-Yashin's take on "public life" is also suggestive in grasping the communal politics in governing the schools (2002). As she explains how the state is produced through quotidian discussions in public life, she offers a powerful vantage point to understand how the public discussion regarding the role of notables in governing the schools re-reifies the state in a variety of appearances. Her account of public life as a category offers ways of scrutinizing the political in its many transmogrified forms (2002, p. 3). She carves out a new space to see multiple metamorphoses of the state instead of merely scrutinizing it in its rationalized and institutional forms (2002, p. 3).

Navaro-Yashin pays regard to the enduring repressive power of state organs; however, she also underscores the fact that the means of enforcement of the state do not seem to be sufficient to keep the idea of the Turkish state alive (2002, p. 132). Rather, bearing in mind Foucault's understanding of power that addresses a simultaneous attempt to productively practice power, she argues to see the image of the Turkish state as reified with independent support of spheres of society (2002, p. 132). As she delineates the domains of state and society in a "changing enmeshed relationship", she argues that the state as a material reality would not have sufficient effect, unless it is reproduced in everyday practices of the society (2002, p. 135).

Her work underscores the significance to paying attention to fleeting and intangible forms of the political, because she argues that although the state is deconstructed by the public discourse, incessant quotidian practices reproduce, regenerate and re-reify the state and redress it in a variety of garbs in our daily lives (2002, p. 4). Building on her insights, in what follows by presenting some excerpts from my fieldwork I show that the public discourse on the Armenian notables, as they weigh in the educational sphere, regards the state as a rationalized entity separate from the society. However, different from her take, I will not portray the articulation of the state fantasy but modestly only focus on the interpretations of my participants and foreground how in governing the Armenian schools, the potency of the state effect is buttressed by narratives seeing the notables as the hand of the bourgeois performing in the Armenian community.

§ 5.2 Leveraging in Educational Affairs

As I thoroughly explained earlier in Chapter 1, the present edifice of the Armenian institutions and the schools functioning under the rubric of their individual foundations greatly originated in the Ottoman Empire. I already spelled out the historical backdrop of the establishment of the schools and the reasons why they were landed outside the public education system with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. However,

for the purposes of this chapter, I will probe a little further on the role of different actors and platforms in the maintenance of the schools from past to present and elaborate on the ramifications of the altering political context on the Armenian schools. I believe delving into the role of the *amiras* in the maintenance of the schools is particularly significant based on my frequent encounters in the public discourse to the comparison between *amiras* and notables.

The socio-political changes of the 19th century marked a period in the Armenian community as they elicited decoupling of secular and religious matters of the Armenian population. There had been a series of developments introduced with the objective of administering secular affairs of the community. Moreover, the 19th century not only marked a momentous turning point for the *modus operandi* of Armenian communal affairs as certain reforms pertinent to quotidian practices of non-Muslim populations were introduced, but they also entailed the educational sphere to be transmogrified with secular ideas of the era and redesigned it irrevocably. The legal configuration of the communal space furthered political shifts for the Armenian community as the maintenance of the schools ceased to be supported almost entirely by individual contributions of the notables of the era, or as widely known as the *amiras*. With this reconfiguration, the Armenian schools were secularized particularly after the emergence of the Supreme Civil Council in 1847 and the ramification of the Armenian Constitution in 1863. The institutionalization of secular affairs begot the secularization of curricula and introduction of Western style education in the Armenian schools, while these two processes almost concurrently burgeoned and undergirded each other.

Until their secularization in the 19th century, Armenian schools were funded and managed by the *amiras* of the Armenian community (Somel, 2005, p. 93). In his unparalleled work on *Armenian Amira Class of Istanbul* (1980), Barsoumian describes *amiras* as wealthy members of the Armenian grandee class, who were in charge of corporal matters of the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire while they hold powerful managerial positions in state institutions and had close connections with the palace (p. 87). In a similar vein, Karpat (1973) portrays *amiras* as the

upper class of Armenians who had significant roles in finance as they sided with Ottoman bureaucracy sometimes even at the expense of their own people (p.89). Although in the public discourse largely money-lenders were referred to as *amiras*, this term was also used to address persons working for the palace due to their expertise, technical knowledge of jewelry, commerce, architecture or industry (Özdoğan *et. al*, 2009, p. 118, 119). With their proximity to the Ottoman bureaucracy, *amiras* were often viewed as surpassing the lines of demarcation of the *millet* system. While keeping their privileged status within the Armenian community, they were not simple *dhimmi* subjects of the sultan; they had a special position within the Ottoman ruling class and were entrenched externally in the Ottoman governing system (Barsoumian, 1980, p. 64, 138).

In order to elaborate on *amiras'* rather *sui generis* role, Barsoumian depicts them as intermediaries, since they facilitated matters between the sultan and his Armenian subjects (1980, p. 48). With their special status, they perpetuated their power and position in the system as power-brokers and conservative defenders of the status quo (Barsoumian, 1980, p. 48). Their political legacy alludes to a conservative mentality and a blind loyalty to authority, and that is why while providing leadership in educational, cultural and economic spheres of the Armenian community, they refrained any steps which might jeopardize their interests and status (Barsoumian, 1980, p. 213, 214).

Due to their special position, *amiras* had considerable leverage over communal affairs until the dissolution of their power in the second half of the 19th century. Representing the wealthy and conservative segment of *Bolsahays*, *amiras* constituted a form of oligarchy which was even stronger than the power of the patriarchs at the beginning of the 19th century (Özdoğan *et.al*, 2009, p. 118). However, being identified in good measures with the Ottoman bureaucracy or sultanate did not grant them any political power. *Amiras* lacked political power in the Ottoman ruling class; and yet they found ample opportunities to exercise power in the Armenian community by means of their economic superiority (Barsoumian, 1980, p. 139).

Their economic power furnished them with the means to build their social status and political power in the Armenian community (Barsoumian, 1980, p. 67). Since the Armenian central administration body was quite limited, it was subjected to the audit of Armenian finance aristocracy constituted predominantly by *amiras* (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 12). *Amiras* presided over the national life of the Armenian community and even prevailed over the patriarchate by their leverage over communal affairs (Barsoumian, 1980, p. 140). With their personal proximity to higher-ranking ecclesiasts or to the Sublime Porte, which was the authorizer of patriarch elections, *amiras* even had a sway in designating elections of the patriarch (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 12). Even so, the most common usage of their economic power was their donations of large amounts for philanthropic and charitable purposes (Barsoumian, 1980, p. 141). While these donations paved the way for their preponderance in communal matters, they also bestowed on the *amiras* an image of reputable benefactors. The field of education received its share from these philanthropic deeds as initial funds for the construction of the schools were granted and contributions for their operational expenses were paid on a regular basis (Barsoumian, 1980, p. 148).

However, the emergence of a new generation who received education in the West and were inculcated with democratic principles paved the way for developments that would shake the Armenian community at its core and challenged the monopoly of power accumulated in the hands of the notables of the community (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 12). Not only they forced *amiras* to resign in 1841, but they also facilitated the means for a dynamic network of press to burgeon and for education to be modernized (Kevorkian and Paboudjian, 2012, p. 12). They liberalized the publication policy which was constantly dominated by the clergy. The new prospects of the publication policy brought in revolutionary ideas for the refashioning of Armenian language and culture while they supported the vernacular Armenian language as opposed to ecclesial classical Armenian, *krapar*. As a continuation of this modernization process, the introduction of the Supreme Civil Council in 1847 led a newly-wealthy group of craftsmen and artisans to emerge and become a part of decision-

making processes in communal affairs. In 1853, this process was followed by the launch of the Education Council under the rubric of the Supreme Civil Council with the significant roles of the new generation in the design of these councils.

Barsoumian argues that the demur of *amiras* to the subservience to patriarchal sovereignty as well as their influence in educational affairs came to an end in the 1850s (1980, p. 164). In addition to internal dynamics of the Armenian community, the altering context with the legal reconfiguration of the Ottoman Empire as a result of a series of reforms brought inevitable changes in the administration of the Armenian community and secularized it. Notwithstanding, like in other areas of the empire, neither the secularization process nor legal reforms were welcomed by the power-holders of the Armenian community, because these developments destabilized the existing hierarchy and undermined the control of religious leaders over their communities by enabling the participation of lay members in communal governance (Göçek, 2015, p. 99).

Quotidian educational matters that were formerly managed by individual fervor and involvement of *amiras* came under the regulation of communal entities; and therefore, their administration was gradually standardized. The Education Council undertook the responsibility to finance and inspect educational institutions, ameliorate professional development and living conditions of teachers, prepare educational materials and support cultural affairs of the community (Somel, 2007). Later, the ratification of the Armenian constitution in 1863 pieced together these objectives as the influence of *amiras* over community affairs was interrupted extensively with the legal configuration introducing cohesiveness into the communal domain (Bebiroğlu, 2008, p. 125). With these developments, civil matters ceased to be under the direct control of *amiras* and were largely extricated from the direct involvement of power-holders.⁷

⁷ After the Lausanne Treaty, the Supreme Civil Council was de facto abolished, and ceased to exist until 1954. In 1954 during the governance of the Democrat Party, the state war-

Notwithstanding, the legal configuration of the communal domain did not last long. Initially with the Lausanne Treaty and gradually with altering agendas of governments, communal institutions lost their authority and the administration of Armenian foundations were once again redressed with irregularity. During these changes, the educational sphere was one of the spaces where the shifts of power were dramatically apparent as these processes brought palpable repercussions for the schools. As long as the institutional framework regulating the schools at the communal level dissolved and the schools were encompassed with a state similar to their former circumstances, they became exposed to individual influences, unpredictability and improvisation.

After the abolishment of the Supreme Civil Council in 1961, secular matters, of which educational matters took a large share, were divided among foundational administrations and started to be managed separately in accordance with the domain and zone of authority of each foundation. Moreover, in line with secular principles of the new republic, the patriarchate was left without a legal entity to rule over secular matters, and did not take part in quotidian practices unless his involvement was vehemently needed due to his canonical status over the community. Deteriorating health conditions of the former Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan of Istanbul⁸, which brought his mandatory retirement in 2008 only worsened this situation and perpetuated the precarious climate until the elections. Thereby, the lack of regulatory and democratic institutions paved the way for the notables of the community to fill the power vacuum once again. These conditions left some of the Armenian schools bereft not only of the security of financial resources but also of the procedures that endorsed merit and competence at various levels of schooling.

ranted permission for the formation of a Central Board of Trustees, which would centrally manage common properties of the Armenian community by means of elected trustees of the community. However, this initiative as well was interrupted by the 1960 military *coup d'etat* and dissolved by the order of Istanbul's military governor (Özdoğan, et. al, 2009, p. 229).

⁸ Պատրիարք Մեսրոպ Բ. Պոլսեցի Սուրբաճեան

In order to address problems pertinent to daily practices of the community and to fill the power vacuum stemming from the lack of an overarching institution, Inter-foundational Solidarity and Communication Platform (VADİP) was formed by a civil initiative in 2008. This platform, albeit not so straightforward, bore important promises for the sustainability of the schools. Before anything else, it built up hopes for the schools which had to rely upon rudimentary measures or sporadic donations for their survival. The initial objective of the platform was to bring chairs of foundations together and create a common denominator through which civil matters of the community could be discussed and resolved. However, the platform could not deliver what was desired initially, and meetings were interrupted due to personal disagreements of its members.⁹

During my one-to-one interviews, I could find the opportunity to ask a couple of my participants, who were either involved with the platform or meticulously followed up the news regarding it, about their perceptions towards the platform. As she is familiar with the processes of communal affairs, one of my participants contributed to the discussion from a particular perspective that I think is worth mentioning here. She delineated the initiative as an attempt to fill the vacuum of authority especially after the diagnosis of the Patriarch Mesrob II Mutafyan of Istanbul¹⁰ with Alzheimer's disease in 2008. The absence of an acting religious leader did not only put the patriarchate in an uncertain position, but also left community matters without an umpire whose suggestions were regarded as binding until then, because of his religious authority over the community along with his charismatic character. As she elucidated, this situation was not only instrumentalized by some board members as an opportunity to consolidate their power but also fortified their places in their seats and gave them the right to manage properties of the Armenian community without any interference. She poignantly put the situation into following words:

⁹ The platform changed its name into the Turkey Armenian Foundations Union by the meeting held on March, 2 2020. See <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/23694/ermeni-vakiflar-birligi-toplandi-dikran-gulmezgil-2-baskan-oldu>

¹⁰ Պատրիարք Մեսրոպ Բ. Պոլսեցի Մուրաֆեան

“After Mutafyan was diagnosed, a vacuum of authority emerged, and they [board members] took advantage of that situation. During the time when the patriarch election cannot be held, nor the elections for the foundations, and the former board members kept their seats. Thereby, they made use of the process.”¹¹

Keeping up with the news in newspapers and on social media on communal affairs, I encountered certain comments that were at odds with deeds of the platform. These critical voices were based on the similar reasons that bred a nurturing soil for volatility and irregularity to sprout up in the first place. The general view of these comments was that the platform could not address communal issues inclusively and that their methods were precarious. The platform has frequently been criticized also by its own members because of its lack of regulation and code of conduct. Thus, the efforts to fill the gap stemming from the absence of a regulatory entity could not bring viable solutions to long-lasting problems of the Armenian schools. On the contrary, the foundations and their schools were forced to abide in an ambiguous state hanging in limbo between political agendas of governments.

During our conversations, some of my interviewees foregrounded these topics as significant issues to grasp the current context of the schools, and more importantly they addressed the fact that these matters consistently found coverage in newspapers and social media platforms particularly covering Armenian communal affairs. Thereby, with their guidance I could find the details of noteworthy examples, and further followed up the processes and their ramifications extended over time. Probing communal matters helped me forge links with educational and communal matters even further. Keeping abreast of the news regularly also led me to see the subject from a larger angle and to reckon with motives bearing repercussions for the schools. In one of these pieces focused on recurrent problems of the platform, I found an interview with the chair

¹¹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a former board member in November 2019.

of a foundation whose name came up during my interviews quite a number of times. The following excerpt from an interview with him, who was also a member the platform at the time, neatly sums up some of the troublesome patterns:

“You cannot get a result or advantage of VADİP (Inter-foundational Solidarity and Communication Platform) with this state structure and in current conditions. Alas, people spend time there. Well, is VADİP a necessary platform? Yes, of course. But it has to have a code of conduct, regulation and sanction power, it has to be on legal grounds. VADİP meetings do not exceed conversations, decisions are not implemented, cannot be implemented. Why? Because there is no sanction power, those who wish, implement the decision; those who do not want to, do not. I don’t want to be included in such a platform.”¹² (Agos, 20 September 2017)

In what follows, it is essential to bear in mind that the relevant articles of the Law on Foundations on the election process and requirements of board members of community foundations were abolished in 2013.¹³ The elections for board members in the community foundations were not

¹² “Bu ülke yapısıyla ve bugünkü şartlarla VADİP’ten netice alamaz, faydalanamazsınız. Yazık, insanlar orada zaman geçiriyorlar. Peki, VADİP olması gereken bir oluşum mu? Evet, tabii ki öyle. Ama bir tüzüğü, yönetmeliği ve yaptırım gücü olması, yasal bir temele oturması lazım. VADİP’te konuşulanlar sohbet toplantısının ötesine geçmiyor, alınan kararlar uygulanmıyor, uygulanamıyor. Neden? Çünkü bir yaptırımı yok; işine gelen vakıf kararı uyguluyor, işine gelmeyen uygulamıyor. Ben böyle bir oluşumda yer almak istemiyorum.” Despite his statement of not wanting to be on the platform, Dikran Gülmezgil later became the vice president of the platform in 2020. See <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/23694/ermeni-vakiflar-birligi-toplandi-dikran-gulmezgil-2-baskan-oldu>

¹³ Regulation on the Amendment on the Regulation on Foundations (published on Official Gazette, No:28533, 19 January 2013). By these amendments, the third section and articles 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, regarding the election of the board members of community foundations, of the Regulation on Foundations (published on Official Gazette, No: 27010, 27 September 2008) were abolished.

held until a new regulation.¹⁴ This legal deadlock impeded board members of the community foundations to be replaced by new members and helped current ones consolidate their power even further. Laki Vingas who was the Minority Foundations' Representative at the Council of Foundations¹⁵ at the time of the interview summarized the situation in an interview held in 2014 as such:

“The Regulation on the Elections of Minority Foundations' is not still issued. The lack of a regulation creates serious distress for the foundations. There are foundations that have been working understaffed because their board members have resigned; there are board members who have to maintain their responsibilities although their incumbency is already due, because the election could not be held; there are boards which continue to work by taking advantage of the opportunity resulted from the lack of a regulation. Controversial elections cannot be renewed. Meanwhile, large-budgeted projects are approved, lease agreements valid through many years are landed, and substantial properties of the foundations are sold.”¹⁶ (Freedom of Belief Initiative, 22 July 2014)

It goes without saying that the suspension of the board elections brought forth critical repercussions for the schools as the accountability

¹⁴ Finally on 18 June 2022 the Regulation on the Elections of Community Foundations was issued and published in Official Gazette No: 31870 on 18 June 2022. The Regulation addresses basic tenets of how the elections for boards of community foundations are held.

¹⁵ “Vakıflar Meclisi” is the highest decision making body of the General Directorate of Foundations (Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü). The council is composed of 15 members one of which represents the community foundations also known as minority foundations. See Law on Foundations No. 5737 (Official Gazette, 27/02/2008, No. 26800).

¹⁶ “Azınlık vakıfların yönetim kurulu seçimlerini düzenleyen ‘Azınlık Vakıfları Seçim Yönetmeliği’ halen yayımlanmış değil. Yönetmeliğin çıkarılmaması vakıflarda ciddi sıkıntılar doğuruyor. Yöneticileri istifa ettiği için yetersiz sayıyla çalışan vakıflar; görev süresi dolan, ancak seçim yapılmadığı için göreve devam etmek zorunda kalan yöneticiler; yönetmelik boşluğunun yarattığı fırsattan yararlanarak göreve devam eden yönetimler var. Tartışmalı seçimler yenilenemiyor. Bu arada büyük projelere imzalar atılıyor, uzun yıllara yayılan kira sözleşmeleri yapılıyor, önemli vakıf mülkleri satılıyor.”

of the board members ceased to be of importance without their electoral concerns. More importantly as a result of this situation, since the size of the boards plunged, fewer people weighed in school affairs and their wishes prevailed whether or not they were pedagogically competent or their views were convenient to the larger educational objectives.

§ 5.3 Notables as a Social Force

I intend to unpack some palpable conditions and describe the board members in a more nuanced way so that my argument does not fall into the pitfalls of portraying a very diverse group of people as homogenous. The board members of the foundations and the notables of today's Armenian community are frequently likened to the *amiras* of the Ottoman Empire by the public discourse. As much as their similarities, I also intend to unravel their differences. In addition to addressing the notables as a social force to make sense of the current context in a more nuanced way, my examples also show the ways how the notables reproduce the new forms of governing through quotidian practices.

In what follows, it is essential to bear in mind that the social force and leverage of the notables over the community stem from certain structural factors, which also create the apt conditions for the governing of the Armenian schools by keeping them in an ambiguous state. The conditions endorse this social force. Like I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter referring to Navaro-Yashin's study, the narratives of my participants reify and redress the state in the garb of the notables. While they address the state as a rational wholesome entity and the notables as its loyal actors, they depict the notables of the community as a hegemonic power.

In the present context, the boards of the community foundations are largely, but not always homogeneously, constituted by property owners, business people, shopkeepers, artisans or social and religious notables of the Armenian community, who land on their seats typically because of their public familiarity or their economic power in different scales and forms. My interviews reveal that the political leadership of the community is largely perceived as concentrated at the hands of a small group of

notables whose influence constitutes an important part of these boards. My findings also disclose the view that the compositions of these boards and the politics around these community foundations to a large extent bear on some momentous ramifications for the schools. Therefore, the educational sphere is exhibited as a space that is refashioned in accordance with the mandate of these notables.

Coupling personal ambitions of notables with educational decisions is one of the recurrent motives in my interviews. For those notables, taking a seat in the boards of the community foundations is seen as a practical way to establish a good reputation within the community particularly because of the communal leverage and political clout these memberships have to offer. Within a similar framework, in their work on identities of the Armenians in Turkey, Karabetian and Balian also foreground the role of the middle-aged men in the betterment of the Armenian community since these people invest their spare time to improve the conditions and raise the attendance in the Armenian schools and organize receptions, dinners and cultural activities as beneficiaries (2001, p. 502).

In order to give some flesh to the appeal of these board seats, these voluntary positions should be taken into consideration with zones of influence that they offer. Beyond being a spare time activity, these seats procure for board members some sort of legitimacy to have the authority in the administrative and financial matters of the foundations they serve for. Since there are no central or umbrella institutions monitoring the foundations or setting some standards for them, the boards are the highest in rank in managing civil matters of their foundations and final decision-makers for their schools. If the foundation in question is a wealthy foundation with various properties and resources, decisions over financial matters, investments to be made or promises to be given are multiplied considerably. In other words, as the wealth of the foundation scales up, so does the zone of influence and the reputation in the community.

What is more, these seats pay off the investment made into them not only because they grant the authority of monitoring all matters or deciding on future prospects, but also because they bestow a public prestige on those people who are ardent and vigorous enough to undertake some

role for the larger well-being of the community. With their increasing involvement, their reputation within the community further establishes them as political figures deciding the larger prospects of the community. Although these decisions seem minor adjustments at the scale of one institution, they shape inner dynamics of the community and eventually designate its resilience within the larger context of Turkey.

One of the manifestations of this pattern that I could point to in the educational sphere is the involvement of these boards into the employment processes of the schools. As the boards have the final say to hire and dismiss teachers or administrative officers, some of them are not timid to see the teachers as their staff. That is why in cases when the standpoint or temperament of the teachers are frowned upon, their places are regarded as most renounceable. Needless to say that the elimination of certain voices from the educational space based on personal preferences instead of merit or competency brings about broader consequences for schooling, especially when this leads to intellectual resources sustaining cultural encounters to be left out. Thereby, the schooling promotes a certain understanding in which even the cultural identity is molded into a desired form as it is whittled down into some essence not everyone in that community can relate to.

For similar reasons, albeit the charm of the involvement in decision-making processes among certain groups, taking part in these communal affairs are not quite popular especially among the youth. Karabetian and Balian explain the absence of the youth in social settings with reference to certain indicators of assimilation tendencies such as dissatisfaction with in-group members, stronger affiliation to Turkish or global-human identities, assimilationist policies of the Turkish government, cohort effects or some combinations of all of these factors (2002, p. 502). Spending some time with the young generation and even having thorough conversations with a couple of high school students, my fieldwork lines up with their findings. However, in these interviews the dissatisfaction of the young generation with in-group members prevailed over other reasons. I have met high school students and new graduates who invested their time in creating awareness for Armenian cultural heritage and who were

eager to talk about the current predicaments of the sustainability of Armenian culture and language. I believe one of my most candid interviews was with two high school students who were generous enough to spend their spare time on a summer day afternoon with me explaining the themes that I should have paid attention to in order to understand the dynamics of the educational sphere which made things trickier than they seemed. During our conversation as much as they shared the incentives of their personal involvement with cultural gatherings and events, they also explained the reasons for their frustration with the *modus operandi* of the administrative frameworks and practices. In that sense, they particularly underscored their lack of trust not only in the practices governing the schools but also approaches to various issues that bore repercussions for the sustainability of Armenian culture or communal well-being.

In their comprehensive work on the Armenians of Turkey, Özdoğan *et al.* also include a part on the lack of inclusiveness in the Armenian civil society. They explain this disinterestedness as a reflection of the larger political culture of Turkey, in which people show limited interest in civil society (2009, p. 281). They further emphasize that this situation also signifies the membership composition of the boards changing only slightly throughout time along with the restricted involvement of women and the youth, and their lack of their representation (2009, p. 281). In that regard, they underscore rather structural conditions which undergird the current edifice of the community foundations. Beside the ways that the Armenian schools are kept in abeyance, here I want to add the conditions of how in this context the tenuous domain of the regulations applying to the community foundations endorse the power of the few while thwarting inclusiveness.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the relevant section of the Regulation of Foundations¹⁷ used to oversee the election processes of the

¹⁷ See Regulation on Foundations (Official Gazette, 27 September 2008, No. 27010). The foundations that were founded after the establishment of the Turkish Republic are not subjected to the regulations administering their election processes. Although the Regu-

community foundations; however, with the abolishment of these articles in 2013 the elections were on hold for a long while. Examining the relevant articles of the regulation allows one to comprehend the bureaucratic process of the board elections of the community foundations at least in general terms. However, these written regulations do not say much about the practice and dynamics of these processes. In order to unravel the practice and possible repercussions of these processes, I readjusted my fieldwork in a way to include these topics during my interviews that eventually opened a whole new dimension in my analyses. As regards, all the information that I share here was obtained during my interviews with legal experts, unless otherwise is specified. Only after the interviews, I checked the relevant regulations and added them here for reference. Additionally, in order to show some notable cases with palpable details, I followed the guidance of my interlocutors who steered me into publicly known examples published in various means of the media.

The Armenian churches and foundations are open to all members *and* non-members of the community. Moreover, these institutions are the common property of the Armenians in Turkey. That is why all Armenians are eligible to enjoy and benefit from all the benevolences that these institutions have to offer or perform. However, the boards of the community foundations are elected exclusively by members of their polling district and this rule bears some repercussions both for the election and sustainability of their boards.¹⁸ As an instance to the practice of this regulation, Özdoğan *et al.* underscore the fact that in the districts where the number of candidates are low in number, this situation sometimes leads

lation on the Foundations addresses certain issues such as the rules for their establishment, audit, accounting, their elections are not regulated by a document written by a central institution. This regulation is one of the significant features which differ the community foundations from the others, and again one of the reasons why they are called as such in the first place.

¹⁸ According to polling district regulations, a polling district is a church district; meaning that the registered members of the church fall into the polling district of the church. See Regulation on Foundations Article 29 (Official Gazette, No. 27010, 27 September 2008).

incapable or incompetent candidates to be elected as a result of insufficient number of candidates to choose from (2009, p. 283). Whereas this aspect was one of the predicaments of the situation raised during my meetings, by giving some examples that made coverage in the newspapers my participants also explained further repercussions of the situation and diversified the examples.

One of the significant repercussions of this condition is, as Özdoğan *et al.* (2009) underscore, the limited number of candidates applying to these positions. Since there are not enough volunteers to create competition, sometimes the candidates are automatically elected. This situation inevitably leads all matters to be decided single-handedly by a few members without any discordance. I believe the case of Beyoğlu Holy Trinity Church I referred to at the very beginning of the chapter is a very good example to this situation as its foundation has only two board members left to rule over all civil matters of the foundation and the institutions performing under its umbrella. During my fieldwork, Beyoğlu Holy Trinity Church was raised many times as an example to illustrate how the demerits of the communal administrative structure cause problems particularly for the schools. The points that were accentuated by my participants vary from the mismanagement of the foundation, to the lack of checks and balances in its administration or to their reluctance to contribute to the other schools and distribute their revenues among other communal institutions albeit their large share of properties and ample income. In that regard, the example that I told at the very beginning of the chapter is a little bit more specific than that as it instantiated how the notables mold the educational field by their almost completely individual decisions. I do not purport to tell all the supervening events not to cloud my main point with particulars. I believe that this incident *par excellence* embodies the accounts I foreground earlier and gives them some flesh.

Not only in the case of Holy Trinity Church Foundation, but in the administration of many other community foundations the annulment of articles regarding the elections and management of community foundations have brought about various issues that required improvised measures to address their bottlenecks. However, during my interviews as

much as these legal deadlocks, the leverage of the board members stemming largely from irregularity, volatility and unpredictability of the structure was often raised as a pressing issue. Even further, some of my participants strongly believe that the state of abeyance is used as an opportunity by an array of notables to further consolidate their already established influence. As well as these notables are perceived to be in good measures with the government, their contribution to the status quo or conditions endorsing it are regarded as their preference.¹⁹

I talked to many people who were in one way or another involved with communal politics or participated in the administration of various tasks in the foundations. Most of the time I felt that my interviewees did not share their sincere thoughts and concerns when I wanted to delve into dynamics of the foundations that they were involved with. Instead, they mostly told what was appropriate to say at the time. As I understood, the main reasons for their reluctance stemmed from the fact that they were teachers or administrators who did not want to walk into a territory that might jeopardize their jobs or simply they just did not want to open up to an outsider who would misunderstand their angle or criticism. On the other hand, I also had interviewees whom I knew long before I started to conduct my fieldwork, and that is why I developed more open and candid relationships with them. These interviewees among others included some very opinionated persons who were not hesitant to express their

¹⁹ In spite of this account as largely expressed by my participants, in October 2021 four (Karagözyan, Getronagan, Tibrevank and Kalfayan) of five national institutions (Hink Hasdadutyun) of the Armenian community heralded their attempt to reinstitute the elections for foundational boards. The General Directorate for Foundations terminated this attempt with correspondence reminding that the foundations could not hold elections but their current boards could appoint new members. After the visit of Toros Alcan, the chair of Surp Haç Tibrevank Armenian High School Foundation, to the interior minister Süleyman Soylu, the board of these four foundations made a public statement and said that three foundations decided to choose their new board members by negotiation, whereas Surp Haç Tibrevank Armenian High School Foundation decided to take legal action for its democratic rights. (See Agos, 23 October 2021, Retrieved from <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/26314/dort-vakifan-secim-aciklamasi> on 25 October 2021).

account or even pin down some names. As I talked to one of these participants thoroughly about the subject, as formerly being one of the board members herself she pointed out growing networks of nepotism ingrained especially by the lack of elections and described this situation as:

“It is a very prestigious thing to be a board member of a foundation which is financially well-off. That is why [the board members of these foundations] do not want the elections for the foundations to be held. Rather, they can assign whomever they want to the [opening seat of the board], which most of the time either their son or their acquaintance. It is a state of complete lack of authority, and they make use of it.”²⁰

As I discussed thoroughly in Chapter 3, the lack of certain regulations keeps the Armenian schools in abeyance and this ambiguity becomes a practical instrument in governing the minority schools. This ambiguity also allows governmentality to coexist with the sovereign power of the state. That is why instead of paying attention merely to the state as a sovereign power, I suggest scrutinizing power relations within and around the Armenian schools by grasping how governmentality performs within the Armenian community. In that sense, the public narratives help us unravel how governmentality performs as the notables act as a social force on this matter. I believe visiting a piece on the role of the notables from Raffi Bedrosyan, who writes weekly on *Asbarez* on many diverse topics regarding Armenians all over the world, is revealing for my discussion:

“The Patriarchate has the right to exert moral authority over the charitable foundations. Instead, the charitable foundation leaders, who are supposed to run the affairs of the Armenian churches, schools, and hospitals on behalf of the Armenian community, conduct themselves as the head of individual empires, not accountable to anyone. Some charitable foundations are quite wealthy as they have substantial revenues and income from significant real

²⁰ Citation from the interview I conducted with a former board member in November 2019.

estate holdings, while others are only reliant on individual donations or fundraising dinners. The “haves” are supposed to help the “have-nots,” but this can only be done by having a strong and influential Patriarch, arbitrating among the charitable foundations and distributing the wealth for the common good of the entire community. But, at present, the directors of the wealthy foundations keep the revenues to themselves and spend it as they see it fit. Although they are supposed to be elected, the Turkish government has not allowed elections for Armenian charitable foundations for many years, and these individuals rule their empires, with no accountability.” (Asbarez, 15 October 2019)

It is essential to remind here that this commentary was written before the election of Sahak Maşalyan as the Patriarch in December 2019 and in a state when the Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan was not in charge because of his medical condition. While considering Bedrosyan’s emphasis on the ways how the vacuum of authority causes the notables to expand their influence, we can also read from his comments that the state does not need to control all areas since the ambiguity it sustains by different means already intensifies the conditions to keep the status quo. One of my participants whom I just quoted above confirms Bedrosyan’s perspective in the sense that she accentuates these board members as reproducers of the status quo as they engage in communal affairs by means of their economic power:

“Board members are persons who strongly internalized the status quo. If you have enough money, then you can have a say in these boards, and have power.”²¹

In similar narratives that I encountered during my fieldwork, the board members were often described as the promoters of the status quo, because it was largely believed that the source of their economic and political power actually lay in this very status quo. They were criticized not only because they ran the foundations as their individual workplaces, but

²¹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a former board member in November 2019.

also because they further consolidated their power by both cultivating the conditions that left the schools destitute to their involvement and eliminating any alternative voices which might jeopardize their position or the larger status quo where they perpetuated a tradition of bumpy and burdensome relations with the government. During our meetings, those participants also reminded me of the accounts on the media that frequently conferred about the current edifice of the community. In the weekly newspaper *Agos*, Pakrat Estukyan shared his thoughts and analysis on the subject by emphasizing the fact that these board members in question kept their benevolent positions thanks to their economic capital, which they could sustain through their infamously known relations with the government in the first place:

“The amira class of the past is today replaced by those who own the title “bankers”. Just like their ancestors, the amiras, they maintain the informal wealth of today’s sultans and their proponents, entourage, when their heads are in the lion’s mouth. Keeping the financial resources of the community under their own control, they make the life [of the community] destitute for their ‘benevolence.’”²² (*Agos* Newspaper, 10 December 2019)

Estukyan underpins the comparison between the *amiras* of the Ottoman Empire and current board members by stressing the fact their concerns to sustain their economic privilege exceed their concerns and responsibility for their community. The board members, like the *amiras*, were depicted as the promoters of the sovereign power of either their

²² This piece was written in a context when the election for the patriarch was believed to be manipulated by some who were thought to have close relations with the government. In this regard as well, these board members were compared with *amiras* who were infamously known for their sway over the patriarchate. “Günümüzde geçmişin amiralar sınıfını bu kez ‘banker’ sıfatını taşıyanlar sürdürüyorlar. Onlar da tıpkı ataları olan amiralar gibi, günümüz sultanlarının ve onların taraf, etraflarının kayıt dışı servetlerini, kelleleri koltukta bir şekilde yürütüyorlar. Toplumun tüm gelir kaynaklarını kontrolleri altında tutarak, yaşamı kendi ‘hayırseverlik’lerine muhtaç hale getiriyorlar.”

sultans or their governments while they enjoyed their political power over their community. Not only in Estukyan's narrative, but also in my field study the board members were delineated as leveraging in educational affairs to build their political power within the community, if not reinforce it.

Although the comparison speaks to some facts, it is essential here to bear in mind that the political existence of the board members, or any other member of the community for that matter, is not limited by the demarcations of the Armenian community. Unlike the *amiras*, they are political subjects beyond the Armenian community as they can participate and take important roles in political parties. That is why I argue that reading the political involvement of the notables with respect to their proximity to a sovereign power is not sufficiently suggestive to grasp the nuances at play as it also disregards those who actually make use of their political involvement for the betterment of the community and to bring viable solutions to its educational predicaments. Rather, I maintain these notables in question should be regarded as embodying new forms of governing and promoting new neoliberal subjectivities as they reproduce a discourse where governmentality performs. Furthermore, the board members that are referred to in the narratives with regard to their good measures in the state are limited only to a few persons. Apart from this small array of people, a large group of the board members is viewed as rather parochial and even criticized for being so because they fail to have a larger educational perspective to address challenges and demands of the schools. This parochialism as well is raised during our meetings as detrimental to cultural sustainability because the notables can be easily caught up with personal motives or secondary topics rather than focusing on larger educational and pedagogical needs of the schools.

On the other hand, the note we can take away from Estukyan or from other similar perspectives like his should be that: these notables reinforce their prominent and even privileged positions by perpetuating the need for their financial presence in the sustainability of the schools. I already raised this issue when I talked about how the ambiguous state of

the schools further escalated their financial insecurity as they increasingly depend on individual endowments for their survival. The lack of institutions regulating civil matters of the community leads the boards to manage all financial resources of their foundations and take all decisions regarding them. While for wealthy foundations this means that the board members enjoy their good reputation and prestige within the community that come with opportunities that they can generously offer thanks to this wealth, for those which do not have sources of recurring revenues the situation seems rather challenging. On such an occasion, the latter depends on the support of beneficiaries since there is no shared budget constituted by financial revenues of all foundations that can collectively address recurring financial needs of all schools.

In other words, while wealthy foundations can provide desired financial resources for competitive educational and extracurricular opportunities for their schools, those who lack a sustainable income have to struggle for the survival of their schools. The lack of a shared budget or a central budget results in some schools destined to be financially and by implication educationally challenged. That is why while some schools can afford to make education free of charge for all of their students, provide extracurricular opportunities, support student clubs or hire native speakers of foreign language teachers, other schools have second thoughts about improving their physical conditions or opening up space for their incoming students.

As the board members have the final decision over financial incomes, in practice participating in a shared budget is also up to their decision. The boards of wealthy foundations have been reluctant so far in distributing their excessive income among other foundations or giving up on their privilege for that matter. That is why the future of the schools which do not have recurring revenues is left onto the hands of a few philanthropists who occasionally make endowments in annual fundraising events. In the piece that I took from Estukyan's commentary or in the below excerpts, the aforementioned schools' destitution for benevolence refers to these conditions.

As our conversations went deeper during our meetings, one of my participants also reminded me that these wealthy foundations also happen to offer inter-foundational donations, which they occasionally give to less advantaged foundations as a leverage. I believe Dikran Gülmezgil's comment, who is the chair of Karagözyan Foundation, is very helpful here in reflecting certain dynamics on the matter:

“Wealthy foundations do not approve the formula for ‘shared pool’, because it means that their spending will be kept in control. This may not suit their book. Some foundations make donations to the foundations they like, and not to those that they don’t like. There is not any kind of principle; the decision is up to the chair of the foundation. I believe that there has to be a shared budget, but to make it happen everyone has to believe in it, has to agree on the terms. Unless the idea of “I have the power, I have the empire under my control” is surpassed, a shared budget cannot be ensured.”²³ (Agos Newspaper, 20 September 2017)

Having financial resources to subsidize more disadvantaged schools on a myriad of occasions, large budgets of the wealthy foundations become the source for spheres of their influence. Even more significantly, since there is no code of conduct regulating the flow of those funds or standards to follow, these redistribution processes are performed sporadically based on individual preferences rather than standardized and calculated procedures. As well as the decisions to participate in a shared budget, the decisions to make sporadic donations also usually result in controversy.

During our conversations on this matter, many of my participants referred to the take of the Surp Pırgiç Hospital Foundation’s board to give

²³ “Varlıklı vakıflar ‘ortak havuz’ formülünü kabul etmezler, çünkü harcamalar belli bir disiplin altında yapılacak. Bu onların işine gelmeyebilir. Bazı vakıflar istediğine verip, istediğine vermiyor. Belli bir prensip yok, karar vakıf başkanının iki dudağının arasında... Ben ortak havuzun olması gerektiğine inanıyorum ama olması için buna herkesin inanması, o havuzun şartlarını kabullenmesi lazım. ‘Güç bende, imparatorluk bende’ mantığı aşılmadığı sürece bu havuz kurulamaz.”

discussions some flesh. They argued that this example illustrated the links between economic and political power in the community. In order to be more specific, quite a number of my participants attracted my attention to the below example when during a public speech the chair of the Surp Pırgiç Hospital Foundation gave his suggestions to find a permanent solution to financial troubles of some schools. Accentuating the low number of students of the Esayan School, he advised to shut down the Esayan School and divide its students between Feriköy Elementary and Secondary School and Getronagan High School. With the money saved, they could financially contribute to the Feriköy and Getronagan schools:

“Today, Feriköy School has 150 students. Excuse me because I give names, but friends always say the harshest truth. Today, the big Esayan School has 188 students. Years ago, it used to be 1000 [students]. Now, let me talk about the 4 million liras worth saving. [I suggest that] the pupils of Esayan School go to Merametçiyen (Feriköy) School, Getronagan High School to merge with Esayan High School. Here is the 4 million liras worth saving. Do this, and come to me; [the foundation of] the hospital will give you 2.5 million liras [of financial support] every year. Give and take; without giving [anything] you cannot take [something].”²⁴ (Agos Newspaper, 19 June 2018)

Although there had been no palpable initiative to form a shared budget to secure steady funds for the schools in need so far, during my field work I heard that there had been some discussion going on the subject for a while. The election of the new Patriarch of Constantinople of Sahak II Maşalyan in late 2019 heralded some changes for the course of communal affairs. In May 2020, the Patriarchate announced that they

²⁴ “Bugün Feriköy Okulu’nda 150 öğrenci var. İsim veriyorum, kusura bakmayın, dost acı söyler, bugün koskocaman Esayan’da 188 öğrenci var. Yıllar önce Esayan’ın öğrenci sayısı 1000’di. Şimdi 4 milyon TL’lik tasarruftan bahsedeyim. Esayan’ın ilkokulu Feriköy Merametçiyen Okulu’na gitsin, Getronagan Lisesi Esayan Lisesi’yle birleşsin, alın size 4 milyon TL’lik tasarruf. Yapın bunu, gelin, hastane size her yıl 2,5 milyon TL verecek. Verin, alın, vermeden alamazsınız.”

were in the process of initiating a study group in coordination with the Armenian Foundations Union to address recurring financial problems of the schools -Kumkapı, Samatya, Feriköy and Topkapı schools in particular whose financial troubles got even further intensified with the COVID-19 pandemic (Agos Newspaper, 15 May 2020).

According to the public statement shared by the Patriarchate, with experts and benefactors the objective of the study group was to develop solutions based on the financial reports provided by each foundation. In order to address predicaments stemming from the lack of inadequate financial resources or administrative drawbacks, the study group initiated the establishment of the Joint Commission for the Management of the Schools “under the auspices of Patriarchate, under the chairmanship of the Patriarch and within the framework of the Armenian Foundations Union” (Bolsohays News, 3 July 2021). The Joint Commission is designed with the involvement of the chairs of school foundations as equal and full members who have the right to vote, and two observer members one of which is from the Patriarchate and the other is from Surp Pirgiç Hospital Foundation who have the right to give an opinion but not the right to vote (Agos Newspaper, 2 July 2021). This autonomous joint commission is expected to administer and supervise mutual topics among the schools, and to form working groups when needed.

The perspective of board members becomes crucial for the sustainability and management of the schools. As the boards oversee decision-making processes regarding the schools, they determine the factors of the strategic direction or prospects of the schools they are responsible for. These decision-making processes pertain to a myriad of topics, such as the medium of instruction, extracurricular activities, the choice of secondary languages or the teachers to be hired. These decisions even shape the student composition of these schools. On this matter, teachers and principals sometimes even see the strategic direction of board members as inimical to their educational and pedagogical envisagement. Educators criticize notables and board members on their intense involvement in educational affairs. These critiques vary in their motives. The parochial

perspectives of the board members are viewed as menacing to educational prospects. They are criticized for their commitment to neoliberal precepts instead of prioritizing more pedagogical needs of the schools or for their pursuit of personal interests and well-being.

Due to their authority over the schools, the board members were depicted as weighing their political agendas in education. During my one-to-one interviews, this perspective was raised many times as a serious drawback for schooling. One of my participants who was working in one of the schools at the time of our interview presented his concerns in a larger perspective before giving specific examples. He portrayed the educational sphere as a playground for the notables to impose their political agendas. He articulated the schools as spaces which were politicized for the second time by the notables - first time being political epicenters of the state:

“Just like how the state politicizes education and makes use of it, the Armenian capitalist class politicizes education in the same way. They use it as an instrument to consolidate their power [within the community].”²⁵

I conclude that the dissatisfaction with the boards mainly stems from their management methods. As I explained in the earlier chapters, although the Armenian schools are named as private, they are actually not profit-making institutions. Administering these schools as business enterprises attracts criticism of, I can say, many people. My participants see the schools as bearers of Armenian culture and language. When the school foundations focus on profit-maximization, their viewpoint is not always welcomed by educators. Educational priorities do not line up well with goals of profit-maximization. This reasoning also puts the boards in competition with each other. While they strive to present their schools as prestigious as possible to attract more students, they miss their actual educational needs and let secondary goals take over their educational prospects. In order to present these perspectives accurately, I picked two

²⁵ Citation from the interview I conducted with a former student in November 2019.

pieces. The first one was written by the journalist Aris Nalcı in his blog. The second one was from my interview with a former teacher. It is indelible how both of these quotations point out similar concerns that they think problematic in the current context, although they are spelled out in different contexts and as an answer to disparate questions:

“Since chairs of the foundations are also the holders of large capital, money has come to assume a central position in areas such as identity and education [of the Armenian community].... As long as holders of those large capitals, who unfortunately approach the Armenian schools as if it [education] is mere business, keep managing our foundations and treating the schools as their companies, a grim end seems imminent for us all.”²⁶ (Aris Nalcı, 18 May 2018)

“Because there are boards [of foundations] who regard schools as businesses [instead of educational institutions]. Since they consider schools as places that should generate profit, parents become customers. So, parents as customers make the best of this situation. They express their thoughts on every matter. When teachers are not responsive enough about their requests, parents can walk over them and go straight to the principal [to enforce their requests]. Boards are in competition with one another. They do not want other schools to succeed. They want only their school to ride high.”²⁷

Having authority over the management of the schools, wishes of the board members almost always prevail. They are eager to redesign the schools in accordance with their point of view and readjust educational approaches. When I was conducting my fieldwork in 2019, I witnessed a

²⁶ “Paranın başkanlarının aynı zamanda VAKIF BAŞKANLARI olduğundan beri paranın sözü kimlikte, eğitimde geçer oldu.....Ne yazık ki Ermeni okullarına şirket gözü ile yakaşan PARANIN Patronları vakıflarımıza da başkanlık yaptıkça okullara da kendi sahip oldukları şirketler gibi bakmaları kaçınılmaz sonumuzu hazırlıyor.”

²⁷ Citation from the interview I conducted with a primary school teacher in November 2019.

manifest instance of this situation when a chair of a respected foundation, Bedros Şirinoğlu, questioned the *modus operandi* of one of the highly esteemed schools, Getronagan High School, and accused the school by the words “*They raise militants.*” in a public statement (Agos newspaper, 20 September 2019). Reading his words, it is clear that Şirinoğlu does not applaud the educational standpoint of Getronagan High School. As many of my participants put it, he also does not appreciate diverse perspectives burgeoning in the school. When my participants narrated the event, they expressed their frustration and resentment towards Şirinoğlu, who tried to undermine the school’s reputation as a chair of one of the Armenian foundations. His defamation sparked a public debacle and received reprimand messages from certain intellectuals of the community. One of these messages came from Garo Paylan, who was responsible with the administration of the Yeşilköy School in previous years and was a member of the parliament at the time of the incident:

“History will remember Şirinoğlu as a mere puppet in our community; a mere puppet of a centralized government that defies variegated opinions. I reprimand him!”²⁸ (Bianet, 16 September 2019).

Although later Şirinoğlu explained that his words were completely misunderstood and misdirected, his words were received as spurious. To the public eye, the incident was an example of the impact of politics on educational institutions. When wishes of the boards are not fulfilled, they do not refrain from discrediting educational institutions to change public opinion and to consolidate their leverage over education. As education is viewed as the epicenter of community politics through which the ‘desired’ Armenian citizen is produced and Armenian identity is shaped in a certain way, the notables are not timid to construct their own spheres of

²⁸ In original: “Şirinoğlu, farklı düşüncelere saygı duymayan merkezi iktidarın, bizim toplumdaki kötü kuklası olarak tarihe geçecektir. Kınıyorum!”

power to govern these processes. In those instances, ambiguity is intentionally promoted to open rooms for maneuver so that the network of interests can be sustained in the status quo.

Within the same discussion, the participants brought up a myriad of conflicts that have direct influence on the schools. In my one-to-one interviews, the discussion around suspended teachers stood out as interviewees wanted to foreground the patterns shaping educational configurations. Mainly as a result of a lack of sophisticated professional training networks and Armenian language departments in the universities in Turkey, the schools had difficulty in finding and educating a new generation of Armenian language teachers who were comprehensively language competent. Notwithstanding, some teachers who were competent, well-educated and met the criteria were suspended in the past years from their teaching positions because of their ideological views, future envisagement or attempts to redesign ways of how things were done in the educational field. We see that dissident teachers are regarded as unfit to their teaching positions because of their progressive views vis-a-vis the status quo.

While talking about these teachers, one of my interviewees foregrounded the progressiveness and left-wing perspectives of these teachers as reasons for their discharge:

“There are many teachers whose contracts were terminated, who were transferred to other schools. There are teachers who are qualified in Armenian [language], but not hired because they are leftists.”²⁹

He further explained that there was a certain image that teachers were expected to preserve during their contracts. It is not very much appreciated when these teachers are involved in community politics or raise their voices of criticism against ingrained praxis. In our meetings, those who witnessed these suspension processes emphasized that teachers were suspended from their positions not because of their merit-

²⁹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a former student in November 2019.

based inadequacy but as a result of personal disagreements with the boards.³⁰ In fact, even a former board member put the situation similarly with the following words:

“[Board members] do not want the opponents to the status quo [to work in their schools]. They exclude the persons who can have a great contribution.”³¹

These comments take us back to an earlier discussion that I mentioned previously in this chapter. They unravel the root causes of why young generations are reluctant to work in community schools or participate in their administration. My interviews with high school students and recent graduates reveal that younger generations do not get involved with communal affairs, because most of them do not feel welcomed during these processes. Communal politics are not very inclusive towards new voices. As I further probed the reasons for their dissatisfaction with communal dynamics, they frequently described the overall atmosphere as conservative and anti-democratic. The participant that I quoted above added the comment below, when I asked him about the reluctance of the youth in participating in communal affairs:

“Both teachers and administrators are conservative; they do not want younger generations to be included and talk [about the issues regarding the Armenian schools or the community]. That is why they block left wing people. They try to maintain anti-democratic, authoritarian, submissive culture. On the other hand, the

³⁰ To see some examples of suspended teachers and the discussion around the issue please see the following examples which also found coverage in the media: Agos Newspaper. (17 June 2016). *Pangaltı Lisesi'nde bir garip işten çıkarma*. Retrieved from (<http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/15673/pangalti-lisesinde-bir-garip-isten-cikarma>) on 23 July 2020. Agos Newspaper. (16 May 2020). *Esayan'da iki eğitmenin görevine son verilmesi tepki yarattı*. Retrieved from (<http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/24031/esayan-da-iki-egitmenin-gorevine-son-verilmesi-tepki-yaratti>) on 23 July 2020.

³¹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a former board member in November 2019.

young generation does not struggle [for change]. They need to manifest themselves somehow.”³²

There is a motley array of reasons from communal interactions to financial troubles which result in the promotion of the notables as a social force in the educational sphere. However, I argue that reading the influence of these notables as the cultural hegemony of the bourgeois class does not help to grasp communal dynamics governing the schools. I argue that as much as these reasons, the governmentality of the communal space gravely matters. As the narratives of my participants emphasize the loyalty of the notables to the status quo, they portray the notables as the embodiment of the state in the context of the Armenian schools. I contend that so long as the public discourse reinvents the social influence of these notables, the educational and communal fields will be the spaces where power operates. The discourse my participants embody reproduce the image of these notables. It redresses the state in the Armenian educational sphere. A narrative that portrays the notables as state agents actually re-reifies the state and redresses it in the garb of the notables involved with educational affairs.

³² Citation from the interview I conducted with a former student in November 2019.

6

Relocating Armenian Identity in Spatiality and Temporality

I designed this chapter as a final step to give a panoramic look to the context of Armenian schools and intended to touch upon a key subject that I left unaddressed until now. In order to illuminate engulfing conditions of the Armenian schools, I unpacked the dynamics around the schools at the state and community levels in relation to one another in the previous chapters and pinpointed the potential impossibility to keep demarcations between these spheres of interaction, simply because the ambience of each sphere could not be interpreted without the other. When visiting the schools and talking to people to unravel the interactions, networks of solidarity or articulations of shared values, one of my aims was to discover the spaces that may speak to resistance in different forms in the terrain of Armenian schools. The family allegory I used in Chapter 4 to describe the cultural and social unity serves for this aim. As much as the efforts to sustain Armenian cultural heritage with a survival instinct, that allegory implies the ways the community sees itself as a whole, sometimes at the expense of individual preferences. This chapter aims to expand this argument by adding another dimension to the framework by accumulating discussions and comments during my research regarding the sustainability of Armenian cultural life within the edifice of

the schools the way it was interpreted at intra-communal and individual levels.

By this chapter, I intend to share the responses of my participants when I asked them the role and influence of the Armenian schools in sustaining Armenian culture and language as opposed to the principles promoted by a nationalist agenda to be instilled through the education system in Turkey. As a result of the considerable amount of time allocated in my fieldwork and one-to-one interviews about the impact and contribution of the Armenian schools to Armenian identity and its rearticulation, it was imperative to write a chapter regarding the prevailing contemporary take on Armenian identity and the way this identity was essentialized or contrariwise refashioned with respect to the exigencies and contingencies of the era. Based on the conversations focusing on the perseverance of Armenian culture, this chapter describes the stalemates as well as the tenacity of Armenian identity with respect to current socio-political climate. In that regard, the objective of this chapter is to unriddle rather tacit processes of identity and self-meaning formation in the realm of education on a daily basis, while naming specific challenges that the schools experience in this regard. That is why while demystifying a subculture rebuffing cultural domination of Turko-Islamic values by means of its cultural institutions, solidarity networks, or willingness to sustain values defining the identity, I focus on the impacts of a subculture on students as they have concerns stemming from more current and contemporary socio-economic dynamics.

In his work unpacking the educational sphere in the latest periods of the Ottoman Empire, Fortna (2005) disapproves the perspective that sees education as an instrument to an agenda as if the schools execute a uniform and mechanical function towards this end, and interprets this perspective as reductionist since it fails to see complex texture of interactions and reactions (p. 27). Schools cannot produce uniform students; that is why students need to be considered not as a group but as individuals whose reactions to the materials and atmosphere they experience tend to vary (Fortna, 2005, p. 27). Similarly, in his work on resistance in education, based on Bourdieu and Passeron's analysis (1977, 1979), Giroux

(1983) foregrounds that dominant ideologies are not simply transmitted and practiced in schools; rather they are often met with resistance by students, teachers or parents (p. 91). When applying theories of social production that see the schools as the reproducers of social formations and social sites for the construction of subjectivities and dispositions (p. 78), Giroux remarks on an overemphasis on domination that may lead to ignoring contradictions and forms of resistance as its concepts mystify how people resist, escape or change the weight of the conditions (p. 86). In order to understand the role of schools in the reproduction of class and gender relationships, he recommends employing approaches focusing on the cultural field of the school as it mediates the complex interplay between reproduction and resistance (p. 86).

Accentuating the diversity of perceptions and attitudes of students towards the same variable, Martinez (2006, p. 136) reminds the possibility of multiple readings by referring to Apple (2000, p. 58) who warns us not to assume “what is in the text is actually taught or what is taught is actually learned” because as much as teachers who mediate and transform text material when they interpret it in their classrooms, students perceive these materials in their particular schemas of thought that are shaped by their own classed, raced, religious or gendered biographies. In that regard, Apple sees a need to foreground the fact that students or teachers are not empty vessels into which knowledge is poured; rather they accept, interpret or reject what counts as legitimate knowledge (2000, p. 58). Armenian schools also accommodate these contradictions: as they embody dominant ideologies, they also exhibit fragments and integrate escape strategies into their operation. Although performances of students and teachers to exhibit the schools serving for a uniform and mechanical function is a part of their quotidian practices, their perceptions and attitudes might differ from these performances. Like Parla’s (2019) description of the routine acts of the Jews in Turkey who have to enact a “performative citizenship” (Silverstein, 2004) in a setting defines belonging in ethno-racial and religious terms, with the terms of acquiescence imposed on themselves, teachers and students are called upon to manifest their allegiance to Turko-Islamic values in publicly visible ways

(p. 20). The most explicit example of this is to make students answer questions of the Turkish history section of the central exams in a particular way to demonstrate their allegiance to the narrative nourishing the image of a sovereign power.

However, while students and teachers perform their public transcripts in their classrooms, the silencing that convoys public transcripts does not necessarily avert possibilities for resistance (Kelley, 1993; Scott, 1990). Resistance may exhibit itself in many diverse ways in the context of the schools in which the code of conduct, the physical arrangement of the schools, the curricula, school textbooks and even the wording of the content of the classes are centrally regulated. Forms of resistance might perform within the same conceptual system of the regime, and most of the time they do (Wedeen, 1999, p. 130). Students and teachers complying with the rules of the game and following the state curricula without nullifying the narrative, at least publicly, does not necessarily mean that the content and discourse are received with good grace.

That is why as much as presenting the interpretations of culture and identity, my attempt includes foregrounding the existence of “hidden transcripts” referring to ‘discourse[s] that takes place “offstage,” beyond direct observation by power holders’ as opposed to a “public transcript” performed in the presence of the dominant (Scott, 1990, p. 4). For my example, while the public transcript refers to practices performed in line with the *modus operandi* of the national education system as well as the policies and rules of the Ministry of National Education, the hidden transcript consists of offstage comments, practices and interpretations that either confirm or contradict with this public transcript within the context of the schools. As an outsider researcher, I am well aware that it is not possible for me to fully unpack these offstage speeches and reactions as I cannot really be a part of these speeches. However, by unraveling the ways teachers, administrators or parents conceptualize Armenian identity and the challenges that Armenian culture experience today, I contend that “[t]he dominant never controls the stage absolutely” (Scott, 1990, p. 4). The hidden transcript impacts the ways Armenian culture and identity is preserved today.

Then, the invisible interaction in the classrooms or more broadly in the context of the schools brings to mind the question of whether we could read these acts of endurance as speaking to a subaltern culture which leads to conceptions of the world specific to the Armenian community in Turkey to prosper. Spivak refuses to use the term “subaltern” to define anything postcolonial or belongs to an ethnic minority; according to her the subaltern earns its meaning in the sheer heterogeneity of decolonized spaces (2010, p. 65). Yet, subaltern cultures are not immune to dominant elements; they contain cultural forms engendering their own subjection (Apple and Buras, 2006, p. 23) or in Butler’s terminology their “constitutive outside” (1993). In order to grasp the confrontation of subaltern cultures with the dominant discourse, perhaps Gramsci’s description of subaltern culture can be explanatory to make sense of the interactions of students with centrally prepared curricula and one-size-fits-all regulations. In her reading of Gramsci on the basic character of subaltern culture, Crehan (2002) describes subaltern culture with an emphasis on being on the defensive. Gramsci describes subaltern culture as having its own conceptions of the world but inherently fragmented, incoherent and contradictory in the sum of these conceptions, and therefore fails to generate effective, authentically transformative social and political movements (Crehan, 2002, p. 102). In their book that offers lenses to capture a more nuanced understanding of limits and possibilities for subaltern communities speaking and acting in the educational sphere, Apple and Buras (2006) wax particularly poetic achievements on bringing a specific focus on the spaces which subaltern communities create to reassert their own perceived identities, cultures or histories (p. 22). Taking my inspiration from them, I am intrigued to embrace a rather broader theoretical framework in telling the particulars of the space created to sustain Armenian identity, culture and history. In that regard, in line with the Apple and Buras’ (2006) aim, I exhibit the effects of self-meaning formation in rearticulating conventional policies, practices or tendencies.

Ruminating aspects that could constitute sameness, Douglas (1986) contends that the idea of similarity and resemblance is conferred and fixed by social interactions facilitated by institutions (p. 53) In order to

grasp the atmosphere in Armenian schools as a subculture and discuss the elements whether it could be counted as subaltern, we need to understand how in this particular context people compose their self-meaning based on shared values and similarity especially as opposed to an exclusionary discourse in the education system. I contend that by looking at the ways Armenian identity and constituents are articulated, it is possible not only to grasp certain characteristics of a subaltern culture, but also to dissolve Armenian identity as a full-grown, given entity. Like Douglas argues, I focus on social interactions facilitated by the schools that foreground and define resemblance as a glue holding the identity intact. I contend that unpacking the currents of Armenian identity will make the reader understand the dynamics of this particular cultural space through which conceptions of the world inherent to the Armenian community can be sustained or the reasons why they fail to.

In order to explain collective behavior, Durkheim (2010) suggests that people do not share a common feeling because they are designed by a pre-established harmony, but because certain factors stimulate them to collectively act towards the same direction (p. 35). I suggest that this line of thinking is also conducive to interpret collective ways Armenian identity is imagined. If we want to understand Armenian cultural space, we need to reckon external and internal factors shaping the collectiveness of this space. Rather than regarding Armenian identity based on an essential core from which its constituents emerge from, we need to ruminate variegated combinations of factors to elucidate identity in its context and historicity which might reveal collective ways of thinking.

In that sense, Nichanian proposes a poetic framework to understand the impact of the collective trauma on the modes of thought of Armenians and how the shared and narrated memories of the genocide become so inherent to Armenian identity past and present (2003). In explaining how collective murder impacts the collective psyche of the victims, Nichanian (2003) underscores the interdiction of mourning as a crucial factor when comprehending the modalities and illusions of the political action of Armenians (p. 100). Additionally, Kazanjian and Nichanian accentuate how

the remembrance of the past becomes catastrophic itself among Armenians, as the act of remembering repeats the denial of catastrophic events by naming and codifying them in positive law and positivist history (2003, p. 130). The trauma of the past and interdiction of mourning of this past stay as definitive components of Armenian identity and shape the modes of thought in the Armenian community. Remembering the past conveys a cultural-political meaning as it bears significance for the social coherence of the survivors (Miller and Miller, 1993; Hovannisian, 1998; Shirinian, 1998; Tuğal, 2001). On its specific role in the reproduction of Armenian identity, Tuğal (2001) frames the recollection of violent past events with reference to its role to imagine the sense of collectivity (p. 137, 138).

Similarly, Bilal (2007) emphasizes that the silencing emerged by discontinuities and disruptions in memory becomes very significant in understanding the formation of Armenian identities because it creates a new form of subjectivity belonging to a displaced memory rather than belonging to a place (p. 60). As the silencing elicits interrupted, incomplete and fragmented histories of the subaltern and leaves the stories bereft of a context, the articulation of these stories becomes impossible in the public sphere and shapes Armenian identity with fragments and interruptions while the meaning of these histories is ripped away (Bilal, 2007, p. 85). Trying to regain what is silenced and rebuild their fragmented histories, aware of the knowledge of loss Armenians situate themselves within the socio-political context in Turkey to create forms of their new subjectivities (Bilal, 2007, p. 80).

I argue that Nichanian's (2003) and Bilal's (2007) arguments offer successful starting points to establish the theoretical framework of this chapter. As my fieldwork shows how students, teachers or parents engage with a particular conception of the world in the schools, their comments or interpretations unravel the way their self-meaning and their educational expectations are infused with collective trauma and the interdiction of mourning. However, I also acknowledge that explaining Armenian identity and culture with respect to its past is not sufficient to paint the full picture. Armenian cultural sustainability is not exempt from paradigm shifts in the global context. As the surrounding conditions shift

as a result of economic, political and social reworking of the global and domestic settings, Armenian identity and culture does not stay steady like an inanimate historical artifact, exhibited as a remnant of a distant past. Rather, the Armenian identity morphs in accordance with the climate. Whereas it continues to bear the gravity of collective imaginations, the manifestations of meaning alter in its present context.

In her take on liberal multiculturalism, Anthias criticizes over-celebrating cultures as these cultures are presented in little boxes as stereotyped and fixed (2002, p. 276). As one of the instances to this over-celebration, over the past years Turkey has witnessed a revival of ethnic cultures by fetishizing them as a showcase of the cultural heritage of Turkey, detached from their context and relevance (Bilal, 2007, p. 78). This understanding tends to see cultures as objects composed of a unified body of symbols and meanings to be described; however, as Clifford suggests our representations and explanations should acknowledge cultures as contested, temporal and emergent (1986, p. 19). With this in mind, I describe the interpretations of Armenian culture and identity of my participants pinpointing the multivalent edifice of this culture and its relationality to historical and political context. Suffice to say that within the volume of one chapter, my intention can only stay as an attempt, and restricting this larger subject by the topic of the Armenian schools in Turkey would underestimate its perviousness to various layers and subjects. However, I still suggest that it is my responsibility to present the discussions about Armenian identity as comprehensive as possible to undergird the depiction of the context the Armenian schools reside in.

Based on the framework of our conversations that center around Armenian identity and culture in the educational sphere, my initial aim with this chapter is to unravel commonly held unredeemable constituents of Armenian identity and culture and show that these constituents are challenged by prevailing precepts of the era. My main approach to understanding Armenian culture and identity pays regard to a significant point and evinces Armenian identity not as an essentialized or ahistorical entity but underscores characteristics to read it in a specific temporality, if not in the multitude of temporalities. That is why as much as the socio-

political context that defines Armenian identity and cements it in a specific way with a strong respect to trauma and mourning, I additionally recapitulate the currents that recast Armenian identity in its era and undermine the sustainability of Armenian cultural production as well as its heritage.

As regards, the novelty of this chapter ruminating Armenian culture is not to give a thorough description of the Armenian identity but to reveal the futility of this effort since Armenian culture and identity is not a constant reality to be discovered. Rather, I want to elucidate that identity and culture are contested by recent economic transformations of the global world and challenged by educational neoliberalization. While explaining Armenian identity with reference to a particular space and temporality, this chapter focuses on narratives about fragments within identity and culture, while the schools undertake the mission to sustain Armenian cultural heritage and production despite its fragments. In Chapter 4, I discussed the significance of reading the dilemmas of Armenian cultural sustainability within the current context and in relation to the neoliberalization of education, thoroughly describing the educational atmosphere in Turkey, and how this climate had an impact on the preferences of parents. In certain ways, this chapter repeats what I said before but it also covers how this educational climate in Turkey reflects on the way people understand identity and culture. By this chapter I add another layer, another perspective to the former discussion by conveying interpretations around identity, culture and history in depth as these interpretations are altered significantly by the requirements the educational realm breeds.

In this manner, I take what Parla and Özgül (2016) suggest, when they argue that the national boundaries of the Turkish public space are defined by the continuance of ethnic privilege, which resulted among other things from the Armenian genocide and policies of exclusion and regulation of Armenian difference (p. 623), and I turn it upside down. I contend that collective imaginations of the Armenian public space are not detached from the construction of the Turkish national public as these pub-

lic spaces speak to each other. The components of the social totality actively mold the currents of the Armenian public as it is redefined with reference to its surrounding. Furthermore, Parla and Özgül (2016) maintain that a critique of current citizenship practices demands a recognition of the continuing existence of ethnic privilege and foundational violence against ethnic minorities; otherwise, it is bound to be restricted with a critique of neoliberal authoritarianism (p. 644). I emphasize a similar need to regard these factors in combination in unpacking citizenship practices towards Armenians. I argue that the predicaments of Armenian culture can only be understood both with the recognition of foundational violence against Armenians and with neoliberal education policies which veil dissolution processes of cultural identities in global marketing.

Grasping the relationality of Armenian identity and culture to the current context, it is helpful to remember that transformations are shifting our modern identities (Hall, 1992, p. 274). The postmodern subject is not a fixed, essential or permanent; rather, it forms and transforms incessantly in relation to the ways we are created and represented in cultural systems that embrace us (Hall, 1987 cited in Hall, 1992, p. 277). The new subject subsumes different identities at different times, which are not necessarily unified around a coherent self; rather the new subject may carry contradictory identities pulling in different directions (Hall, 1992, p. 277). Cultural flows and global consumerism create new possibilities for the sense of shared identities as these identities amass as consumers for the same goods, services, messages or images who are actually far distant from each other in time and space (Hall, 1992, p. 302). The mediation of social life by global marketing and communication systems results in subjectivities to detach from their specific times, places, histories and traditions as subjectivities become free floating above those (Hall, 1992, p. 303). In order to emphasize the break with preceding conditions, Harvey describes this phenomenon as “a never-ending process of internal ruptures and fragmentations within itself” (1989, p. 12).

Türem explains that as competition becomes a significant part of the operation of neoliberalism, our social lives circulate around the intimate connection of two layers; individual subjectivities and macro economy

(2016, p. 33). While neoliberalism burgeons as an art of government that orchestrates several societal institutions together, the economic organization of society molds new individual subject positions (Türem, 2016, p. 40). Suffice to say that the sustainability of cultural identities is impacted by this neoliberal transformation and challenged by competitive subjectivities. That is why my participants interpret and describe Armenian cultural identity blended with values inherent to neoliberalism and in a way incorporating the components of both cultural identity and competitive individual subjectivities into their articulations. I contend that Armenian identity and culture stumbles as it struggles to endure against the prevailing trends of postmodern social life and to identify itself more and more with particular spaces and temporalities associated with Armenian cultural heritage. The narratives of my participants display this conundrum very meticulously. In this sense, this chapter does not fall far from previous discussions and embraces a similar perspective in the fourth chapter unriddling how prevailing precepts of neoliberal era play a transformative role in Armenian educational life.

When ruminating nationalist imaginations of the postcolonial world, Chatterjee criticizes the account regarding postcolonial nationalism as a mimicry of the already available forms in the West and perpetual consumers of their modernity, and he openly asks whether our imaginations also remain forever colonized (1993, p. 5). Are knowledge and culture in a dialectical relationship with power in which we cannot conceive or generate any form of knowledge without the intervention of the latter (Chatterjee, 1996, p. 33)? Based on the framework Chatterjee offers, a secondary question we ask within this discussion should be the following: when self-meaning is reimagined and regenerated as a response to the social life mediated by the blend of Turko-Islamic and neoliberal precepts while keeping its endeavor to preserve the Armenian language and commonly held values that reify Armenian culture, is it really possible or realistic to pursue a third alternative way in between these conceptions? In other words, and more specific to my research subject: could Armenian identity and culture deliver different envisagement of itself when this new art

of government makes its decomposition into global marketable subjectivities ineluctable? Beyond doubt, these questions are perhaps too open-ended and challenging to respond to. However, I ask the reader to keep these questions in mind when reading this chapter because what I do throughout this chapter is to tell the story of these envisagement when describing Armenian identity and culture with its continuities and disruptions in the era of neoliberal education. When sharing their perceptions towards Armenian culture, my participants as well reflect this double bind.

In order to duly present my fieldwork discussions regarding Armenian identity and culture, I divide the subject into three overlapping episodes. First, I discuss the context in which Armenian identity and culture is regarded as gradually vanishing in the postmodern era. Second, I unravel the conundrum of how Armenian identity and culture are challenged and even displaced in the education system while it tries to sustain its commonly-held components within the abstract space of the schools. In the light of these discussions explaining the ways of how self-meaning is reimagined in this particular context, I further ask whether these conceptions can be read within the discussion of subaltern. In the third part of the chapter, I evince how language, religion and space become inherent to Armenian identity and culture and why these themes are focused on as they cement Armenian identity and culture as a composite entity.

§ 6.1 Vanishing Culture, Displaced Identity

In her insightful piece, Bilal (2007) argues that Armenians' emphasis on their historical roots in Turkey when articulating Armenian identity is actually a form of everyday resistance against their invisibility in the public sphere (p. 59). As their existence and cultural heritage are not regarded as sufficient for their public visibility, Armenians often see the need to rearticulate their identity and culture with respect to their history (Bilal, 2007, p. 59). The tenets of belonging are strongly associated with a distant past reminiscence of which are framed in a way to prove

Armenian existence. This tendency is further reinforced by surrounding socio-political conditions and eventually Armenian culture boils down to mere traditions and customs to be preserved. This situation leads the presentation of Armenian identity to be restrained more or less within the demarcations of a distant past rather than to be interpreted as a vivid concept reproduced in accordance to the altering dynamics of its surrounding which is shared and cherished within the Armenian community on a daily basis with the facilitation of cultural institutions among which schools have a significant share. Bilal describes this phenomenon as the replacement of cultural production by the past, its reflection, its learning or its commemoration as in the process of time there was nothing left to produce about Armenian culture (2007, p. 82).

When I was in one of the high schools as a part of my fieldwork, my path crossed with a vice principal who worked several years in different Armenian schools as a Turkish culture teacher and later an administrator appointed by the Ministry of National Education. During our not so short conversation, I asked him more about his take on the current articulation and experiences of Armenian identity in the schools. Not so surprisingly his comments somewhat were in line with what Bilal (2007) remarked before. He accentuated the historical and cultural elements of the Ottoman past which Armenian identity and culture was based on in its articulation. According to this understanding, Armenian culture was built not in today but in the past with references to considerable acts of participation in various areas of the production of Ottoman cultural heritage and legacy. He regarded this collective memory that held Armenian culture intact as a momentous constituent keeping Armenians together around a sense of historical awareness. Performing at variegated levels, this sense of historical awareness is generated by remembering the irreplaceable role and capacity of Armenians in the production of Ottoman artifacts and architecture, narrating their determination in literary movements, maintaining their entrepreneurships in arts and crafts or sharing the stories of a common past including memoirs taking place at the time of the mass massacres. This collective historical awareness is also fortified by the withdrawal of Armenians from certain domains of the public

realm as a result of the isolation they are drawn into by the socio-political context. As he sees it, with the means of social media becoming more and more widespread, the oral history practices of the former generations are now replaced by communication networks, email groups or Facebook groups composed by people from different cities, countries, regions or age groups. Although through these new means Armenian folklore could find alternative ways to be relayed in different contexts, these practices are not very common among the younger generations who are often regarded as detached from their local cultures and cultural roots. That is why as an external observer, he interprets the sense of Armenian culture as diminishing among younger generations as he witnesses the coming-in of younger students every education year slightly different from the earlier generation in terms of their priorities, and he depicts this process in these simple words: "Armenian culture used to live in the memories of people; now even in the memories it does not exist."¹

This state of focusing on a steady past rips off Armenian identity from its current context and leaves it bereft of temporality. In this sense, the paucity of Armenian cultural production does not only result in the vitality of the culture to vanish but in many respects displace it from the social relations that can re-conceptualize it in accordance to the contingencies of the era, and cement it as a folklore apart from specific experiences and geography (Bilal, 2007, p. 82). The memories of the violent past or collective act of remembering does not only build strong bridges between Armenian identity and its past, but also unpacking meanings in the past influences the way people articulate and understand their current standing. In that sense, it is important to note that in its impact on Armenian identity the collective trauma of the genocide is not taken into consideration only as a past event. Rather, it is also the current repercussions which makes considering it more relevant in this subject. During my fieldwork, my participants often regarded the emotional weight of collective trauma as definitive to the identity. Since the trauma infiltrates into daily life practices, it becomes cross-cutting regarding the sustainability

¹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a vice principal in April 2019.

of cultural existence of Armenians. For similar reasons, they also interpreted the paucity of Armenian cultural production as resulting in the fragility of Armenian culture against the overwhelming impact of popular culture. Thereby, our conversations focusing on Armenian identity most of the time were restricted within the boundaries of a binary form. The way my participants put it; Armenian identity either can exist by its ties to the past or it is bound to be dissolved within popular culture.

In her work on the post-genocide Turkey, Suciyan (2015) conceptualizes the continuation of genocide on daily basis by illustrating the habitus of post-genocide Turkey, and unravels the ways the denialist policies impact the conceptualization of history by the Armenian community. In the context of the schools, in a way we see the educational aspect of this habitus when the silencing of the violent past and cultural heritage becomes almost palpable in Turkish culture classes. In these classes the obliteration of Armenian past and cultural heritage embodied in a shape of large elephant sits in the classrooms of which everyone is aware but no one enunciates. In that regard, when ruminating the current dynamics of the Armenian identity, it is crucial to comprehend how various practices including the silencing which is inherent to the educational system in Turkey impact the psyche of students and the ways they engage with the representations of Armenian culture and history.

In one of the extracurricular activities I participated as an observant, when discussing one of the books students read about the Syrian war and displacement of people, I found an opportunity to understand the perspective of the students and their take on the feeling of displacement and dispossession. As the memoirs shared in the book center around the real life experiences of Armenians experiencing violence, forced migration, displacement or hate crimes during the latest Syrian war, students could easily relate to these stories by referencing their family stories taken place at the end of the 19th century or at the beginning of the 20th century. Despite the violent past and the uneasiness penetrated into their daily life through these past experiences, they expressed their willingness to stay in their homeland or at least to come back after a couple

years spent abroad for education. Maybe the most poignant comment of this conversation was the moment when one of the students said that:

“Their experiences are analogous to ours. Just like us, they have to hide their identities in the places they seek refuge. We also have the need to hide ourselves.”²

Although I indubitably acknowledge the social and political setting of the post-genocide Turkey has a considerable impact on the current articulation of Armenian identity, further scrutinizing the ways of dealing with the past was not one of my objectives when conducting my research. As I already said at the beginning of this chapter, presenting a comprehensive description of the factors and reasons generating Armenian identity and describing the identity comprehensively are beyond the scope of this chapter. My purpose in remarking these points could only stem from the need to highlight the multiplicity of the factors undermining Armenian cultural production and empowerment today or elements affecting expressions of Armenian identity so that the educational atmosphere can be duly portrayed. Therefore, during my fieldwork, dealing with the silencing and denial of the past did not directly become a part of my research when trying to understand the means and spaces of empowerment that could sustain Armenian culture and identity. One of these reasons has to do with the acknowledgment of the fact that these kinds of questions are very broad questions to be answered in a couple of short sentences. I would never intend to take this conversation lightly. It often takes a thorough analysis to understand how people deal with their past in a context where practices of silencing and denial are not only intrinsic to the official state discourse but also infiltrated into societal dynamics and ways social interactions perform.

Suffice to say that a couple of instances that I listened to during my fieldwork or one-to-one interviews with students and teachers cannot spell out the hidden transcript in the way I described earlier in this chapter, but I argue that these instances address the existence of discourses

² Citation from a student during my class participation in March 2019.

taking place off stage outside classrooms and that is why pinpoint the aspects impacting the articulation of Armenian identity which struggles to position itself in a turbulent society.³ Although Armenians have never left their homelands, the feeling of displacement is prevalent in everyday life, since discontinuities of their history, memory and cultural belonging make them the historical 'other' of the Turkish national identity (Bilal, 2007, p. 58). This ambivalent state of belonging and feeling of displacement at the same time create a void in the identity. A considerable part of the Turkish culture teachers working in the schools that I visited see the vanishing of Armenian culture to bring certain ramifications for cultural belonging of students. Students sit on the fence as their cultural belonging swings between Armenian and Turkish cultural practices.

Addressing similar currents from another perspective, teachers and administrators currently working in the schools identified this situation by rather more tangible examples. Reiterating in different contexts, they recapitulated their concerns for the Western Armenian language with its declaration as an endangered language by UNESCO in 2010, and for the sustainability of the schools as they came up against challenges of financial instability and diminishing number of students over the years. It goes without saying that these concerns are not mutually exclusive, and the root causes of both are regarded as patterns stemming from a gradual erosion in language and culture. When I asked them to elaborate further on their concerns, teachers described the context by giving similar examples from quotidian practices in the schools.

However, it is important to note that having similar challenges, the schools vary in cultural awareness and approaches to cultural matters since school-cultures prioritize disparate qualities in their education methods. For the teachers who work in different schools at the same

³ As I could read some of the signifiers of cultural codes during my extensive fieldwork, I am aware of the impact of affective registers on the reproduction of identity. I acknowledge that a discussion on hidden transcripts, cultural codes and affective registers as well as the conceptualization of the safe space refer to affect theory. Since it would require a completely different theoretical framework to have such a discussion in this context, I have not address or try to frame those affective registers.

time, the diversity of approaches can be more salient to observe as they can compare instances and tendencies of students on a daily basis. When expressing her apprehension about the vitality of the Armenian language, one of these teachers who was working in two high schools at the time of my fieldwork also emphasized the situation in certain schools to be more worrisome as it usually took more time for those students to develop a sense of belonging or to master the Armenian language. On the other hand, she underscored that these were not individual problems; rather, there was an ongoing critical issue about the Armenian language as its transmission was disrupted by the multiplicity of factors. As an outcome of this situation, students do not prefer to talk in Armenian unless they are encouraged to do so. With the church-going practices diminishing, churches cease to be social meeting spaces where people can speak Armenian more often. Since religious holidays that used to be traditionally celebrated in large families are replaced by vacations, people spend less time in large family networks in which customs and family rituals are practiced. Younger generations can now only decreasingly cherish the joy of chatting with their grandparents in Armenian who are fluent and willing to speak in Armenian, as the intensity of speaking in Armenian plunges over the years and over generations.

However, the scene is not so grim with the schools struggling to make up for deficiencies by playing the role of families, social networks, meeting points, life-long educational centers or professional networks in accordance with the needs of their students and teachers. As I described the contribution of the schools in the lives of students and teachers in Chapter 4, this endeavor is often all-encompassing as it is demanding, trying to fulfill different expectations and areas of social life. In order to take over the place of the families in which cultural transmission is regarded rather weak in comparison to other families, the schools step in to arrange the celebration of holidays and other cultural events appreciating Armenian cultural and religious heritage or to simply introduce some concepts for cultural and literary awareness. Since the composition of the schools differ, as much as the success of the schools in this respect, what they understand by culture may also greatly vary. For instance; in

her comparison of the two schools, the teacher in the former example complained about the school culture of not prioritizing speaking Armenian which eventually led students to fully switch to Turkish and their cultural ties to weaken.

Focusing similarly on the Armenian language as a moribund element of cultural sustainability, another teacher explained the dissolution of Armenian cultural practices by the vanishing of the Armenian language in public as well as private spaces. According to her perspective the short-term reasons of the downfall in the language can be explicated by the reluctance or lack of skills to speak in Armenian at home as a result of the busy schedules and pressure of daily life, the professional mediocrity of teachers because of the lack of professional resources that I explained in earlier chapters, the absence of Armenian schools outside Istanbul, the loss of cultural accumulation and practices of older generations and most importantly the metamorphosis in the mindsets of parents and children.

This rupture, she furthered, made itself even more evident years after 1915 which marked the intensification of cultural destruction and became the subject of today's discussion when Turkey engaged with the global trends of neoliberalization process with the introduction of its principles in the 1980s. After the 1980s, Armenians, who were already timid to express their identity and withdrawn in the public space as a result of the social dynamics of the post-genocide setting, started to be assimilated into a Turkish mass culture. Especially younger Armenians entered into new spaces in which their economic integration to the new neoliberal economic order was complemented by the relinquishment of cultural values. Unlike their parents, this younger generation was dissolved in the larger Turkish society particularly as a result of the condensation of market values in the public spaces with the introduction of the policies of the Justice and Development Party coming to power in 2002. Although certain political developments introduced spaces of public visibility at different levels, these processes could not decelerate the dissolution of Armenian culture as a result of the alteration of social life patterns. During its integration to the new economic order, Armenian social life was in the

lurch in creating new spaces of popular culture that could accompany these new social life habits.

While Armenian culture lingered in generating its popular culture, the cultural ties of younger generations waned by the penetration of popular culture and its trends. In such a context, the schools were heralded as the most powerful and perhaps even the only means that could sustain Armenian culture and its patterns of thought, but to no avail. A similar description of the situation was made by a Turkish history teacher working in a high school, who foregrounded the fact that not only Armenians but now students in general were assimilated into popular culture at the expense of their local cultures. This tide revealed itself in the context of Armenian culture as the reluctance of students towards mastering in and speaking Armenian. In order to understand the perspective of students on this matter, I asked a couple of high school students about their take on the issue and how they interpreted the cultural ties of students to their identity and language. However, it was not easy for me to approach students and ask their opinions on this matter as they were not really interested in talking to me about the maintenance of cultural practices. In fact, my meeting with a high school student and a fresh graduate of another high school unpacked some of the finer points of this matter as they expressed their disappointment towards the apathy of their fellow classmates concerning the viability of Armenian cultural practices, way of thinking or language. While criticizing the conditions undermining healthy passages of cultural transmission and general propensities of students, they portrayed the meanings of being Istanbulite Armenians with an avid glint in their eyes and expressed their desire to preserve cultural heritage by getting involved in variegated activities towards this purpose.

§ 6.2 Impacts of Nationalist Education

As much as the significance of individual or communal efforts to keep cultural values intact as opposed to global identities of the new economic order, by sharing their experiences and challenges during our meeting

the students underlined the constraints of national education towards different cultural identities. In order to comprehend the reasons for reluctance to advance Armenian language skills, it is imperative to pay attention to historically shaped Turko-Islamic precepts in the national education system and the way these values are instilled through schools. Nationalist education interrupts the comprehensiveness of Armenian cultural heritage and history by abstracting it from its context. Not only Armenian history is not taught in the curricula, but also Armenian cultural heritage cannot be part of the Turkish literature classes, albeit the contribution of renowned Armenian intellectuals and authors to Turkish literature. In that regard, I argue that the approach of the nationalist curriculum towards Armenians affects not only the articulation of Armenian identity, but also the relationality of students to Armenian identity.

Analyzing the ways how institutions channel our perceptions into forms that are compatible with themselves, Douglas (1986) contends that institutions fix processes that are inherently dynamic with the purpose of controlling individual memories (p. 112). In order to eliminate experiences incompatible with their righteous image and highlight events complementary to themselves, institutions provide certain categories of thought, set the terms for self-knowledge and fix identities (Douglas, 1986, p. 112). Reminiscent of her description, the Ministry of National Education by means of its centrally prepared curriculum tells when it is acceptable and appropriate to be Armenian (see Martinez, 2006 for a similar example). The curriculum aspires to inculcate students with a Turkish nationalist fervor by molding them with certain categories of thought and setting the demarcations of their self-knowledge. In her seminal work on the construction of militarism and gender in education in the incipient stages of the Turkish Republic, Altınay (2004) paints a comprehensive picture of the relationality of the schools to the myth of military-nation. Referring to publications of the Ministry of Education and of Culture, she depicts the ways republican education was invented as an instrument to raise nationalist citizens (p. 70). Reflecting on the nationalist recipe in a rather more specific context, Bilal (2007) deciphers the current national-

ist identity politics in Turkey as a disruption in Armenians' ties with cultural heritage and reads it in association with silencing mechanisms that lead to a feeling of displacement at home (p. 55).

As much as Armenians want to preserve their cultural distinction concealed in communal and private spheres against external interventions, the communal spaces, or the mid-sides as Ekmekçioğlu describes (2016), are not free from state interference and are open to influence and control of state institutions. By the presence of Turkish culture teachers and administrators appointed by the Ministry of National Education, the state has been able to exhibit its image in the Armenian schools. In Turkey, students generally regard textbooks as an important source of information as they have difficulties in using scientific sources for acquiring information and questioning the knowledge offered by textbooks (Özmen, 2012, p. 49). In the textbooks, the overarching nationalist narrative marginalizes non-Turkish and non-Muslim people while coding them as minorities outside a homogenous national identity. The dominant narrative of Turkish history schoolbooks is an antagonistic narrative building an 'us' and 'the others' dichotomy, and promoting non-Turkish and non-Muslim nations and ethnicities as a threat and enemy to the Turkish nation (Akpınar, 2019, p. 24).

In order to have a sense of the influence of a nationalist curriculum on students and their psychological state, it was very helpful to have conversations with Turkish culture teachers about their perceptions or tools to handle the delicacies of the situation in their classrooms and also with the permission of school headmasters to participate in those classes as an observer sitting back corner of the classroom and taking notes in silence. Suffice to say that it was not a joyful experience as it made me look like an auditor, even an examiner pondering the competency of teachers or students on this exact matter. However, trying to understand the ways Armenian identity is compromised by a prevalent nationalist discourse promoted in school textbooks, I could pay attention to nuances that could reveal the impact of the curriculum and its content on the students and even on the teachers.

When I was trying to understand the dynamics of having the Turkish culture teachers in the Armenian schools, the teaching moments for me were during the times when I attended the classes and asked the Turkish culture teachers about their experiences and feelings of being in an Armenian school. As I was curious to see remnants of the encounters with the national narrative in the Armenian schools, I was also timid to ask about how the students and teachers tackled the national narrative that was exclusionary by design. The school principals and teachers to a large extent were very open, understanding and welcoming about my questions; they tried to answer me candidly and narrate their daily predicaments. Nevertheless, I also experienced certain moments during which especially the Turkish culture teachers or vice principals approached my questions with suspicion. Considering the works and articles produced in Turkey portraying the minority schools as detrimental to the national security, it did not perplex me the way people reacted protectively not to be misunderstood on any occasion, although it was bewildering that these reservations were mainly expressed by the Turkish culture teachers. As I explained my research and talked more about why I asked these questions, these reservations were eliminated considerably and we talked more about the ordinary course of the classes.

I asked the Turkish culture teachers the reasons why they preferred to apply for an Armenian school. They explained those reasons mainly as; the Armenian schools are teacher-friendly environments in comparison to Turkish public schools in which conflicts between teachers and administrators are common, the number of holidays is higher in comparison to Turkish public schools, mobbing by the school administrators is very unlikely in the Armenian schools, student populations of the schools are lower in number, and hostility and destructive competition among teachers are nearly absent. As most of the Turkish culture teachers I talked to during my research accentuated their ethnic or religious identities or described themselves as leftists, they explained that having these identities they preferred to work in an Armenian school, because their former ex-

periences in Turkish public schools were challenging and emotionally destructive, where disciplinary mechanism were easily applied with political motives.

As I mentioned in the earlier chapters, the classes were dominated by the stress stemming from the central examination pressure and teachers did not have much room to have an open discussion on the subject matters; they rather focused on covering the exam content as comprehensively as possible. During our conversations, while Turkish culture teachers agreed on the ubiquity of the propensity to abide by the central curriculum in their teaching methods, they additionally remarked on the fact that criticism towards the discourse of the curriculum or the accuracy of the content did not find its way into 40-min long classes. These teachers argued that while erasing the memory of Armenian cultural heritage or contorting the veracity of Armenian history were prevalent characteristics of the national curriculum, students often approached the curriculum with disesteem since they were very familiar with this narrative and had a predilection to negate the righteousness of the discourse in its totality and to procure it somewhere outside that conversation taking place in the classroom. In other words, students do not bother to eliminate pieces of contestation in the state narrative since the content only refers to an instrumental meaning which can help them to move forward on their studies.

However, these patterns of behavior should not mean that the discourse promoted by the national curriculum have no impact on the ways Armenian identity and culture are articulated. Turkish history teachers openly pinned down the frustration stemming from the state narrative and discourse especially regarding the violence which installed cornerstones of the Turkish Republic and defined the conditions Armenian socio-political life was built on today. In those moments, the bantering tone of students' comments might give way to quite somber voices by the unabated color of the nationalist discourse. When students see that Armenian cultural heritage or history cannot find any place in history and literature schoolbooks which are devoted to the vaunted glory of Turkish or Islamic artifacts and literary works, this milieu affects the emotional

state as a part of which the sense of belonging is shaped in a certain way. When deliberation is not attainable in the classrooms, it creates its own designated places to be unfolded. Since it cannot become a part of daily life taking place in the public sphere, it cannot be discussed or shared explicitly without censorship, it creates its own sacred and safe places to be revealed in the private spheres, which is why, in a way, it is incarcerated in the private spheres of confidentiality.

In the Armenian schools or in many other schools in Turkey for that matter, the public transcript, the open and observable interaction between subordinates and power holders, does not depict the whole story about power relations in the classrooms; rather, the students and families told me that it was through hidden transcripts taking place off stage beyond the direct reach of power-holders how they shared their understanding of the past and current events (Scott, 1990, p. 2, 4). That is why family narratives of the genocide as well as daily strategies to deal with the current socio-political context of Turkey are reserved for the private sphere, where debate, exchange of opinions and experiences are shrouded within the safe borders of households or intimate groups where the involvement of the state is regarded absent. Needless to say that the examples given, the feelings shared cannot be representative of all students attending the Armenian schools. These examples can only be the windows opening to short moments shared in the classrooms. Nevertheless, these incidents signal the pedagogic troubles of teaching a centrally prepared curriculum in every school in Turkey despite the cultural diversity of its students.

Although they are obliged to cover the topics in their curriculums following rules and practices of the centralized education system that is monitored by the Ministry of National Education, the Turkish culture teachers expressed difficulties they had when they covered controversial topics during classes and the strategies they developed during those times. Being provided with this antagonistic nationalist discourse in the curriculum of Turkish history as well as literature classes, a considerable majority of the Turkish culture teachers I interviewed told me that they

found it very challenging in an Armenian school to cover these topics presenting non-Muslim communities hostile and violent to the national security of the Republic. When I asked the ways they dealt with the narrative presenting Armenians as detrimental to the national integrity and security, the Turkish history teachers told me that they tried to find smoother ways to cover the topics without offending the students, or that they skipped certain topics knowing that discussing the subjects with a Turkish nationalist emphasis would be pedagogically problematic for the students. They also expressed certain mechanisms they developed to cover these topics without marginalizing their students. In their words, the teachers “try to stretch the curriculum as much as they can” while remaining loosely faithful to the general framework and presenting additional points and perspectives to remind the possibility of a rather comprehensive narrative. I shared some excerpts from our interviews below exemplifying the methods and mechanisms that the Turkish culture teachers developed to deal with the discourse and content of the teaching materials:

Although in social science and Turkish language classes, we [as teachers] remind our students that the official history narrative might not be accurate, there might be gaps and differences [between the official history narrative and] what really happened in the past, the students might see different things [from what we told them] in their schoolbooks and test books. In the central exams a question about the Genocide is put with an option below saying that the Genocide did not occur and the students are expected to choose that option as the correct answer. We, [as Turkish culture teachers working in the Armenian schools] try to eliminate texts in the curriculums that have Islamist and nationalist discourses. However, it is important to remind here that these curricula do not only draw reactions in the minority schools, but in the Kurdish cities of eastern Anatolia and in the Black Sea region as well. Here, [in the Armenian schools] since the students know very well the fact that the official history is not accurate, they do not feel the urge to struggle with it. Sometimes when I act very

incredulously and talk about it, the students tell me that they already know [that the official history narrative is very biased] and ask me to calm down. In that regard, we can say that the students are well-aware and knowledgeable.”⁴

“In the history classes, I do not bypass the curriculum; however, the students know that this is our syllabus and not everything written in the schoolbook is correct. This [how you deal with this situation] all depends on the attitude of the teacher; when the students know you as a person it does not turn into a problem. In this sense, the schools suggesting the [Turkish culture] teachers to be appointed to their schools eased the situation.”⁵

“Sometimes, the students act very reluctant or have difficulty in learning topics of Islamic history. [At those times], I try to go through these topics rather loosely. In the 8th grade, when we talk about the Genocide, they get sad. That is why I do not fully cover the syllabus.”⁶

Within the same context, I also asked the history teachers their feelings about teaching history from a Turkish nationalist perspective in an Armenian school. Most of the Turkish history teachers as predominantly having Kurdish, Alawite, Arab identities or coming from leftwing backgrounds were already critical of the discourse and perspective the schoolbooks had. They emphasized the absurdity of forcing a unilateral

⁴ Citation from an interview I conducted with a Turkish literature teacher working in a primary school in May 2019.

⁵ Citation from an interview I conducted with a Turkish history teacher working in a high school in April 2019.

⁶ Citation from an interview I conducted with a social science teacher working in a primary school in March 2019.

narrative for reading the past especially in an Armenian school, while attracting attention to the fact that in different places of Turkey people with various identities also experienced the same problems and suffered from this very centralized mindset.

I found out that especially in the high schools where the students were old enough to develop a critical understanding to interpret events around themselves, the strongest defense mechanism in these kinds of situations was to have a silent pact between the teacher and students during which the history teacher covered the subject from the perspective presented in the schoolbook but the students knew that the teacher did not necessarily agree with neither the discourse nor the narrative used in the books. Since students are familiar with the narrative and know the fact that teachers have to cover assigned topics of the curriculum, both sides play their parts while acknowledging the fact that the content is almost mythical and does not reflect different parties comprehensively or authentically for that matter. I name this silent pact as accommodating endurance⁷; whereas the message desired by the state is delivered, it clashes with standpoints and interpretations of the students “hiddenly” (Scott, 1990) and dissolves into repetitive meaningless words. Even though in the public sphere the students and the teachers comply with the rules of the power holders, in this case predominantly the Ministry of National Education, this does not necessarily mean that they do not embrace certain forms of endurance or a subculture. When I talked to some of the high school students outside of their classrooms and schools, they candidly explained that they refrained from expressing how they elaborated the positions presented to them as facts.

In order to explain why I name this situation as “accommodating endurance”, let me give a couple of examples. During my visits to schools, as I mentioned before some of the Turkish culture teachers also welcomed me to their classes to help me see their point of view and relate to the

⁷ In her work on contemporary Syria, Wedeen (1999) talks about a similar situation. She argues that although public spectacles are seen as phony by both who orchestrate them and who consume them, citizens show compliance to the regime through enforced participation *as if* they glorify their leader (1999, p. 6).

students. In those classes, the teaching of the class was never interrupted, the classes were perfectly held as it was desired by the Ministry of Education or other relevant authorities, and the schoolbooks that were provided by the Ministry of National Education were the only teaching material of the lessons. In that regard, the teachers and students were accommodating and yielded to the rules and practices of the Ministry. On the other hand, the narrative that was delivered by the teachers as officers of the state encountered with endurance as they were not quite welcomed by the students. I made this interpretation by listening to murmuring or huffing sounds that the students made as a response to what was told to them during these classes, although I have to say that this does not mean that it is a common practice, rather in some classrooms there might be no reactions from the students at all. However, by hinging on my interviews outside of the classrooms I still argue that the students and also even the teachers endure against this national narrative by not letting it slip into their mental schemes or by discrediting it with silence.

One of the classes that I got the opportunity to listen to was a Turkish literature class held in a high school. Later when I talked to the teacher after the class, I also learned that she applied to the Armenian school that she was working at that moment following her reluctant appointment into an *imam* and preacher school. She shared some of the daily predicaments and tension with the administration and how her daily life became difficult because of the undemocratic environment of the *imam* and preacher school. In the class that I attended, the subject of the lesson was ideologies which impacted literary works of the time period. While explaining certain ideologies of the period, she was also giving an account of the historical context in which these ideologies emerged. When she explained the concepts of capitalism and nationalism while giving a context, it came to the 1915 events. After very briefly touching upon the subject, she said “you know what it is” and continued with the topic of the class. She acknowledged her students and their perspective in that regard, but yet covered the topic as it was. Without any hesitation in how to maneuver the topic or insisting on a rigid state narrative, she just in a way

greeted the common understanding that they shared in the classroom, and to me this was what made it a moment of endurance.

In the Turkish culture classes that I participated in as a listener, I encountered many examples where the teachers implicitly acknowledged the fact that the history was written from a certain perspective promoting a homogenous national identity. In a similar manner in another class I participated as an observer, the subject of the lesson was the Treaty of Berlin signed in 1878 which is usually depicted in the schoolbooks as the treaty through which the Armenian Question was fabricated and used as a leverage by the great powers of the time to interfere with domestic affairs of the empire. In this context, the teacher explained the way Armenians were presented in the schoolbook; that they tried to undermine the integrity of the empire by fabricating delusional claims. However, at both ends this narrative was adopted very poorly, and regarded as lacking integrity and plausibility. In fact, as I observe, forcing a national narrative to be shared in history classes creates a contrary impact. By replacing scientific historiography with the fabrication of national myths, the national narrative loses its credibility and accountability in the eyes of all parties. And maybe that is why after presenting the national narrative on the subject, the teacher suggested an academic book for the students who were genuinely interested in reading and learning history.

As being absent in their Turkish history or literature books, the students voiced that the Armenian existence in Anatolia was overlooked and removed from the narratives of the Turkish history textbooks. Although they would like to learn more about Armenian history and culture, and connect with their heritage in the Ottoman Empire, the curriculum does not embody political and social history of Armenians, important Armenian intellectual or professional figures, or Armenian kingdoms held sway in Anatolia which is now portrayed as the historical homeland of the Turks. Bilal attracts attention to the fact that in an age when the political language of difference is promoted, the Armenian history not being studied in the Armenian schools as it is misrepresented as pernicious, gives the students intellectual tools to criticize hegemonic identity politics of Turkey (2006, p. 80).

“While trying to regain what has been stolen from them, while building up fragmented knowledge about Armenians in Anatolia, they situate themselves within a knowledge of loss and become aware of the political contexts that define Armenian identity in Turkey.” (Bilal, 2006, p. 80)

In recent years, in order to present alternative viewpoints and introduce critical approaches to reading and writing social history, in some schools that I visited they explained that they either participated or organized certain extra-curricular activities to create a ground for alternative history education. An example of these activities is the projects that were developed and conducted by the History Foundation since 2013 under the title of “The youth writes history” in which the students from different schools came together and participated in the workshops to discuss and rewrite historical events from different perspectives⁸. Among the participants of these projects, there was also one Armenian high school. During these visits, I also encountered that the schools introduced bits and pieces of Armenian intellectual history and some historical figures thanks to their extra-curricular activities of theater clubs or events organized for important days such as Women’s Day. However, those alternative means of reading history could only be possible by the individual initiatives of teachers, which is why they can only be counted as exceptions that do not alter the larger atmosphere of history education.

On the other hand, in Turkish literature classes, the interactions with the curriculum are slightly different than the emotional weight manifested in Turkish history classes. With a strong emphasis on the Turkish-Islamic character of the Republic, literary history is taught in a way to catapult this identity by generating a narrative focusing almost solely on the works of authors identified with their Muslim or Turkish identities.

⁸ For a list of the projects that have been conducted since 2013 by the History Foundation in the area of education, you can visit the website of the History Foundation: <https://www.tarihvakfi.org.tr/projeler/tarih-egitimi-ve-alternatif-egitim-materyalleri/38>.

According to their statements, as much as the students, the teachers are also not comfortable with the design of the syllabi or the objective of the curriculum embodied in the schoolbooks. With the purpose of rendering the classrooms friendlier, the Turkish literature teachers I conversed with expressed their effort to tone the Turkish and Islamic emphasis down to their understanding. Despite these efforts, the strong emphasis on Turko-Islamic identity of the Republic alienates students and escalates the conditions to undermine the Armenian sense of belonging by decoupling it from its context.

In such a narrative, Armenian literati, authors or intellectuals are not even mentioned in the textbooks despite their indelible contribution in introducing ideological movements through translation and scholarly debates or in composing first Turkish literary works of the era. Although Armenian literature and its context are addressed in a way to become the subject of Armenian language and literature classes, these Turkish literature teachers underscore that the failure to include Armenian cultural and literary heritage into the curriculum which is supposed to tell the literary history of the Republic and the Ottoman Empire discloses the political agenda of the national education in a certain manner. That is why despite their restricted latitude, Turkish literature teachers often try to depict a rather broader picture of the literary periods including Armenian authors and intellectuals. Apart from that, the insistence on teaching literary works of the Islamic period creates other unanticipated troubles for teachers. Since the students are usually not familiar with the terminology, concepts, events, dates, idioms or even names that can help them to make sense of the piece they work on in the Islamic period, the teachers find themselves in a position to explain certain concepts and values integral to Islamic thinking, which they are neither competent nor willing to do.

The Turkish literature teachers expressed that they shared similar thoughts and feelings with their Turkish history teacher colleagues when explaining the context of literary works. With reference to literary works of the national literature in particular, they stated that they had similar predicaments in reaching out to the students because the discourse in

the schoolbooks was exclusionary for non-Turkish identities who were poignantly presented as betrayers or completely absent in the intellectual history of the Ottoman Empire and later the Turkish Republic. In order to fill the gap in the syllabi of Turkish literature classes which contain topics from divan literature, Sufi literature or literary periods under the influence of movements of nationalism or Islam and to open spaces through which students can connect to Armenian cultural heritage and cherish it through literary works, Turkish literature teachers do not refrain from adding anecdotes to give a sense of the literary and intellectual setting of the era they cover during their class hours.

As an instance, a high school Turkish literature teacher gave the example of *Akabi Hikayesi* which was written in Armenian alphabet by Vartan Paşa as the first Turkish novel in 1851, 20 years earlier than Şemsettin Sâmî's *Taaşşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* which was written in 1871 and acknowledged as the first Turkish novel.⁹ The fact that the syllabi do not pay regard to the diversity in faith and ethnicity leads students to interact with a curriculum which does not subsume pieces of their background and introduces concepts that are outside their categories of thought. It is safe to assume that this pattern can be observed in many other schools and is not peculiar to the educational climate of the Armenian schools. However, I argue that it becomes more palpable and easier to pin down in the context of the Armenian schools as the composition of the classrooms is relatively more homogeneous and examples are notable by number.

While the regulations of the Ministry of National Education and school curricula restrict the proper ambit to discuss Armenian cultural heritage and history, the narrative and its boundaries define Armenian identity and culture in a specific way. In the last twenty years with the Justice and Development Party embracing a neo-Ottomanist approach, its

⁹ *Taaşşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* is presented as the first Turkish novel by a word play; instead of building the phrase the first novel written in Turkish language, it was formulated as the first novel that was Turkish. The recognition of *Taaşşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* as the first Turkish novel disregards the affluence of other literary works written in Turkish before 1871 with regards to different factors based on the alphabet used or the way they were published.

emphasis as the heir of the Ottoman Empire elicited a discourse gravitating towards a multiculturalist image. In this presentation, as Armenian culture is portrayed as an image aggrandizing the multicultural painting of the Ottoman past, it becomes exposed to a different kind of discrimination, and this situation generates a narrative in the wider society picturing the Armenian community as an endangered species, an ornament decontextualized from its historicity. It is perceived as an object to be discovered and even conquered because of its exotic nature. As a way of discrimination, seeing Armenians as an exotic, unusual, interesting object is not uncommon, something brought from faraway lands and presented to the public in its scarcity (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, p. 30). In addition to the endeavor to be a part of a grandiose past, this perspective tends to see Armenians as a unidimensional entity composed of only one attribution lacking any other depth, character, capacity or identity. As the sovereign power that is historically constructed based on Turko-Islamists precepts encloses Armenians in a confined identity, this sovereign power is perpetuated by perceptions that Armenians have a common established idea about everything as a community. This is one of the reasons why on almost every occasion Armenians receive questions regarding their perceptions of the past and present, and thereby the discriminatory language of the larger society entails Armenians to withdraw from public spaces and to be more reticent about becoming expressive in different venues.

In understanding the ramifications of the exclusionary narrative in the context of the schools, we need to unpack the ways Armenian identity is articulated. In that regard, as much as seeing the schools in which the state narrative circulates, visiting them as publicly acknowledged places for cultural empowerment and sustainability and even more importantly at the intersection of these matters will be helpful to grasp their role in the community. In order to depict this binary aspect of the schools, Ekmeçioğlu (2016) stresses on the distinctive rhythm of living and being in the schools as they are legally and traditionally warranted to teach Armenian language, literature or music maintaining identity and recovering

Armenianness, despite all the drawbacks they experience (p. 125). In order to unpack this distinctiveness, by using a family allegory to talk about solidarity networks in the earlier chapters, I accentuated the significance of the schools in the community in preserving Armenian cultural heritage. Continuing on the same subject here, I would like to highlight how these dynamics influence the conceptualization of identity in this particular context while the schools maintain their role for the community, despite the fact that this role is compromised by state curricula or sorts of regulations on a daily basis.

§ 6.3 Language, Religion, Space in Making Armenian Identity

Throughout my chapters, many times I have mentioned different layers of why and how Armenian identity and cultural identity is compromised. Within these discussions, as much as daily predicaments and perpetuated conditions, I mentioned the endeavor to preserve the socio-cultural space bearing cultural codes, customs or social relationality especially around cultural institutions. In order to give a comprehensive picture of the environment of the schools, my field study demonstrated that it was also imperative to look at the ways people engage with certain components of cultural sustainability and on which terms they defined these components. In that regard, it is significant to remember that the schools are not museums exhibiting the vanishing pieces of Armenian culture while developing strategies to preserve the sense of social unity. As I already discussed in the previous chapters, the Armenian schools are not deployed somewhere outside the altering dynamics of the educational sphere. Being a part of it, these schools are very well impacted by current developments; and thereby, the texture and particularity of this cultural space are compromised by these dynamics. In the articulation of Armenian identity during my interviews, our discussions were centered predominantly around themes of language, religion and space and how people engage with the Armenian identity on these themes. Sharing these conversations in this chapter I prefer to center my discussion based on these frameworks.

6.3.1 *Language*

In our conversations about the concerns for the sustainability of the cultural space, language was frequently mentioned as a fundamental constituent, and that is why the concerns regarding cultural awareness were frequently linked together with the vanishing of the Western Armenian language in daily life. Part of their expertise and experiences, Armenian language teachers had a lot to say about this subject as they not only undertook the role to equip their students with the tools and means that could cultivate a passion and understanding for mastering the Armenian language, but they were also the observers *par excellence* of these processes. The comments of an experienced Armenian language teacher sum up the role of the schools in this regard: “The schools contribute to culture by teaching the language”¹⁰. On the other hand, teachers approach language education not as a mere acquisition of language competency. Addressing it from a larger perspective, teachers see language education as a stage to equip students with a certain level of knowledge about Armenian language and culture in a dynamic context molded by social and practical impacts. In literature classes, they put emphasis on the context while teaching real life stories of authors and poets. In order to emphasize the importance of learning Armenian, a primary school principal spelled out that they informed students about cultural heritage, production and legacy so that Armenian language could be appreciated by students as it pertained to the past as much as the present.

Despite their efforts to teach Armenian literary works in a comprehensive framework, the intensity of the classes and the emphasis on literature have deteriorated over the years. Comparing present tendencies with their own experiences from school years, teachers explained that day by day the Armenian language was cramped within the confines of everyday conversation and its image as a literary language melted away. Therefore, Armenian language and literature classes are designed in a way to teach the language or to polish fluency rather than aggrandizing

¹⁰ Citation from an interview I conducted with an Armenian language and literature teacher working in a high school in May 2019.

the knowledge of literature or amplifying the sophistication of students in that matter. In Armenian language education, the tendencies, approaches and strategies of the schools differ from each other in accordance to their objectives, composition of students or competencies of teachers. For example, in one of the primary schools I visited, the principal put the objective of the school as to teach all classes in Armenian in the first 4 years to polish the competency in language and imbue students with values, approaches and modes of thought intrinsic to Armenian culture while students got familiar with new terminologies. After these 4 years, the language of instruction shifts to Turkish, particularly because of the fear of parents and students of falling behind in central exam preparations. In other schools I visited, I witnessed different practices and approaches; while the overall tendency in primary schools is to have fully Turkish curricula putting Armenian language and literature classes aside, there are also primary schools embracing hybrid approaches or ones that persist to maintain their curriculum in Armenian as much and as long as possible in the educational development of students when the circumstances allow.

In high schools, the situation is not any different. The classes, except for Armenian language, literature or religious knowledge and ethics, are held in Turkish following Turkish curricula unless the particular teacher of the class decides to teach the class in Armenian by their personal determination. In total of five high schools, one of the schools stands out among others with its emphasis given on keeping Armenian curricula. As this school is often mentioned in reference to its endeavor to incubate an enduring interest in Armenian cultural heritage, the school administration makes a great effort to keep the curriculum Armenian during freshmen and sophomore years. However, in practice this effort does not always lead to success as a result of various factors including the difficulty to find fluent teachers in Armenian for subject matter classes or challenges to keep students engaged and eager. In those cases, teachers or administration tend to develop hybrid approaches such as providing consecutive Turkish translations, speaking blended Armenian and Turkish

or giving materials in Turkish but holding the class in Armenian. Teachers' encouragement of speaking Armenian outside classes and in the free time of students underpins these approaches. Teachers illustrate their decisiveness in preserving or extending the venues to speak Armenian by their tenacity to stick to Armenian unless otherwise is essential. In order to describe the overall tendencies, one of these teachers expressed her concerns about cultural erosion in younger generations. In the way she saw it, most of the students paid no mind about the sustainability of Armenian identity or culture. However, thanks to the school principal's stance on this matter teachers could insist on continuing to hold their classes in Armenian despite the dissident voices on the side of parents. With the support of the school administration, she could teach all of her classes in Armenian at every level of education in the high school. This determination sometimes stirs up backlash among parents who see Armenian curricula as an unnecessary challenge that might be relinquished for a more competitive education. In that sense, she underscored the difficulty to perpetuate the practice of Armenian culture and language. She explained that parents and students were reluctant to see that a successful language education demanded adoption of that language and its cultural values in all areas of education and everyday life.

Working in another high school with a different composition of students and teachers, another teacher explained the limited space the Armenian language took in daily life in a similar manner. She as well accentuated the diminishing significance and worth of the Armenian language in the social life with respect to the deterioration of the practical value of the language as it ceased to be regarded as an applicable instrument to various areas of social life. She furthered that cultural awareness of students has crumbled in comparison to her generation, since they did not see language practice as a momentous component of cultural heritage any more. As opposed to her school years when it did not even cross her mind not to express herself in Armenian within the confines of the school based on common practice and customs, now students rarely prefer to speak Armenian among friends unless they are asked to.

While some teachers put meaningful effort to motivate language practice in the social life, some others contribute to language education by providing extracurricular Armenian language classes to students who have difficulty in expressing themselves in Armenian and mostly who could not have language education because of their physical distance to schools or family's preference to enroll the student to an Armenian school at a later age. These extracurricular classes are often regarded as necessary, because the diversity of language proficiency surfaces as one of the factors undermining teaching the classes in Armenian. Having students in their classrooms without competency in language, teachers are obliged to hold the classes in Turkish to be able to address all their students. Together with the paucity or lack of usage of Armenian at family settings and disinterestedness to practice Armenian in the social life usually result in the Armenian language to become a secondary language to be taught in the schools.

Students coming outside Istanbul usually constitute the majority of these students who face challenges in expressing themselves in Armenian. These students do not have any access to Armenian schools in their home cities and can only start their language acquisition at later ages or later stages in their school years. In these cases, the socio-economic background of the student is most of the time considered as momentous in attaining language competency or developing a sense of belonging. In the schools in which the majority of their students come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, the underprivileged status of the family was frequently accentuated as a reason for students' weak ties to their cultural heritage or for their lower extent of cultural awareness. Especially in the boarding schools, the abundance of students who were not familiar with customs and traditions, who have not seen any Armenian newspaper before or who were not aware even of the most renowned authors was mentioned by teachers. During my visits, one of the places in which I heard this correlation to be articulated was one of the boarding schools providing education at the elementary and middle school levels and accepted students from the countryside and from families who could barely afford education for their children. The vice principal of the school

depicted the overall state of their students as substantially oblivious towards cultural customs and practices. Most of the students did not have Armenian language skills. In order to emphasize the limited access to venues where the Armenian language can be practiced, he gave an example from students who came to study from other cities. He mentioned that there was a large family in Adıyaman, and they sent their children to the boarding school in Istanbul so that the students could learn Armenian and connect to the Armenian community. These students are sent to study in an Armenian school at later ages, usually after the 4th grade when they are more ready to study in a boarding school away from their parents. Since they do not learn Armenian until that age, it becomes impracticable to have Armenian curricula or teach classes in Armenian in their classrooms. However, as other teachers highlighted, a more significant challenge stems from the fact that these students are destitute of the social environment and family setting in which they can establish cultural values or language skills acquired in the school. In that regard, the urban and rural divide or the socio-economic composition of families have a direct influence on the way language and culture is approached in the classrooms. In Chapter 4, I unpacked the complexity of these processes and the coping mechanisms of the schools to handle the processes gracefully and inclusively addressing different needs of their students. That is why I argue that the cultural practices in the schools or spaces of cultural belonging cannot be detached from rather more intimate relations taking place in familial settings.

On the other hand, despite their different backgrounds, students have a rather common understanding that there is no environment where Armenian language skills seem to be meaningful to have. Since learning the Armenian language does not fit well into future prospects, students might have certain reservations about going to an Armenian school. The paucity of social viability of the language gets language sustainability into a vicious circle. In such an atmosphere, the schools not only lose the incentives to teach Armenian curricula as the Armenian language is accepted as a moribund language, but they are also challenged as cultural spaces having difficulty in finding fluent Armenian speaker teachers to

serve their objective of teaching Armenian language as one of their priorities. I could tell that the schools still regard Armenian language education as their distinguishing feature. When I asked my participants their elaborations about the overall objectives of the schools, teachers often described the *raison d'être* of the schools as the transference of language to younger people. Expressing their frustration in that matter, these teachers also acknowledged the fact that the schools could not fulfill this objective any further. The rupture between the past and present or between Istanbul and other Anatolian cities surfaced when they pinpointed patterns of crippling this objective.

In our conversations about the linguistic ruptures between generations, teachers with different backgrounds described people who were born roughly between the years 1950-1960 as the lost generation emphasizing their lower language proficiency in Armenian. To their view, the transference of mother tongue was interrupted by the post-genocide environment in Turkey as people hid their identities, preferred not to speak Armenian in public spaces or gradually refrained from attending Armenian schools to blend in with the Turkish identity. Even though the parents of the 1950-1960-born generation had a brilliant command and knowledge of the Armenian language, whether intentionally or not they refrained from transferring Armenian as a mother tongue to their children because of the hostile political context towards ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey. The analysis of these teachers on the impediments of the transference of the Armenian language to younger generations was not based on scientific studies or surveys. However, based on their observations, experiences and perceptions, teachers whose ages were within the 30-40 age range accentuated the language proficiency of their grandparents as opposed to their parents who were not so successful in either embracing Armenian as their mother tongue or providing a learning environment for their children because of the need to hide their identity as a result of the trauma or fear they had experienced. Instantiating this argument, especially younger teachers who were born after the 1970s referred to the linguistic and cultural rupture as the reasons eliciting their lack of language competency.

All of these factors I have been bringing up beget a shift in conceptions of the world and modes of thought of students or of the larger Armenian community. Since for some teachers and students the schools are the only places where they can speak Armenian, sometimes their vocabulary remains restricted with the nature of the conversation that can be held in a context of a school. Some of the high school students I talked to expressed gratitude towards their teachers who worked hard to undergird cultural sustainability by the means of language education and to galvanize their students to embody Armenian cultural heritage, but to no avail. A former Armenian language teacher described this as follows to capture the disposition of students:

“When the cluster in which students speak Armenian is too tight for the outside world, they tend to break off with Armenian. The Armenian language is left as the language of the church; cannot make its way to conversational, daily language. On the other hand, even in the church Armenian fell into disuse. Sermons are held in Turkish so that people can understand. There is no Armenian resource for young adult literature, and no momentum to meet this need.”¹¹

The most palpable reason for this tide refers to the education environment I illustrated in Chapter 3 when unpacking the ways how neoliberalization of education impacted education patterns in the Armenian schools. Especially Armenian language and literature teachers foregrounded the wind that the central exams brought to their classrooms. They argued that without the pressure of central exams, the circumstances that the Armenian language faced would be a lot different than today's. In fact, in addition to the factors constraining the Armenian language into the confines of Armenian literature or ethics classes, one of these teachers working in a high school foregrounded the alteration in the conceptions of the world of students. She stated that the culture and

¹¹ Citation from the interview I conducted with a former Armenian language and literature teacher in August 2019.

subjectivities were molded by the synthesis of Turkish curricula and neoliberal education system in the following words:

“The classes used to be held in Armenian in the past. Now, all classes are taught in Turkish because of the central exams, because of the Turkish textbooks sent by the Ministry of National Education. Only in Armenian language and ethics classes the medium of instruction stayed in Armenian. Armenian has become a secondary, even tertiary language. But more importantly, the culture of the younger generations has changed. They do not speak Armenian anymore.”¹²

In the same vein, while construing the ramifications of the competitive educational environment on cultural sustainability in the context of the Armenian schools, the headmaster of an elementary and middle school underscored the transformation of students’ prevailing perspectives. He said that

“Students do not think in Armenian any more. New concepts sometimes do not translate to Armenian. And their worries and concerns in life overshadow [the concerns for] the Armenian language.”¹³

Economic, political and social reworking of the global and domestic settings transformed the ways students engage with their language and identity. The Armenian language could not be integrated into the operation of popular culture. A high school principal reads this atmosphere by an uneasiness of both students and teachers in expressing themselves in Armenian; they do not prefer to articulate themselves in their social settings in Armenian. A vice principal of another high school seconded this argument by underlining the fact that as Turkish culture became very intrinsic to students’ mode of thought and their practices, they lost their

¹² Citation from the interview I conducted with an Armenian language and literature teacher working in a high school in December 2018.

¹³ Citation from the interview I conducted with an elementary and middle school principal in April 2019.

connection and ties to the Armenian language. Based on the perceptions of my participants, I argue that Armenian language and culture gradually melt in the overall aura of the secular time. The nuances and particulars of Armenian culture, like the other cultural identities for that matter, flattened and eventually liquefied in the mundane details of the general public. The haze of the epoch, neoliberalism, consumer culture or social interactions which dominate our everyday lives reproduce us on a bi-dimensional, dull plane surface. The mundane details of the global identities smoothly take over the scene and leave little room for other possibilities. This simplification fractionally and slowly dissolves diverse cultures in a majority culture, and Armenian culture is not exempt from these processes. In fact, considering the socio-cultural context of Turkey it is perhaps the most fragile.

6.3.2 *Religion*

While it is regarded that the weight of the Armenian language has waned as a complementary feature of Armenian identity, the emphasis on religious difference in the self-meaning has not deteriorated. As a matter of fact, with the Armenian language plunging as a descriptive characteristic of Armenian identity, religious belonging became more palpable to define the demarcations of this identity. The stress on early Christian roots has always been a part of the ethnic pride for Armenians, and churches maintain their importance by procuring the cultural space in which religious traditions, cultural practices or social connection are preserved (Manoogian *et al.*, 2007, p. 580). Moreover, religious belonging contributes to the construction of identity in diverse ways. In their research on the role of Armenian women in the survival of the Armenian community, Komşuoğlu and Örs (2009) capture the nuances of the articulation of religious difference in the definition of identity. Religious difference is not only described as a cultural code significant in daily practice but also as a political and ideological code momentous in the construction of “us” while defining “others” (Komşuoğlu and Örs, 2009, p.

331). In this sense, Orthodox Christianity (Armenian Apostolicism)¹⁴ is one of the means to designate cultural and communal boundaries and create a conceptual space of communal belonging to maintain the Armenian identity within a context where the hegemony on Turko-Islamic values prevail (Komşuoğlu and Örs, 2009, p. 332). Similarly, in her interpretation of Hayganush Mark's take on the role of religion in self-preservation in the post-genocide context, Ekmekçioğlu (2016) recounts the church as a marker of difference which unites Armenians as one, and the act of churchgoing as a "diasporic moment" while religious traditions, ceremonies and architecture help Armenians imagine a temporal continuity connecting them from past and present alike (p.102).

In parallel to these former studies, the interviews with my participants also revealed that religious identity was a momentous part of the definition of Armenian identity among students or teachers since it was often regarded as the only concrete difference through which Armenians established the boundaries of their cultural space. I suggest that the reasons why religion continues to be a significant aspect of Armenian identity whereas the Armenian language is relinquished for practical reasons can be found in the inertia of religion. Religious identities do not bear any cost in the integration to global identities; on the contrary, these identities most of the time avail for building a certain sense of belonging in far-away lands. However, I contend that the most salient reason why religion does not lose its emphasis in Armenian identity stems from the fact that it ensures an effortless way towards communal belonging. It is a constant which is unconditionally there. I talked about the emphasis on religion in the ways Armenian identity was articulated thoroughly to one of my participants who was an intellectual and had translations from Armenian to

¹⁴ Although Catholic and Protestant Armenians are also part of the Armenian community in Turkey, Armenian identity is defined with respect to Orthodox Christianity (Armenian Apostolicism), which is the national church of Armenians. As the majority of Armenians in Turkey are Apostolic, 13 out of the 16 Armenian schools are managed by church foundations that function under the spiritual oversight of the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey. That is why my participants, working and studying in one of these 13 schools, refer to Armenian Apostolicism when they say religious identity.

Turkish. According to her, as the knowledge, expertise and familiarity with Armenian cultural heritage melted away, Armenians leaned towards their religious difference to fill this hiatus in their identity. As Armenianness lost its meaning, it started to be taken as equal to Christianity. The fact that Armenians are one of the first populations to choose Christianity as the state religion and that they have a national church consolidates the place of religion in identity. Religion as a concept is very powerful in connecting Armenians to one another. Since ethnic and religious identity are blended together very well, Armenianness cannot be regarded as separate from Christianity or more specifically from Armenian Apostolicism. This account was repeated many times during my fieldwork including by Turkish culture teachers who perceived religion as a salient segment of Armenian communal belonging. A high school vice principal who worked in different Armenian schools throughout his career contended that while the students defined themselves as Armenian, their definition of Armenian identity was mainly based on religion. Conceptually they had a connection to the church but this connection should be read as a commitment to their identity. In a similar manner, a high school Turkish language and literature teacher put it:

“I think as a result of the assimilation most of the students lost their cultural identities. But, although most of these students are not religious, it is the religion that keeps them together. Based on religious unity, they feel close to each other, feel safe.”¹⁵

Although the schools are categorically secular and have no objective of inculcating the youth with religious knowledge, religion does not cease to be a part of Armenian culture. The link between identity and religion as a representation stays within the boundaries of the school. This representation is further reinforced in the schools by small details. As a requirement of curricula prepared centrally by the Ministry of National Education, in each level of education Religious Culture and Knowledge of

¹⁵ Citation from the interview I conducted with a Turkish language and literature teacher working in a high school in March 2019.

Ethics classes are part of the curriculum. Whereas in Turkish public schools, these classes are focused on teaching the history of Islam, Islamic values and practices, in the Armenian schools the syllabi are designed in a similar way similarly to teach the religious culture, history, canons and practice of Orthodox Christianity or Catholicism depending on the school. Since there are no educational departments in the universities to produce graduates that can teach these classes, the common practice is to assign Armenian language and literature teachers to Religious Culture and Knowledge of Ethics classes. As these teachers remarked, this situation accelerated the perception among students that religion was intrinsic to Armenian language and culture. This perception is even further reinforced with the physical arrangement of the schools. Since the schools are located within the same compound with a church, the cultural and educational space is also visually engaged with the church. They are often seen as two peas in a pod.

Furthermore, as much as sustaining its role in the construction of identity and setting boundaries of communal belonging, like schools, religion also maintains its function to draw people together in an Armenian architecture where people can reproduce cultural codes and speak Armenian. Although teachers often refer to their students as having weaker ties to the church, they acknowledge the role of churches in the sustainability of cultural identity. Even people who consider themselves as not religious do not categorically dissociate themselves from the church. They still participate in cultural activities such as being a part of a church choir or attending concerts, and this is also the case for high school students. A young high school graduate explained to me that although he was not interested in religious practices, he gladly wanted to be part of these events not only because they were great communal spaces to have fun but also, they were conducive to cultural sustainability:

“I used to go church choir practice regularly every Friday. I really liked it because it both gave me an excuse to go out every Friday night, and we were doing music there and it was really fun. But the

main reason was because I thought that if I didn't do this, didn't go there, who would go and maintain this?"¹⁶

The physical edifice of the church gives people a sense of cultural belonging, it speaks to cultural sustainability. That is why sharing the same physical space with schools, churches actually complement the abstract boundaries of cultural belonging because it forges the links between Armenian identity and space.

6.3.3 *Space*

Armenian identity's relation with space is very particular because Armenian culture is restrained within the space of its cultural institutions. In order to foreground the absence of vitality of Armenian cultural practices in public spaces as a result of Turkey's identity politics, Bilal (2007) portrays Armenian culture as only living within the confines of the Armenian community in Istanbul (p. 90). In such a context, special events and festivities become the few spaces where Armenian cultural practices and identity can be found by young Armenians who are often left without the means to reproduce Armenian culture (Bilal, 2007, p. 90). Having the considerable majority of the Armenian population¹⁷, with all schools and 35 out of 41 functioning churches, Istanbul almost always stands at the center of events and festivals, and establishes itself as the cultural space of the Armenian community. The meaning of this space weighs in Armenian identity. In her work focusing on the lullabies and other stories about being an Armenian in Turkey, Bilal (2006) focuses on the impact of space on creating memory. Moreover, in her later work unraveling the perception of Istanbul as a home for Armenians, she underscores the ties of Armenians to the place as it signifies centuries-long Armenian presence in Istan-

¹⁶ Citation from the interview I conducted with a fresh high school graduate in August 2019.

¹⁷ With the migration to abroad and to Istanbul continued until only a few families left behind in Anatolia, no schools and only a few churches and cultural institutions could function in Anatolia (Bilal, 2007, p. 57).

bul (Bilal, 2007). Having Armenian institutions in Istanbul like the Patriarchate, churches, schools, hospitals, cultural associations, choirs, folk dance groups in addition to various buildings of Ottoman architecture that were built by Armenian architects, Armenian cultural heritage and presence in Istanbul contributes to the feeling of belonging to the place (Bilal, 2007, p. 56).

With the soaring of migration from Anatolia to Istanbul over the years, Armenian presence and cultural sustainability has been almost exclusively identified with Istanbul, albeit the historical existence of Armenian cultural heritage spread throughout Anatolia. As the boundaries of cultural space overlap with Istanbul, Armenians predominantly preserve social and cultural life within the city. When choosing among universities in Turkey, most of the time Istanbul appears as the most popular option, and sometimes even only, as students do not prefer to drift apart from their community. In addition to the ties to the city, the Armenian population in Istanbul is concentrated in the neighborhoods where schools and churches function as the cultural centers of the community. In that sense, even by their physical presence the schools as much as the churches hold Armenians together where people could sustain social life in a space where communal belonging is embodied.

In the teacher lounges in one of the high schools, I was talking to a high school math teacher about the students who came from Anatolia to Istanbul to study. At some point, she brought up the difference in cultural practices between Istanbul and Anatolian cities based on a significant distinction between these two contexts. Having churches and schools in Istanbul to support the cultural life, she expressed her gratitude in celebrating holidays and practicing customs and traditions thanks to the cultural space that the city had to offer. It is imperative to say that this situation also reinforces the spatialization of Armenian culture by associating it with particular spaces and preserving it within the boundaries of semi-private spaces of the schools. It is often regarded among teachers that the transmission of cultural heritage and the sense of communal belonging through generations thrives on the schools. With the

schools standing at the center of cultural mobility, they keep the communal life intact. Whereas the schools struggle to persevere as bearers of Armenian culture, they are also reminders that Armenian culture is restrained within particular spaces.

The schools as physical buildings are a statement in itself. They are tangible markers of Armenian culture; a way for Armenians to say “we are here, we have been here”. As a representation of Armenian culture and existence, this image surfaces two different perspectives. While the visibility of schools is a way to substantiate Armenian culture on a daily basis to everyone who cares to see them, this visibility makes them open targets of hate crime. Whenever hate crimes towards Armenians soar the schools are assaulted in different forms of physical damage or most common expressions of hate speech written on their walls. That is why people I talked to during my fieldwork coming from different backgrounds expressed diverse opinions on the matter. Although in recent years for the Armenian community overall it has become more noteworthy to be visible and knowable to the larger society, the wariness in being within the sight has not withered away. As opposed to those who prefer to highlight Armenian schools and churches as visible markers of Armenian heritage and existence, the number of people who lean towards keeping these buildings under a veil of concealment to be safe is not to be underestimated.

In addition to being symbols of Armenian existence as a facade, especially for their students the schools are windows opening to an Armenian world. Nothing but by the means of the architecture of the school, students conceptually enter into Armenianness. First and foremost, the school mounts next to an Armenian church, designed in a way to reflect Armenian cultural codes, has a high ceiling, decorations on the walls, names of its founders on it, and old scripts showing which year it was constructed. The pin boards in school buildings and classrooms are decorated with photographs and biographies of Armenian scientists, writers or intellectuals with information in Armenian. They signify a conceptual space that students can emotionally engage with. Even though students are not competent or do not feel confident enough to speak Armenian,

the space helps them connect to a deep-rooted Armenian past. The schools provide the venue in which students get acquainted with a particular conception of the world that is inherent to the Armenian identity. Thereby, they establish their cultural and identity awareness in the past and bring this past into the present to engage with Armenian identity. The attachment of students to the past is one of the reasons why students pay homage to spaces of Armenian existence. Some of the students I talked to during my fieldwork expressed their emotional attachment to the space. As I already brought this up in Chapter 4, they spelled out that even though they go abroad for their education, they would like to return to Turkey to settle down in order to preserve Armenian cultural heritage and protect tangible culture (see Bilal 2007). It goes without saying that future prospects and intentions of students alter throughout their education and careers; however, their comments reflect their attachment to the space.

The sustainability and perseverance of culture can be found in the mundane details embedded in the educational field. That is why as opposed to nationalist policies or overwhelming influence of neoliberal lifestyles, the relevance of spaces of Armenian culture does not expire. I contend that as much as the Armenian schools endure as representations in which solidarity, identity, language, religion, and culture form an assemblage to perpetuate a space of communal belonging, Armenian culture can convey alternative envisagements in the new epoch. Despite the socio-political climate encircling the schools, the Armenian educational habitus does not cease to offer collective imaginations of culture. I suggest that this is what makes it possible to imagine the schools as spaces in between, mediating the complex interplay between reproduction and resistance in a communal setting.

Conclusion

The overall objective of this study was to unveil the extended story of the Armenian schools in Turkey and duly locate them in their current context. With that purpose, as much as examining the governing of the schools under the neoliberal yoke of educational currents in Turkey, the perspective of the study suggested embracing a rather comprehensive approach in order to portray the terrain of the schools in their historicity and relationality. The edifice spawning the Armenian schools was characterized with numerous factors impacting the ways how the schools acted as spaces of solidarity and cultural sustainability for the larger Armenian community. Throughout the chapters I showed that the schools were the embodiment of cultural apprehensions, communal politics, vicissitudes of the socio-political climate, networks of solidarity and means of cultural empowerment. I also argued that the schools were significant markers to grasp contemporary conundrums deep-rooted in the Armenian community in Turkey. Thereby, unfolding their present milieu, I contended that they mirrored new technologies of governing at a smaller scale by the educational tide socio-economic changes invoked.

In addition to their communal responsibility, I portrayed the Armenian schools bearing the brunt of centrally prepared curricula of the national education system and the pressure of the neoliberal educational

wind. Thereby, I examined the double-sided nature of the schools by depicting them within a habitus of education. Through the lenses of this habitus, I analyzed communally ingrained patterns and perceptions which eventually shaped the functioning of the schools at different levels. In this vein, unlike previous studies this study did not solely focus on administrative, bureaucratic or regulatory processes that restricted and defined the governing of the schools within the limits of state apparatuses, but challenged these arguments by studying the relation of the schools to their surrounding atmosphere more profoundly and pinpointed the need to foreground the dialogue among different actors and spheres in the Armenian educational field. I insisted that this story was in need of telling because the educational habitus of the Armenian community exhibited key focal points to grasp recurring themes, conflicts, and predicaments deep-rooted in history that were now inherent to the edifice of the Armenian community in Turkey. I suggested that with the perspective I employed not only the educational sphere but also the complexity of the social context of Turkey could be addressed. The study of the Armenian schools reminded us of the fact that the viability of cultural diversity should be sought in multilayered and cross-cutting themes expanding throughout different spheres of political, economic and social life. In that regard, the theoretical framework of this study carves out new spaces to discuss not only the cultural or educational rights of Armenians in Turkey, but also provides a larger framework to revisit minority studies, citizenships practices or democratic demands with reference to the social dynamics of our time.

With that objective I started presenting this study with a concise description of the historical formation and transformation of the schools as they were restructured with reference to the educational refashioning of the modernization process. Throughout the second chapter, while I composed the remodeling of the schools within the tide of global political developments, I elucidated the background story of how the present status of the schools was engineered in the course of their history. Whereas the overall objective of this second chapter was to tell the historical backdrop of the schools, it also served a crucial aim and showed that some of the

bottlenecks of the existing precarious status of the schools were rooted in their past. As much as underlining the significance of examining the historical context engulfing the Armenian schools as a necessary component to grasp their current dilemmas, I also emphasized that this perspective was not sufficient to see the larger framework the schools resided in. We needed to capture the exigencies and contingencies of the era and discuss the schools in their larger habitus. The second chapter endorsed what I articulated in the introduction and later reiterated in the following chapters, that one of the motives of this study was to analyze the schools in their particular time and space. Therefore, it underscored the fact that the schools were responsive to recent developments and were in fact substantially impacted by the neoliberal shift in the educational realm, the demise of cultural diversity amidst the affluence of popular expressions of a global identity or new technologies of governing.

In order to locate the Armenian schools in the larger national education system and to further unravel their status, in the third chapter I examined the governing of the Armenian schools in consideration of the transformation of the mentality of governance and reconfigurations of power in the age of neoliberalism. In doing so, I challenged the image of an all-encompassing repressive state which was presumed to have comprehensive decision-making processes in order to meticulously regulate the minority schools. Thereby, I refused to land on arguments which saw a straightforward relationship between the nation state and the Armenian schools. I contended that despite its image, the Turkish state did not calculate every detail regarding the Armenian schools. Instead, I preferred to use the term “meandering state” to address the state apparatus whose discourses and actions meandered with reforms, improvements and ambiguities. The perpetuation of this meandering state, I further argued, referred to multiple ways of governing and subsumed both forms of sovereign power and governmentality, precision and ambiguity, continuity and rupture. While the sovereign power that was historically constructed on Turko-Islamic precepts employed new mechanisms performing through legal ambiguity, it also paired with disciplinary technologies

of governmentality as they penetrated into quotidian practices of the schools and transformed how people thought and behaved.

In the fourth chapter, I explained the other side of the medallion and spelled out how the Armenian schools contributed to the empowering networks that helped the ways Armenian culture and identity endure. I foregrounded that scrutinizing the Armenian schools did not only address how communal places provided paramount means to sustain the existence of conceptual spaces of communal belonging, but also, they contributed to the resilience of this conceptual space while the regime tried to eliminate community-based social structures standing on the way of engineering a direct link from the individual to the nation state. I discussed how the governmentality of this communal space performed in its particular ways. I described this space with reference to a familial culture because it was reminiscent of familial relations and forms of intimacy. In this manner, as much as unpacking networks of solidarity, the chapter challenged the opacity of the boundaries of private and communal spheres and questioned the ways power performed in a family-like atmosphere.

With the purpose of filling the gaps between two stories told in chapter three and four, chapter 5 focused on intra-communal governing mechanisms, administrative networks and the operation of the foundation boards since these aspects impacted the functioning of the schools in many respects from their quotidian practices to structural matters. By discussing communal dynamics, my objective was to present different layers and variegated aspects of the edifice engulfing the schools and tell the story as subtly and as comprehensively as possible. Nuancing the family allegory that I used in the former chapter, this chapter probed the ways the notables of the community influenced the educational field by their involvement. I showed that their involvement in educational affairs often undergirded the consolidation of neoliberal precepts as well as the state effect in the Armenian educational field.

For the comprehensiveness of the larger study, in the final chapter I illuminated contemporary articulations of Armenian identity and culture

in the current socio-political context of Turkey. As I analyzed the sustainability of Armenian cultural life within the edifice of the schools the way it was interpreted at intra-communal and individual levels, I drew attention to the existence of discourses, comments, practices and interpretations taking place off-stage that either confirmed or contradicted with the public transcript within the schools. Deciphering the ways teachers, administrators or parents conceptualized Armenian identity and the challenges that Armenian culture experienced in this particular setting, I remarked how self-meaning morphed in accordance with paradigm shifts in the domestic and global contexts as much as it was molded by the collective trauma of the past. As regards, my objective in this final chapter was to underscore that Armenian identity was not a constant reality. Rather, I suggested grasping Armenian culture and identity with reference to its spatiality and temporality, since its main constituents were recurrently challenged by prevailing precepts of the era.

Reiterating my initial research question here once again, in a couple of sentences I would like to recapitulate what the chapters explaining the habitus of education have already discussed previously. The larger objective of this research was to bring answers to the question of to what extent the Armenian schools in Turkey served as spaces of cultural empowerment, solidarity and cultural sustainability in providing the means and a particular conception of world for the Armenian community, despite the fact that the nationalist and centralized education system in Turkey marginalized Armenian culture and disposed the schools at the periphery of the education system on a rule of exceptions. My fieldwork showed that the answer to this question was multilayered and required to look at an assemblage of multiple factors in the economic, political and social terrain of Turkey. By my analysis, I contend that the space in which Armenian culture abides, if not blossoms, how people conceive the world, how they behave, think or speak is not fully surrounded, engirdled or encompassed by the nation state or it is not completely enmeshed within the dominant discourse. It is indeed possible to locate terrains of empowerment, resistance or endurance. I argue that by playing a role in the perpetuation of this educational habitus, the Armenian schools contribute to

safeguarding the sense of latitude which allows sustaining Armenian culture and identity. The schools have a significant share in the reproduction and reconceptualization of these processes.

Furthermore, the line of thinking in answering my research question highlights a meaningful inference in that it demonstrates that the challenges which Armenian cultural sustainability faces today is not so straightforward. I conclude that one of the most suggestive takeaways from this analysis is that it proposes to question straightforward or linear links between events, actors or processes to read the larger picture. The challenges and predicaments that the Armenian schools or the Armenian educational sphere experience cannot be sought within the bare boundaries of state institutions. This line of thinking also applies to other studies trying to unpack meaning in social life. In that regard, this study offers a new perspective for minority studies as its approach highlights the significance of grasping social and cultural aspects and relations including precarious and complex domains.

The interplay between reproduction and resistance does not always appear in conflicting ways. Sometimes these processes are observed in ambiguous ways blended to each other. I contend that with new conceptions of the world, what we understand by governing also changes. I do not see the processes of empowerment, solidarity, sustainability, exclusion, assimilation or dominance as opposed to each other. In this manner, the lenses that the habitus of education offers help us see the complexity, multivalence and circularity of the phenomena which define and construct the space of the Armenian schools. With that objective, the perspective I employ throughout the text suggests to juxtapose these processes and read them simultaneously. This perspective, I contend, underscores the essentiality to interpret multipartite, manifold, active, engaged and malleable characteristics of the educational field of the Armenian schools. That is why it refuses to see Armenian educational and cultural life as a stable essentialized entity. As much as the schools address daily activities, encounters or relations of people, the factors that can portray them should be pursued in regular details of state of affairs. Instead of discussing the Armenian schools in compartmentalized topics

of discussion, which is usually categorized under minority studies, this study suggests reading the subject within broader frameworks which can reflect the expansiveness of paradigm shifts. As this analysis highlights the extent neoliberalism and the schemas of thought it introduced are embedded in various spheres of life, it offers a meaningful departure point to capture how power performs in this particular time and space.

The study highlights the fact that cultural sustainability of local cultures is challenged by the social reworking of neoliberalism and global marketing practices. In this age, sustainability is a cross-cutting trending topic on the agenda of not only academic and research institutions but also non-governmental organizations, businesses, states or intergovernmental institutions. The discussions regarding cultural sustainability become more relevant and significant in understanding the future of local cultures that strive to endure in a dominant majority culture or against the social reconfigurations of the new era.

Having said that, one of the novelties of this research is to identify the paucity of perspectives that see Armenian studies relational to challenges that neoliberalism, globalization or governmentalization bring for this particular context. We need to discuss the factors that impact how and to what extent Armenian cultural practices and heritage survive in the future and how Armenian cultural sustainability can be reconceptualized in the light of these developments. This research has already unveiled the intensity of the interaction between cultural sustainability and economic globalization at the small scale of the Armenian schools. It also underlines the need to ruminate and pursue aspects which would define the future of Armenian culture on a larger scale. The implication of this study highlights the need to analyze the ways Armenian culture and identity is reimagined by different actors in the Armenian community. It indicates the need to discuss the topics I referred to within the educational field in a larger framework so that the predicaments that Armenian culture encountered today would be comprehensively analyzed. Understanding Armenian cultural sustainability demands the expansion of the range of study and visiting other spaces of cultural production.

Writ large this story tells us that our conceptual lenses need to be remodeled in a way to grasp the veracity of contemporary challenges and capture the sophistication of daily life. There is a need to reconstruct, reframe and renarrate currents of socio-political structure and socio-cultural life. The issues that I raised throughout the chapters to describe the milieu of the Armenian schools actually resonate in different settings in a similar way. Therefore, the theoretical framework I used can be adopted in various areas in order to address the intersections of economic, political and social fields. Throughout the chapters, I showed that society, community and individuals act in harmonious ways and their power dynamics interact with each other. The lenses we are equipped with should also see the fluidity between these levels of analysis.

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