

GYPSIES, THE ROMA AND JUSTICE CLAIMS: THE CASE OF LÜLEBURGAZ

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2008

GYPSIES, THE ROMA AND JUSTICE CLAIMS:THE CASE OF LÜLEBURGAZ

Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Political Science and International Relations

by

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Boğaziçi University

2008

Thesis Abstract

Begüm Uzun, “Gypsies, the Roma and Justice Claims: The Case of Lüleburgaz”

The Gypsy/Roma communities in Europe have turned into an intense area of focus both at the international level and in academic circles in the last decade. In Turkey, the revival of interest with the Urban Regeneration projects that demolished the Roma settlements along with others in different parts of Turkey; the persistent references to the disadvantaged position of the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey in the EU progress reports and the increasing tendency of the Turkish Roma to get organized have also attracted considerable media and academic attention in the recent years in particular and have led to the increasing involvement of NGOs in the projects targeting the Gypsy/Roma communities in different parts of Turkey. In the light of these developments (which I call the “Europeanization of the Gypsy/Roma issue”), my thesis is an attempt to focus on a seriously understudied region of Turkey- the Kuştepe and Altıyol districts of Lüleburgaz (a town in the Thrace region in the northwest Turkey where a considerably large number of people defined as Gypsy/Roma by the majority population are living.). By utilizing data obtained through in-depth interviews, informal focus groups and participant observation in these districts, this research explores the current socioeconomic status of the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts and how they perceive their own identity as well as how they respond/what kind of politics they entail to cope with their marginalization. I argue that the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts constitute the local manifestation of racism towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey and thus should be identified as “a racialized group” in terms of their political, economic and social marginalization. What is striking, however, in the case of Lüleburgaz, is that the residents of the districts perceive being a Gypsy/Roma not as an ethnic affiliation but as a social/cultural and class position and develop ways to get rid of their perceived subaltern position. In this context, the main focus of my thesis is how the survival/coping strategies of the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts have been replaced with their claims to justice. On the one hand, at the discursive level, by perceiving being a Gypsy/Roma as a subaltern position instead of ethnic affiliation and by sheltering strategically within the Islamic identity, I assert that their justice claims, at the discursive level, entail having access to employment, education, better housing and welfare benefits as equal Turkish citizens. On the other hand, however, that discursive strategy has been accompanied and somehow transformed at the action level by getting organized under Roma associations which are supposed to take action against the injustices towards them on the basis of Roma ethnic identity. In this sense, though conflicting and competing in nature with regard to citizenship, those justice claims are the strategies which strikingly reflect their increasing demands for integration with the larger society.

Key Words: Gypsy, Roma, racism, racialisation, justice

Tez Özeti

Begüm Uzun, “Çingener, Romanlar ve Adalet Talepleri:Lüleburgaz Örneği”

Geçtiğimiz on yılda, Avrupa’daki Çingene/Roman toplulukları hem uluslararası siyasette hem de akademik yazında ilgi odağı haline geldi. Türkiye’de ise Kentsel Dönüşüm Projeleriyle ülkenin farklı yerlerinde pek çok Roman yerleşiminin yıkılması, Avrupa Birliği’nin Türkiye İlerleme Raporlarında ,Türkiye’deki Romanların dezavantajlı durumuna ısrarla referans verilmesi, Türkiye’li Romanların son yıllarda artan şekilde Roman Dernekleri altında örgütlenmeleri medya ve akademinin Çingene/Romanlara ilgisini arttırırken;pekçok sivil toplum kuruluşu da Romanların sosyoekonomik durumunu iyileştirmeyi hedefleyen projeler geliştirdiler. Bu gelişmeler ışığında, (Çingene/Roman meselesinin “Avrupalılaşması” olarak adlandırdığım süreçte) bu tez, Lüleburgaz ilçesinin (Trakya’nın kuzeybatısında yer alan ve ilçe halkı tarafından Çingene olarak tanımlanan topluluğun yoğun olarak yerleşmiş olduğu ilçe) Altıyol ve Kuştepe mahallerine odaklanmaktadır.Derinlemesine mülakatlar, enformal odak grupları ve katılımcı gözlem yoluyla, araştırmam Altıyol ve Kuştepe mahallesi sakinlerinin –ilçe halkı tarafından Çingene olarak tanımlanan topluluğun- sosyoekonomik durumunu, kendi kimliklerini nasıl algıladıklarını ve uğradıkları sosyal dışlanmayla başetmek için nasıl yollar geliştirdiklerini saptamaktadır. Altıyol ve Kuştepe mahallesinde yaşayan topluluğun, Türkiye’de Çingene/Roman’lara yönelik “ırkçı söylemin” yerel tezahürü olduğunu iddia ediyorum. Ancak, Lüleburgaz örneğinde, asıl çarpıcı olan, Altıyol ve Kuştepe mahallesi sakinlerinin Çingene/Roman olmayı etnik bir kimlikten ziyade, sosyal/kültürel ve sınıfsal bir statü olarak algılamaları ve bu statünün yarattığı “maduniyet haliyle” baş etme yolları aramalarıdır. Bu çerçevede bu tez, Altıyol ve Kuştepe mahallesi sakinlerinin maduniyetlerini aşmak için geliştirdikleri hayatta kalma/idare etme stratejilerinin yerini adalet taleplerinin almasına odaklanmaktadır. Altıyol ve Kuştepe mahallesi sakinleri, söylemsel düzeyde, Çingene/Roman olmayı yoksullukla özdeşleştirip müslüman kimliklerine yoğun şekilde atıf yaparak adalet taleplerini eğitim,iş, konut ve diğer sosyal yardım imkanlarına eşit Türk vatandaşları olarak erişebilmek şeklinde kurmaktadırlar. Diğer taraftan ise Roman dernekleri altında örgütlenerek “Roman etnik kimliği” üzerinden adalet taleplerini dile getirmektedirler. Her ne kadar, söylemsel ve pratik düzeydeki adalet talepleri vatandaşlıkla ilişkileri göz önüne alındığında çelişkili gözükse de Altıyol ve Kuştepe mahallesi sakinlerinin artan adalet talepleri onların topluma entegre olma ve sosyal dışlanmalarını aşma isteklerinin göstergesidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çingene, Roman, ırkçılık,ırksallaştırma, adalet

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people without the support and collaboration of whom this study could not be completed. Firstly, I want to give my special thanks to my advisor, Prof. Dr. Yeşim Arat for her insightful comments, her enthusiasm in my project and her ever-motivating stance. It was a great experience to work with her. I am greatly indebted to my jury members, Assist. Prof. Murat Akan and Koray Çalışkan for their invaluable comments which enabled me to sharpen my mind and reexamine my questions.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my interviewees, the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts, for allowing me to merge into their lives and houses, for sharing their experiences and feelings with me. Mehmet Abi, my dear friend, deserves special thanks for introducing me to my interviewees and enabling the interviews.

I am especially grateful to my mother and father, Sevinç and Attila Uzun. They have always respected my decisions, always encouraged and motivated me during hard times. My little sister, Bengü, deserves special thanks. During the days and nights when I was writing the thesis, she was there to make me laugh during our coffee breaks.

During 2006- 2007, I benefited from the graduate scholarship of “National Scholarship Programme for MSc Students” granted by TÜBİTAK (Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu). I want to express my gratitude for their financial support which better enabled me to conduct my research in a more thorough manner.

I owe gratitude to my colleagues at IB 203 (the assistants’ room!), Duygu, Yasin Kaya, Taylan, Levent, Aslı, Özlem, Gül and Aslı E. Their comments and support made the hard times more bearable. I am especially grateful to Ümit, who helped me to translate the narratives of my interviewees into English.

I am grateful to my friends, Esra and Seçil. The hardest times of writing the thesis became more bearable thanks to our “abreaction ceremonies” in which we shared our writing experiences and motivated each other. Our long discussions to unravel the uncertainties of life reminded me of the necessity of having real companions in the world of confusion and complexity. My dear friend, Işıl, was always besides me. During long coffee sessions, she gave her support and never gave up motivating me. Without the encouragement of Nil and our tea-talks at *manzara*, writing the thesis would have been a more painful experience. And, my dear Esra İçen, besides your motivating voice in our phone calls and your never-ending confidence in me; to feel your existence in my life was always a source of inspiration.

And Yüksel... Not to mention your insightful comments and editing my writing, your presence was alone the source of motivation and hope. All the times in Beykoz and Kadıköy, watching the Bosphorus, have led me to grasp the life even more passionately. As you said: “The real revolution that ever happened, is within us”.

To Gypsies,

Long-time wanderers of the world

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The story of Gypsy/Roma communities in Europe has been one of pain and disaster. While they were scattered throughout Europe in various stages of migration, they are now mostly populate Southeastern Europe and Turkey. As peoples, without a homeland (and a nation-state in its modern form), they have been subject to exclusion, state oppression and stereotyping by the majority ethnic groups in countries where they have settled down. The Nazi persecution of Gypsy/Roma had long been neglected and disguised until the last decades. Under the communist regimes, a significant portion of Gypsies/Roma were given access to employment and housing. Nevertheless, they were still subject to strict assimilationist policies.¹ It was only after the collapse of communism in Europe that the socioeconomic status of Gypsy/Roma communities and the various forms of oppression imposed upon them have become more visible.

The status of the Gypsy/Roma community in Turkey seems to be even more complicated. Scattered around almost every region of Turkey, they have been subject to various forms of exclusion. Lacking access to social services, many of them are living under desperate conditions and struggling with poverty. Besides, they are also shouldering the burden of being condemned by the state and the majority ethnic group in Turkey. From the Ottoman times until today, the Gypsy/Roma community in Turkey have been neglected, marginalized and treated as an “undeserving” people. There are

¹ Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995), p.14.

several trends, however, that have recently led to the increasing academic and media attention in the status of the Gypsy/Roma community in Turkey.

First is the Urban Regeneration Projects cooperated by TOKİ (Housing Development Administration of Turkey) and municipalities in big cities with the aim of renewing old debris of cities. Within the context of Urban Regeneration Projects, starting in 2005 Roma settlements in the Sulukule, Kağıthane, Gaziosmanpaşa, Küçükbakkalköy and Kuştepe districts of Istanbul; were demolished. The places demolitions took place were the long-time settlements of the Gypsy/Roma community in Istanbul. In those regions, Gypsy/Roma residents usually sold their houses to the municipalities for a small amount of money and began to live in tents waiting for the new apartments to be built for them. Not only in İstanbul but also in Ankara, Bursa, Mersin, Izmit and Zonguldak, Gypsy/Roma settlements were demolished by municipalities for the sake of Urban Regeneration. The ongoing projects have not displaced only Gypsies/Roma from their settlements. There are many groups that have been aggrieved by the demolitions. However, due to their ever- marginalized status, Gypsy/Roma community has become further disadvantaged and have become an area of focus. The struggle against the demolitions undertaken by *Sulukule Platformu* (Sulukule Platform) and *Sulukule Roman Derneği* (Sulukule Roma Association) have also contributed to the increasing public interest in the issue.

Another trend that created curiosity in Turkey has been increasing attempts by Gypsies/Roma for establishing organizations. According to the statistics of 2006, in 12 cities, there are a total of 40 Roma organizations. In 2005, the organizations established in Adana, Mersin, Izmir, Bartın, Balıkesir Ivrindi, Tekirdağ Malkara, Kırklareli

Lüleburgaz, Edirne, Keşan and Lalapaşa came together and organized under *Roman Dernekleri Federasyonu-ROMDEF*(Federation of Roma Associations). ROMDEF is also an active participant in the Platform of European Roma Immigrants which is a subcommission within the European Commission. The second federation of Roma organizations, *Anadolu Roman Dernekleri Federasyonu* (Federation of Anatolia Roma Associations) was established in May, 2006 with the engagement of organizations in Çanakkale, İzmir, Dikili, Aydın and Kuşadası. ²

After Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate for full EU membership in 1999; the regular reports of 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 on Turkey's Progress towards Accession and after negotiations were officially started between the EU and Turkey in 2005; the progress reports of 2005, 2006 and 2007 recurrently mentioned the Roma community in Turkey.³ Under the title of "*Minority Rights and Protection of Minorities*", the EU gave insights on the situation of the Roma community in Turkey. Reports until 2006 persistently focus on the Law of Settlement adopted in 1934 which identifies nomadic gypsies among the five categories of people not admitted to Turkey as immigrants.⁴ When the term "gypsy" was abandoned by the law in 2006, it was marked as a progressive move.⁵ However, it is stated that "Law on foreigners residing

² *Radikal*,30 June 2006.

³ For further information see: <http://www.ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives>.

⁴European Union, 9 November 2002, *2002 Regular Report (on Turkey)*, available(online):<http://www.ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives>; European Union, 8 November 2003, *2003 Regular Report (on Turkey)*, available (online): www.ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives; European Union, 6 October 2004,*2004 Regular Report(on Turkey)*, available(online): <http://www.ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives>.

⁵ European Union,8 November 2006, *2006 Progress Report(on Turkey)*, available (online):<http://www.ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives>.

and travelling in Turkey which contains discriminatory provisions on Roma, particularly as regards extradition.” is still in force.⁶

In addition to these points, the Roma communities’ restricted access to housing; education; social protection; health and employment are other recurring themes. The reports of 2006 and 2007 also mention the Urban Regeneration process in Sulukule and other cities of Turkey and regard demolitions as “forced evictions” of Roma from their neighborhood.⁷ EU’s commitment to the protection of minority rights is at stake in the reports regarding Turkey. What is worth mentioning is the fact that reports on Turkey under the title “*Minority Rights and Protection of Minorities*” mention only Kurds and the Roma community as the unjustly treated ethnic groups.⁸ It is obvious that Turkey counters the Roma problem with respect to the process identified below as Europeanization of Roma issue. Turkey having a considerable number of Roma people⁹ seems to be under the close observation of the Union along with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Having a determined stance for the unity of the nation-state, Turkey has long had problems in terms of fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria on religious and ethnic minorities. Due to that uncompromising position, since 2001 -except the amendment on the Law of Settlement- Turkey has neglected the alerts of the EU

⁶ European Union, 6 November 2007, *2007 Progress Report(on Turkey)*, available (online):<http://www.ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives>.

⁷ European Union, 2006, p.24; European Union, 2007, pp.22-23.

⁸ Jews, Armenians and Greeks are also focused on regularly under the same title. However, their status differs from those of Kurds and Roma, since they were accepted as legal “non-“muslim” minority groups with the Treaty of Lausanne(1923).

⁹ As stated in 2005 Progress Report, Roma population in Turkey is estimated at between 500 000 and 2 000 000. For more information see: European Union,9 November 2005, *2005 Progress Report(on Turkey)*, available (online):<http://www.ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives>.

regarding Roma communities. It is likely that the following progress reports will continue to give reference to the Roma community in Turkey. If Turkey keeps its stance for being a full EU member, it will no longer be able to turn a blind eye to the alerts of the EU regarding its Roma community.

Interestingly, however, their marginalization in life has also been paralleled in the absence of satisfactory research about the various aspects of the Gypsy/ Roma community. In this sense, well-structured academic works which will uncover the marginalized status of Gypsy/Roma communities in Turkey as well as which will provide reliable statistical data on Roma in the absence of official documents are of utmost importance. Those works will shed light for –hopefully- upcoming measures towards increasing the socioeconomic status of Roma communities in Turkey.

My thesis will be an attempt to fill this gap by focusing on a seriously understudied region of Turkey- the Kuştepe and Altıyol districts of Lüleburgaz. This is a town in the region of Thrace in the northwest Turkey where a considerably large number of people defined as Gypsies by the majority population are living. By utilizing data obtained through in-depth interviews, informal focus groups and participant observation in these districts, this research will explore the current socioeconomic status of the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe and how they perceive their own identity as well as how they respond/what kind of politics they entail to cope with their marginalization.

Main Argument and Theoretical Observations: Ambiguous Identities, Justice Claims,
Democracy

I argue that the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts are objects of the local manifestation of racism towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey and thus should be identified as “a racialized group” in terms of their political, economic and social marginalization. What is striking, however, in the case of Lüleburgaz, is to observe how the survival/coping strategies of the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts have been replaced with their claims to justice. On the one hand, at the discursive level, by perceiving being a Gypsy/Roma as a subaltern position instead of ethnic affiliation and by sheltering strategically within the Islamic identity, they are posing their justice claims within the accepted parameters of the Turkish citizenship. Opposing their discrimination on the basis of Gypsiness, their justice claims, at the discursive level, entail having access to employment, education, better housing and welfare benefits as equal Turkish citizens.

On the other hand, however, that discursive strategy has been accompanied and somehow transformed at the action level by getting organized under Roma associations which are supposed to take action against the injustices towards them on the basis of Roma ethnic identity. In this sense, though conflicting and competing in nature with regard to citizenship, those justice claims are the strategies which strikingly reflect their increasing demands for integration with the larger society. Therefore, the case of

Lüleburgaz also poses significant questions regarding the relationship between justice and identity in contemporary democracies.

While the collapse of communism was celebrated by anti- Marxists as the “victory of liberal democracy” (and along with it capitalism and modern citizenship); the ethnic minorities and women in the West from the early 1970s on have increasingly questioned the notion of equal citizenship of liberal democracies. They discredit the notion of “all equal” since, in fact, it has been those “white, middle class men” who have so far enjoyed the benefits of modern citizenship. Those who have been excluded have not been the agents, but the sufferers within nation-states.¹⁰ On the other hand, with the collapse of communism, new multiethnic nation-states came into existence in Southeast Europe and in the countries which were once the members of the Soviet Union. Now it was the time for ethnic identities which were once suppressed under the umbrella of “communist identity” to become more visible. Therefore, marginalized and excluded groups within nation-states (either communist or democratic in governance) - ethnic and religious minorities, women, gays and lesbians – pushed their demands against the universalist understanding of modern citizenship. Taylor, Kymlicka and Honneth identify that shift from universalism to particularity as “recognition demands”.¹¹ For

¹⁰ I borrowed the term sufferers from Arendt, who claims in *Human Condition* that modern men are not only agents but also the sufferers of their lives. For a detailed account see: Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

¹¹ Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso Publications, 2003); Will Kymlicka, “Multiculturalism”, in *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, edited by Will Kymlicka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Charles Taylor, “Multiculturalism and ‘The politics of recognition’”, in *Multiculturalism : Examining the Politics of Recognition* edited by Amy Gutmann (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, c1994).

Taylor, with the politics of difference, “what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else.”¹²

However, those multiculturalist liberals (Taylor, Kymlicka and Honneth) were criticized for reducing identity claims merely to recognition. As Young argues, the “victory of the liberal democracy” along with a shift from universalism to particularity also has its drawbacks. Contemporary democracies are producing structural inequalities such as inequalities of wealth, social and economic power, access to knowledge, status and work expectations. Those structural inequalities, social and economic in kind, are not only supporting domination but also leading to political inequality. Therefore, Young argues, formally democratic procedures usually marginalize the voices and issues of those less privileged.¹³ In this sense, Young argues that structural relations of power, resource allocation and discursive hegemony embedded in contemporary democracies (as well as non-democracies) lead excluded groups to engage in political struggles. However, those struggles should hardly be defined as identity politics claiming solely cultural recognition. Claims of oppressed groups to cultural recognition are usually *means* for getting rid of domination and deprivation. Marginalized groups do not only seek recognition for their distinct identities, but they also have rising demands for social, political and economic inclusion due to the various types of oppression they face.¹⁴ Therefore, Young identifies those struggles as “politics of difference” which she supposes would be more encompassing than the term identity politics.

¹² Taylor, p.34.

¹³ Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2002), p.34.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp.102-107.

Young's account of "politics of difference" makes sense when the justice claims of the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts are concerned. Though conflicting and competing in terms of their claims to citizenship, their justice claims reflect their demands for political, social and economic inclusion. Cultural recognition -despite the long-standing misrecognition of Gypsiness-, does not predominate their justice claims. Even getting organized under Roma associations -which I will be discussing in the upcoming chapters-, is to overcome the marginality and deprivation their subaltern position bears in itself.

How democracy may bring about inclusion for those already excluded and silenced constitute, another realm of discussion when the justice claims of those marginalized groups are concerned. Despite various mechanisms of oppression that the contemporary democracies impose upon the less privileged, democracy also bears possibilities for a heterogeneous public sphere which would enable distinct groups to raise their justice claims. Nancy Fraser criticizes Habermas's notion of a single bourgeois public sphere where deliberation of interests is made possible without the interference of the state and offers a plurality of competing publics. For Fraser, "these *subaltern counterpublics* would enable subordinated social groups to invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs"¹⁵ As Young claims, such heterogeneous public sphere that democracy allows mostly comes to existence through the "self-organizing activities" of the civil society. By establishing voluntary

¹⁵ Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interrupts Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist Condition* (New York:Routledge, 1997), p.81.

associations, the marginalized groups may “sustain self-development, by supporting identity and voice, facilitating innovative or minority practices, providing some goods and services”¹⁶

The recent self-organizing activities of the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe offer significant insights concerning the possibility of whether voluntary associations of civil society may carry the capacity to give voice to the justice claims of the excluded. In this sense, my aim will be twofold in the thesis: on the one hand, I will attempt to display the ways that the residents of Kuştepe and Altiyol have started to raise their justice claims at the discursive and action level, since the overall structural impediments have made it harder to keep old strategies of survival that have so far enabled their existence within their subaltern position. On the other hand, I will be focusing on the shift/the transformation in voicing their justice claims with regard to the conflicting/competing construction of their justice claims at the discursive and action level. I will discuss the crucial question of whether getting organized under Roma associations has the capacity to make them “agents” in the public sphere to more efficiently express their demands of integration. Keeping a critical stance in terms of the limits of the activities of civil society which is completely detached from the state, and the processes and mechanisms and trends which led those organizations to be established, I will also discuss the tensions between the strategies of the residents when raising their justice claims as well as the prospects and drawbacks of those strategies which may lead to a more radical transformation in the future in terms of claims to justice.

¹⁶ Young, p.165.

Methodology

The Gypsy/Roma communities have been living in almost every region of Turkey. Though different in number and cultural/linguistics characteristics, one can encounter people who define themselves as Gypsy/Roma or who have been defined by the majority as such in most parts of Turkey. However, my own research concentrates on Lüleburgaz where a large number of people defined as “Gypsies” by the majority of the town or who define themselves as such are living. Lüleburgaz is selected as the focus of the case study for several reasons:

First of all, Lüleburgaz is an old settlement which has been hosting its Gypsy/Roma population for centuries. The Gypsy/Roma in the town have been an integral part of the local community constituting an economic niche through their traditional occupations and skills. Secondly, the Gypsy/Roma’s contribution to the local economy in Lüleburgaz, however, has been declining since their traditional occupations have begun to be discredited in a growing capitalist economy of the town. The dynamics of that process deserve further attention, since the Gypsy/Roma in Lüleburgaz have become further disadvantaged while the new comers to Lüleburgaz (the Kurds and Turks from Bulgaria) are able to find new opportunities for economic integration. Departing from the case of Lüleburgaz, it would be possible, I suppose, to examine how different ethnic groups in Turkey are constructed at the discourse level and which criteria apply to them when the distribution of the resources is concerned.

Finally, Lüleburgaz is the town where I have grown up and lived for many years. In those years, I had the chance to closely observe the Gypsy/Roma community of the town. Despite their condemnation by the larger society as well as all the difficulties they are forced to shoulder, I am particularly inspired by their somehow stubborn grasping of life (and their surprising passion for life). This is why I am still trying to merge deeply into their lives. My affiliation with Lüleburgaz was also an important asset in conducting a satisfactory fieldwork. For all those reasons, I suppose, Lüleburgaz is a convenient place for a case-study which will provide some answers to the main research questions of the proposed study.

Altıyol and Kuştepe districts are two nearby neighbourhoods where my research was carried out. Those are the districts that the others-the majority of the town- label as “Gypsy settlements” and avoid stepping in if not necessary. The districts, though adjacent to the town centre, are not preferred for settlement. Those districts are separated from each other, on the other hand, by “ambivalent” borders. In Altıyol district, residents are those who usually work as musicians, whereas in Kuştepe “occupational diversity” can be observed. Musicians, porters, garbage collectors are among the residents of this district. In both districts, the settlements are usually small single-houses, but at the outskirts of Kuştepe there are several families living in tents made of wood and plastic.

In my field work, two interrelated processes were investigated: First, understanding the dynamics/practices/mechanisms/modes of conduct which are at work to construct the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts of Lüleburgaz as a “racialized entity.” Second, understanding the ways that the residents are raising justice claims to get rid of their subaltern position due to their prolonged racialisation at the state, societal level and in

the local economy of the town. For collecting the data required, the qualitative methods of in-dept interviews, informal focus groups and participant observation were chosen. I conducted the fieldwork starting in January 2007 and the research continued with ebbs and flows until January 2008.

At the beginning of the research what I had in mind was to find a household in the district and conduct in-dept interviews with its members. In the next step, I was planning to continue the household interviews through snowballing. However, such a strategy did not work after I had engaged in fieldwork. I could not find any possible contact to conduct the first household interview.

While pondering on ways of conducting interviews, I met Mehmet Abi, a musician who defines himself as “Roma” and resides in Altiyol district. He is also the ex-vice president of one of the Roma associations in Lüleburgaz. We engaged in long talks on the situation of Roma in Turkey and it was after those talks and after I attempted to build confidence in him that he helped me in arranging interviews and informal focus groups in both districts. Face-to- face interviews turned to be possible from then on. Wandering in the districts, I usually talked with people in coffeehouses, in front of their houses and sometimes in the city-bazaar where some were working every Monday. During those interviews, I faced two main problems regularly. When I started talking to someone, a friend or member of his/her family usually interrupted us and intervened in the conversation. Such occasions led to the splits and breaks in the narratives of my interviews, upsetting the way the interviewees were to talk about their own experiences. Secondly, despite his enabling role in finding interviewees, Mehmet Abi usually tried to manipulate my interviews by asking his own questions and/or provoking the

interviewees for statements “a stranger sympathetically engaging in the Gypsy/Roma issue” would most likely wish to hear! Indeed, without his introduction me to the residents of the districts, it would have been quite hard to conduct the research.

What I call “informal focus groups” were mass conversations I engaged in with the male residents in coffeehouses or with women in front of the houses. These were “informal”, because these were mostly “simultaneous, unplanned, sudden” occasions which emerged when I had started to talk to someone in the coffeehouses or in front of the settlements. The routinized experience was that several others usually came and engaged in talk and after some time we usually became a large group discussing enthusiastically on the hardships of life in Altıyol and Kuştepe. Unlike a well-designed focus group, I had no structured style to control the conversations. Nevertheless, they were usually shaped through my questions, ponderings and partial interventions.

The most convenient informal focus groups took place when my Roma friend Mehmet Abi attempted to establish a Kuştepe-based Roma association. In his contacts to establish the organization, two mass gatherings in Kuştepe –one with men and another with women- were organized. In those meetings, the residents of Kuştepe talked about a range of issues from their lack of education to the high level of unemployment in Kuştepe, their treatment in local state institutions to their concerns regarding their children’s future. In this sense, they discussed how a Roma association may contribute to them in terms of voicing their demands to the state and getting rid of their marginalized status. In those meetings, I was given the role of a moderator and also was allowed to ask questions related to my own research.

Wandering in the districts and visiting the houses when invited in, engaging in the discussions in coffeehouses regarding getting organized were the pillars of the research that enabled the participant observation. Besides that, in order to have a general picture of Roma mobilization in Turkey which would shed light on my analyses regarding the Roma associations in Lüleburgaz, I have attended two country-wide meetings that gathered the representatives of Roma organizations from different parts of Turkey. The first of them, organized by *Anadolu Kültür Derneği* (Anatolia Culture Association, an NGO composed of non-Roma activists but dealing with issues regarding the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey) was a roundtable discussion on how to distribute the educational funds for the Roma children in Turkey offered by international NGOs. The second one-organized by Sulukule Roma Culture, Development and Solidarity Association with the assistance of Roma Education Fund and ERIO (European Roma Information Office) - was on “Roma Access to Education in Turkey.” This meeting had many Roma activists from Europe, but only few Roma from Turkey were able to participate due to the small budget of the conference!

Though it was a lively and great experience to conduct the research, there were three significant challenges that made it harder during the months I was in the districts. The first challenge refers to a general problem the researchers working on the Gypsy/Roma groups encounter. As İncirlioğlu, quoting from Kyuchukov, argues, there are problems and tensions confronting the Gadze (non-Roma) researcher who claims to work on the Gypsy/Roma. The main problem is the criteria she/he relies upon when determining whether the group she/he works on is a Gypsy/Roma community. Attributing the group under analysis, the definition of “Gypsy and/or Roma” based on

the so called “objective criteria” like skin color, native language or geographical region does not make sense when the very heterogeneity of Roma groups in terms of their perception of Roma identity is concerned. The term Gypsy and/or Roma at some instances connotes life-style and occupation and sometimes directly the ethnic identity. The members of the group under analysis may have Gypsy origins, but they may deny it for the sake of integrating into the whole society they live in.¹⁷

A concrete example to this phenomenon comes from the research of Csepeli and Simon on the construction of Roma identity through large scale surveys conducted in three countries (Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria) by non-Roma interviewers. This research demonstrates that, “not only do members of non-Roma majority fail to agree who is Roma and who is not Roma, but there is no match between the results of the outgroup and ingroup categorization, regarding who is Roma and who is not.”¹⁸ This observation is also relevant to my own research experience in Lüleburgaz. In order to escape from essentializing the identity of the group I work on, I tended to define it as “the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts of Lüleburgaz defined by the majority as Gypsies.” Besides that, I preferred to use the term “Gypsy/Roma” throughout the thesis in order to reflect the very heterogeneity of Gypsies/Roma’s definition of themselves not only in Turkey but around Europe. (The term “Roma” which was adopted by the Roma activists from the 1970s onwards has been preferred by some of the Gypsy/Roma

¹⁷ Emine Onaran İncirlioğlu, “Şecaat Arzederken Merd: Türkiye Çingenelerinin Örgütlenme Sorunları” in *Türkiye Kültürler*, editör: Gönül Putlar and Erman Tahire (Ankara: Tetragon Yayınları, 2005), pp.168-180.

¹⁸ György Csepeli and David Simon, “Construction of Roma identity in Eastern and Central Europe: Perception and Self Identification”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30, no.1 (Jan 2004), p.129.

communities. Whereas the term “Gypsy” has been still the signifier that many of them adopt to define themselves.)

The second challenge was due to the rising interest in the Gypsy/Roma communities in Turkey. In the last few years, as my interviewees reported, many researchers from universities, journalists, NGO activists have visited their districts, taking their photos and asking them questions as well. The residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe, at first, seemed to enjoy that somehow “sudden” enthusiasm towards them. However, after some time they had the feeling of “being instrumentalized” by those visitors for their own purposes. Most of my interviewees think that those people are making money through research or projects targeting them, but as the “objects” of those research and projects they have nothing in return. Therefore, my first encounters in the districts were quite challenging, since they perceived me as one of those who would benefit from the interviews conducted with them. Building confidence and convincing them that my research relates to my obligations at the university and I would not have any material gains in turn was a painful process.

The final challenge emerged after I had attempted to convince them to talk with me. Once they trusted me and talked about their problems and their perceptions of identity, they had the feeling that I may have some networks through which I could voice their demands to the state and/or the NGOs. As an educated person and part of a reputable university, they constructed my image as “someone with prominence” and hoped that their encounter with me would bring some benefits for them. Despite my insistent efforts to deconstruct this image, those perceptions regarding me and expectations from me persisted during my field work.

Apart from the interviews in Altiyol and Kuştepe, I also conducted in-dept interviews with ten people who were non-Roma. My interest regarding the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe owes so much to my observations on the ways that the majority tends to perceive them. Generally, the Gypsy /Roma are constructed by them as “lazy, undeserved, condemned peoples.” Though those perceptions in Lüleburgaz have become “commonsense”, I indulged in more detailed conversations with non-Roma regarding their construction of the “Gypsies” -long-time residents of their town. Attempting to uncover the main components of the discursive schema regarding Gypsies in Lüleburgaz, I had collected a range of narratives, which I have supposed, would demonstrate the ways by which the process of racialisation towards them functions at the societal level.

My interviewees had put forward many examples regarding their maltreatment by the local government. In order to compare the validity of those complaints as well as to uncover the construction of the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe in the imagination of the mayor and his companion, I also conducted interviews with them. The “unhesitant comfort” of the mayor when making racist discursive constructions about the Gypsy population of the town shocked me. For the mayor, it was a great surprise to see someone from the political science department of a reputable university, conducting research on such a topic. For him, by focusing on the so called Gypsies, I was wasting time ignoring “very significant problems of Turkey such as the decline of laicism.” The mayor asserted that there was nothing uncovered regarding the Gypsies, their *culture* was there to recognize. The emphasis on Gypsy culture was the main determinant of his racist construction of the Gypsies. For the mayor, it was the “loose, damned, elusive”

culture of the Gypsies that put them to such a disadvantaged position in society. Their unwillingness to work and to be educated, to lead a modern way of life made them impoverished for centuries. The vice-mayor, reputable for her close relations with the Gypsy population of the town, also talked in the same manner. The culture of the Gypsies should be blamed for their marginalized status. For the vice-mayor, the Gypsy population of the town was not respecting the rules of the town, and garbage collection was cited by her as a clear example displaying their disobedient behaviors!

To conclude, my assertions and arguments throughout the thesis will be shaped by the analysis of the narratives I picked up through in-dept interviews, and informal focus groups in Altıyol and Kuştepe as well as by participant observation and by my interviews with the non-Roma. Based on my observations, I aim to shed light on the experiences of the Roma community in Luleburgaz with the help of the theoretical insights contemporary literature on justice provides.

Organization of the Thesis

Departing from a more general question of why, in the last decade, the Gypsy/Roma communities have been an intense area of focus in Europe (at the governmental level as well as in the media and academic circles), I will highlight the main dynamics of what I call “the Europeanization of the Gypsy/Roma issue” in the first section of the following chapter. I will discuss the processes and trends which have led to the rising interest in the Roma who have been centuries-old residents of Europe, but have been invisible and neglected until recently. This brief analysis will also shed light on the recent interest in

the Roma communities of Turkey- their heightened representation in the media, increasing academic publications on Turkish Roma as well as activities in the civil society targeting them.

The second section will specifically deal with the Turkish Roma. Engaging in a review and critique of the existing literature on the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey, I will discuss why the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey should be defined as a racialized community. In a theoretical framework on racism, I will reconsider the construction and treatment of Turkish Roma at the societal and state level as well as in the labour market and try to demonstrate the mechanisms that have led to their marginalization. Such an overall analysis of Turkish Roma supported by a theoretical framework, I suppose, will enable us to better understand the mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion regarding the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe who have been defined as “the Gypsies” by the majority of Lüleburgaz. The processes/practices/mechanisms of racialisation towards Turkish Roma in general and towards the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts in particular will also pave the ground for grasping how their strategies of survival/coping have been replaced by their justice claims for further integration to the “mainstream” of society.

In the third chapter, on the other hand, I will specifically focus on how the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe district perceive their own socioeconomic status and ethnic identity as well as how they respond to their marginalized position. Indulging in the literature on “the resistance/survival/coping strategies of the subaltern” and the theoretical insights drawn from it, on the one hand, I will attempt to demonstrate how strategies of coping with the hardships of life have been replaced by the residents’

claims to justice and on the other hand, how those justice claims have competing/conflicting claims to citizenship.

In the conclusion chapter, I will summarize the main findings of the research and draw attention to their significance for further research.

CHAPTER II

EUROPEANIZATION OF THE GYPSY/ROMA ISSUE AND THE TURKISH ROMA

Europeanization of the Gypsy/Roma Issue: From Being “Elusive Outsiders” to Becoming National Minorities

On February 2, 2004 Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia signed the Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in Sofia, Bulgaria. As stated in the official web site: “All of these countries have significant Roma minorities, and the Roma minority has been rather disadvantaged, both economically and socially. Each country participating in the Decade has developed a national Decade Action Plan that specifies the goals and indicators in the priority areas.”¹⁹ Such a move should be taken seriously. Gypsy/Roma as a long-time

¹⁹ In the web site of the “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2004-2015, the action plan and the international partners are indicated as such: “The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2004–2015 is an unprecedented political commitment by governments in Central and Southeastern Europe to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma within a regional framework. The Decade is an international initiative that brings together governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as Romani civil society, to accelerate progress toward improving the welfare of Roma and to review such progress in a transparent and quantifiable way. The Decade focuses on the priority areas of education, employment, health, and housing, and commits governments to take into account the other core issues of poverty, discrimination, and gender mainstreaming..... The founding international partner organizations of the Decade are the World Bank, the Open Society Institute, the United Nations Development Program, the Council of Europe, Council of Europe Development Bank, the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Roma Information Office, the European Roma and Traveller Forum, the European Roma Rights Centre, and the Roma Education Fund. In February 2008, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) also became a partner in the Decade.”for more information see: <http://www.romadecade.org>.

invisible, oppressed community is now one of the central areas of concern in Europe. The history and dynamics of this process, I believe, require further analysis.

Europeanization of the Gypsy/Roma issue can be examined within two interrelated dynamics: First is the process which has also given birth to the decade of Roma inclusion. The end of communism in Central and Eastern Europe brought about the enlargement of the European Union. With the accession of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia to the European Union and the already candidate status given to Macedonia, Croatia, and Turkey the Gypsy/Roma and Traveler communities turned to be the largest ethnic group within the EU.²⁰ Therefore, the EU has developed action plans for the Gypsy/Roma due to the “failure of existing policies within both the EU-15 (the old Member States) and the new Member States to address adequately the discrimination against these communities and to promote their social inclusion.”²¹ Intensified racist attitudes and even the violence towards the Gypsy/Roma in Europe have made the issue even more urgent to address.

Secondly, when the end of communism in Central and Eastern Europe eliminated the limited scope of movement under communist regimes and thanks to the free movement policy across the countries of the EU, many Gypsy/Roma groups have begun

²⁰ European Commission’s 2004 report on *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged Europe* indicates that “Although precise figures are unavailable, there are possibly over ten million Roma in Europe as a whole, a population many times the size of the total population of a number of European Union Member States.” For information see: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/pubst/roma04_en.pdf

²¹ European Commission, May 2004, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged Europe* http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/pubst/roma04_en.pdf, p.6.

to flee from the East to the West for better socioeconomic status.²² Therefore, the “EU-15”, due to the panic and suspicion for the large influx of Roma immigrants into their territories, started to pay significant attention to accommodate Gypsy/Roma and all their problems through various reform and action programs within the very borders that they have long settled. Within this context, Europe, “suddenly and somehow reluctantly”, also rediscovered the long-settled Gypsy/Roma groups within its borders and the age of Roma has started.

A Selective / Short History of the Gypsy/Roma’s Westward Journey

A brief and selective review of the history of Gypsy/Roma in Europe since their arrival would highlight both their current marginality in Europe and the dynamics of the Europeanization of the Gypsy/Roma issue above summarized. Treatment of Gypsy/Roma in Europe through the ages can be explored within two phases. The period between the first arrival of the Gypsy/Roma communities and the Enlightenment in Europe had witnessed the construction of the Gypsy/Roma communities as a “condemned other” in European public discourse. Mystified, exocitized and feared, Gypsy/Roma were portrayed as a people that a distance should be kept from. The practices of public authorities towards them were already “in being” in the process of changing from negligence to partial tolerance. However, with the Enlightenment, when the rationalization of public life, the idea that Europeans constitute the superior race,

²²Zoltan D. Barany, “Living on the Edge: The East European Roma in Postcommunist Politics and Societies”, *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer, 1994), p.338.

formation of nation-state and modern citizenship were already at stake, new practices based on the public discourse of the past came to existence. Conceived as a group who “should be disciplined and if necessary totally dismissed”, a more systematic set of policies and measures were taken against them. Those measures changed in scope from assimilation to total extermination in gas vans.

As Petrova suggests, although history alone is not sufficient to understand the anti-Gypsism in Europe, plunging into history at least reveals how the primary stereotypes, constructed during the early arrival of the Gypsy/Roma communities in Europe, were internalized and led to the legitimization of later racist discourse and practices.²³

The country of origin of Gypsy/Roma has long been a debated issue. However, for several years now, many Gypsy experts and linguists have adhered to the idea that Gypsy/Roma came from India. That hypothesis has gained support due to the similarities in vocabulary and grammar between the Romani and Indian dialects.²⁴ Still, however, why Gypsy/Roma migrated from India has not been uncovered properly. Some of the authors claim that they were the captives of the Seljuks. When the Seljuks defeated the Ghaznavids at Nishapur in Khoran (today a part of eastern Iran), they brought captives into the Byzantine Empire from both India and Persia. Another hypothesis is that when Islam began to spread into India through Seljuk Turks, the Indian militia was mainly

²³ Dimitrina Petrova, “The Roma: Between a myth and the future”, *Social Research* 70, no.1 (Spring 2003), pp.127-128.

²⁴ Ian Hancock, *We are the Romani People* (Hatfield, Herfordshire: University of Herfordshire Press, 2002), p.16; Fraser, p.8; Jean- Pierre Liegeois, *Gypsies an Illustrated History* (London: Saqi Books, 2005) pp.8-10; European Commission, p.2 .

composed of Rajputs. Known as “sons of princes”, they had resisted Islam for centuries. Rajputs are claimed to be the ancestors of Gypsy/Roma who migrated to Anatolia after clashes with the Seljuks.²⁵ It is estimated that in the eleventh century, the Gypsy/Roma reached the Byzantine Empire and spread to the Balkans and Western Europe onwards.²⁶

That first encounter of Gypsy/Roma with *gadze* (Gypsy word for non-Gypsy) started being identified by some “other” in a territory so far from their homeland. In the Byzantine Empire those “mysterious, dark-skinned” people from the East were given names. As Hancock states, Gypsy/Roma were identified as “Tsingani” and “Egyptian”. Tsingani which took different forms as Cingano, Cikan, Zigeneur and Çingene means in Byzantine Greek “do not touch” or “hands off” people.

There could be several reasons why they were also referred to as the Egyptians: The medieval Europeans tended to use the term Egyptian for foreign people at the time. Secondly, the Roma communities were claimed to stay for a while in a region called “Little Egypt” before their arrival in Europe; or that some Gypsy/Roma identified themselves as Egyptian.²⁷ Either Tsingani or Egyptian, Gypsy/Roma had been marked in the imagination of Byzantines and then in other parts of Europe as peoples who should be avoided and kept an eye on. As dark-skinned foreigners reluctant to communicate with anyone else, the Gypsy/Roma were quickly doomed to suffer at the very beginning of their long journey.

²⁵ Hancock, pp. 8-14.

²⁶Hancock, p.15; Fraser, p.27; European Commission, p.3.

²⁷ Hancock, pp. 1-2.

Gypsy/Roma people came to the Balkans through the Byzantine Empire and as Liegeois claims, spread throughout Western Europe between 1415 and 1430.²⁸ Arriving at the Balkans was a new and painful period in Gypsy/Roma history. According to Hancock, by the early 1300s, Romanies were working with the feudal landlords and were given as gifts or as payment by one owner to another, as well as to the monasteries.²⁹ It was especially in the independent principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (modern Romania and Moldova) under the Ottoman rule that the Gypsy/Roma were enslaved. In those times, the two principalities were in economic decline. Peasants were selling their lands and were turning into serfs. Gypsies, then, were used and became indispensable as specialized artisans, blacksmiths, locksmiths, tinsmiths, etc. Therefore, the authorities restricted their wandering in order not to lose their work force. It was even declared that “every Gypsy without a master was the property of the state”.³⁰ These were the times when the Ottomans were permeating the Balkans. It is argued that during the Middle Ages, Ottomans were more tolerant than Europeans when dealing with the ethnic groups under their rule including the Gypsy/Roma people.³¹ How Gypsy/Roma were treated by the Ottomans will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

²⁸ Liegeois, p. 41.

²⁹ Hancock, pp. 17-18.

³⁰ Fraser, pp. 57-59.

³¹ European Commission, p. 7; Fraser, pp. 171-176; Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire : A Contribution to the History of the Balkans*; translated by Olga Apostolova , edited by Donald Kenrick and Elena Marushiakova (Hatfield : University of Hertfordshire Press ; Paris : Centre de recherches tsiganes, c2001), p.12.

The era of Enlightenment in Europe marked a new beginning in the treatment of the Gypsy/Roma. Foucault describes the Enlightenment as “an event including elements of social transformation, types of political institution, forms of knowledge, projects of rationalization of knowledge and practices, and technological mutations.”³² Within this context of Enlightenment, in the reshaping of European societies at every level, touching upon the body politics as well, the Gypsy/Roma were dealt with “enlightened” practices and techniques. Their control and encapsulation were now practiced in a more “rational” and systematic manner. The aim was twofold: On the one hand, European authorities attempted to “discipline” Gypsy/Roma (along with the whole society) with the hope of making them obedient to the norms of the public order. On the other hand, they were either expelled or strictly kept in places where they would not be able to permeate society. Foucault talks about noso-politics as one of the stages of those disciplining practices. He suggests that, in the eighteenth century, the politics of health in Europe had taken many forms. One of the attempts to hygiene society in this period was the “surveillance of “unstable” or “troublesome” elements” including vagabonds and beggars³³, not to mention those were mostly Gypsy/Roma. In France, the hospital bureaux had a jurisdiction over vagabonds and beggars, and the parish bureaux and charitable societies were also dealing with them.³⁴ Foucault describes the general aims of “noso-politics” in the following words:

³²Michel Foucault, “The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century” in *The Foucault Reader* edited by Paul Rabinow, (London:Penguin Books ,1991), p.43.

³³ Ibid., p. 275.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 276.

“....”The analysis of idleness has its practical objective at best to make poverty useful by fixing it to the apparatus of production, at worst to lighten as much as possible the burden it imposes on the rest of the society. The problem is to set the “able-bodied” poor to work and transform them into a useful labor force.....But one must also note another process which is more general than the first, and more than its simple elaboration. This is the emergence of the health and physical well being of the population in general as one of the essential objectives of political power. Here it is not a matter of offering support to a particularly fragile, troubled and troublesome margin of the population, but how to raise the level of health of the social body as a whole.³⁵

Foucault states that the reshaping of European societies in the eighteenth century of Enlightenment was practiced not through one single apparatus but through an ensemble of multiple regulations and institutions which took the general name of “police.” In this period, the term “police” was not the institution of police in the modern sense, but “the ensemble of mechanisms serving to ensure order, the properly channeled growth of wealth and the conditions of preservation of health in “general”.” “One of the main tasks of policing was surveillance of dangerous individuals, expulsion of vagabonds and, if necessary beggars and the pursuit of criminals.”³⁶ Although Foucault does not refer to the Gypsies among those groups to be disciplined, the expulsion of vagabonds, beggars and criminals was usually associated with the Gypsy/Roma in Europe.

These points are in line with Liegeois’s categorization of the governmental techniques and practices towards Gypsy/Roma as expulsion, confinement and forced assimilation. For instance, in France, between the 1600s and 1800s, Gypsy/Roma were tried to be disciplined through the devices that Foucault mentions . In 1606, during the reign of Henry IV, Gypsy/Roma were punished for being “vagabonds and evil-doers”.

³⁵ Foucault, p. 277.

³⁶ Foucault, pp. 277-278.

From 1700 to 1722, due to begging and vagabondage, they were banished from France. In 1802, among those who could not be deported, Gypsy children and women were sent to the poor houses; while young Gypsy men were sent to the navy and army and adult men became forced laborers.³⁷ In Spain, starting from the seventeenth century, the dress, way of life and language of Gypsy/Roma were forbidden and settlement was made compulsory.³⁸

When European economic expansion reached its peak with colonization, it was no surprise that once enslaved by feudal lords and the Church, the Gypsy/Roma took their part in the colonized territories as forced laborers. Fraser describes this process as such: it was with the decree of 1538, when the first group of Gypsies were sent to Portuguese African colonies. In 1696, Brazil was now the new destination for Gypsies. Following the Portuguese, Spain also transported some of its Gypsy descendants to North Africa and America. France, England and Scotland all followed the same path.³⁹ European governments had achieved two targets at once. On the one hand, the Gypsy/Roma work force were exploited in the colonies. On the other hand, it was a great chance for the European governments to transport the untouchable peoples in their territories to the colonies where they could be exploited along with other “dark-skinned”. Those transportations also highlight the existence of Gypsy/Roma overseas – America, Canada and Latin America.

³⁷Liegeois, pp. 95-97.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 109.

³⁹ Fraser, pp. 168-171.

The most traumatic influence on the memory of European Gypsy/Roma people was no doubt the genocide practiced by the Nazis against them. The experience of the extermination of Jews in the Nazi period has taken its place in the memory of humanity as one of the most devastating tragedies of world history. By means of different forms of art, a still growing literature of academic works, the traditional Holocaust reminder days and the efforts of the Jewish lobbyists, the memories of the Jewish genocide have been kept fresh in our minds. However, the Gypsy genocide of the same period along with that of the handicapped and homosexuals was for a long time a total amnesia. It is no surprise that as a culture without written sources but only an oral history and narratives and as a people without a homeland where they would be backed up against injustices in the international scene, the Gypsy/Roma were left alone in dealing with the trauma of the genocide. As Milton suggests, it was not until the 1980s that the academia began to pay attention to the connections between the murder of the Jews and that of Gypsies and the handicapped.⁴⁰

The so called Nuremberg Laws of 1935 which aimed to govern eligibility for full German citizenship treated Gypsies along with Jews as dangerous “alien races” who posed a threat to the German racial purity. Therefore, a ban was introduced for marriage and extramarital status with the Gypsies.⁴¹ In 1938, Himmler- a high ranking Nazi politician- demanded the racial investigation of each Romani family’s background. The result of the research was to determine the criteria of which Gypsies/Roma should be eliminated in order to prevent them contaminating German blood. As quoted by

⁴⁰ Sybil Milton , “Gypsies and the Holocaust”, *The History Teacher* 24, no. 4 (Aug., 1991), p.377.

⁴¹ Fraser, p.257.

Hancock, Kenrick states, “ In general, a person with one Jewish grandparent was not affected in the Nazi anti-Jewish legislation, whereas one-eight “gypsy-blood” was considered strong enough to outweigh seven-eighths of German blood – so dangerous were the Gypsies considered.” Therefore, Hancock concludes that these criteria were twice as strict as the criteria determining who was Jewish. If the criteria that were applied to the Jews had been applied to the Romanies, nearly 20,000 would not have been exterminated. ⁴²

The persisting stereotypes of the Europeans about the Gypsy/Roma people who were perceived as deviant criminals and immorals were also the main motives for the Nazis to get rid of them. As evidence , Milton quotes the report dated 5 February 1940, from Senior State Attorney Dr. Meissner of the Graz Circuit Court (Oberlandesgericht) to the Reich Minister of Justice in Berlin. Meissner claims that:

Gypsies on the other hand pose less danger politically; however, they do constitute a special racial and economic threat, particularly in the Oberwarth court district, where 4,000 of them reside. The "black" Gypsies of pure race are probably the overwhelming majority. The Gypsies live almost exclusively from begging and theft. Their work as musicians is simply a cover and not genuine employment They are an even greater danger to the racial [purity] of the inhabitants of Burgenland. The majority of these Gypsies, whose physical appearance resembles primitive African and Asian races, are racially inferior, with particularly inferior intellect and morals, although they are physically extremely resilient. Inter-marriage with this morally and mentally inferior race ineluctably means a decline in the racial value of offspring. Such miscegenation is favored, on the one hand, by special sexual aggressiveness of young male Gypsies and, on the other, by the loose sexual morality of Gypsy girls. These circumstances will continue even if a large segment of the male Gypsy population is sent to labor camps. Incarceration in work camps does not really remove this danger. Furthermore, it is hardly feasible to expel them; since they lack

⁴² Hancock, pp. 40-41.

jobs or businesses, we cannot confiscate these. Although they are German citizens, they are rejected by all other countries.⁴³

The result was devastating for the Roma /Gypsy. “On 18 May 1940, 2,800 German Romani and Sinti Gypsies were deported from seven assembly centers, located in the Old Reich, to Lublin, located in the General Government (Nazi occupied Poland)’. One and a half years later, from 5 to 9 November 1941, five transports (each consisting of 1,000 Austrian Gypsies) arrived in the Lodz ghetto. Less than two months later, in December 1941 and January 1942, these Gypsies were taken from Lodz to Kulmhof (Chelmno), where they were among the first to be killed in mobile gas vans.”⁴⁴ Not only in Germany but also in allied countries of Germany and German occupied territories, Gypsies were murdered in labor camps or deported from the territories they had long settled in. Italy, Albania, Hungary, Romania and the occupied parts of USSR were among those countries where Gypsy racial persecution was practiced.⁴⁵ In *Porrajmos* – Romani expression for Holocaust- , nearly up to 1,5 million Roma were victimized according to the report of November, 2001 by the International Organization for Migration which is based on the information collected from the testimonials of the Romani claimants.⁴⁶

After the end of the World War II, many Gypsy/Roma started living under the communist regimes. Their treatment in those times should be, in part, grasped within the new ideological constructions of communism regarding state, society and citizenship.

⁴³ Milton, p.38.

⁴⁴ Milton, p. 375.

⁴⁵ Fraser, pp. 267-268.

⁴⁶ Hancock, p. 48.

The attempt to eliminate class divisions through central state planning targeted all the ethnic groups under communist regimes. As Fraser argues, although policies towards the Gypsy/Roma changed from state to state in this period, the project developed for them was to assimilate and integrate them into the whole society. The idea was that it was capitalism that had put Gypsy/Roma in such a marginalized situation up to that day and in a socialist society, the Gypsy/Roma problem would fade away.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, that communist ideal did not come true.

The means of employment and education as well as housing and social services were the devices of the communist governments to eliminate the “anti-socialist traits”⁴⁸ of Gypsy/Romacommunities. Gypsy/Romacommunities were attempted to be disciplined by turning them into proletariat either in factories or on land; by providing them housing and social services and enrolling Gypsy children in state schools. The fear of and suspicion of their nomadism were the basic motives of communist governments in their attempts to assimilate and integrate Gypsy/Roma to the whole society. Like their counterparts in the past, in the imagination of those communist governments, nomadism was the main characteristics inherent in Gypsy/Roma culture that was producing the anti-socialist traits of that group.

The treatment of Gypsy/Roma under communism should be understood in this context, though the practices of the states seemed somehow different in kind and scope. As Fraser states, in Poland, beginning in the early 1950s, Gypsies were employed in low-skilled, low-paid jobs and many children were enrolled at schools. Nomadic

⁴⁷ Fraser, p. 154.

⁴⁸ European Commission, p.7.

Gypsy/Roma were also provided housing facilities. Nomadism was considerably eliminated by means of such policies. However, those measures could not eliminate the social exclusion of the Gypsy/Roma by the larger population. When disputes between Gypsies and their neighbors in the apartments- that they were now living in- intensified, many Gypsy/Roma were expelled from Poland and even denied citizenship.⁴⁹

In Czechoslovakia, the policies towards Gypsy/Roma changed in context. In 1958, it was declared that “the Gypsies group identity had to be demolished if they were to advance at all, but it was decreed that they were not an ethnic group but people ‘maintaining a markedly different demographic structure’.” In the same year school attendance and settlement were made mandatory for the Gypsy/Roma. They had to be registered in a certain place in order to be employed. Despite the determination of the central government, the overall project of forced settlement was poorly achieved, since local authorities usually ignored Gypsy/Roma and did not implement the law issued on Gypsy/Roma.⁵⁰

Romania was not, in general, concerned with providing schooling and cultural support for Gypsy/Roma, while it was more sensitive about increasing the socioeconomic and cultural status of its Hungarian and German minorities. When Gypsies began to engage increasingly in industrial wage-labor jobs and in agricultural

⁴⁹Fraser, p. 276.

⁵⁰ Fraser, p. 277; Angus Bancroft, “Closed Spaces, Restricted Places: Marginalisation of Roma in Europe”, *Space & Polity* 5, no. 2 (2001), p.148.

cooperatives within the context of proletarianization of the whole society, the long-time social prejudices towards Gypsies became even more widespread.⁵¹

Bulgaria's assimilation policies towards Gypsy/Roma were even harsher. Romani was forbidden at segregated schools established for the Gypsy children. The newspapers and associations of Gypsy/Roma were closed down. By the 1970s, the oppression policy of Bulgaria towards its Muslim minority influenced Gypsy/Roma as well. The designation "Gypsy" was abolished in identity papers and Gypsies with Muslim names were forced to take Slavonic names. Along with Turkish folk music Gypsy music carrying Turkic tones was even forbidden to be played down.⁵²

In Yugoslavia, in 1981 the Gypsies were given nationality status along with the Albanians, Hungarians and Turks. In this sense, they gained language and cultural rights. However, their new constitutional status was not recognized uniformly in every republic of the Yugoslav federation.⁵³

Communist governments perceived the Gypsy culture as the reason for Gypsy/Roma marginality. The solution they posed was that of assimilating Gypsy/Roma. It can be claimed that Gypsy/Roma at least gained some forms of education, housing and employment as part of those assimilation processes. However, as Petrova argues, the conditions of Gypsy/Roma under communist regimes still differed from those of the other segments of society. They were the lowest strata of working class and they had the lowest levels of income; since they were mostly employed as

⁵¹ Fraser, p.279.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 279-80.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 281.

unskilled workers in the industry, construction, forestry, and in some unattractive occupations like garbage collection.⁵⁴ Furthermore, anti-Gypsism was not eradicated from the consciousness of the larger society. Therefore, as the developments in the post-communist years reveal, the communist measures to solve the Gypsy/Roma problem were not innovative and successful.

After World War II, the conditions of the Gypsy/Roma were hardly different in Western Europe. In Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, Gypsy existence continued to be perceived as a threat. Even a policy of forced sterilization of Gypsy men and women was followed in these countries. Romani children were taken away from their families and accommodated in state institutions for care.⁵⁵ Those measures directed towards the very “bodily existence” of Gypsy/Roma seemed to be undertaken in order to get rid of them in the longer period. Surprisingly, however, as Fraser claims in Western Europe the number of travelling Gypsy/Roma exceeded that of Eastern and Central Europe. They were now practicing a technology-based nomadism, since most of them had small caravans rather than their previous horses. (An uncommon trend in Turkey!) Therefore, governments’ main concern in most of the countries was how to deal with nomadism. In England, for instance, the law passed to allow for legal campsites for the nomads, but its implementation was poor.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Petrova, pp. 143-144.

⁵⁵ European Commission, p.7.

⁵⁶ Fraser, p.283.

Liberty in the Shadow of Poverty: The Status of Gypsy/Roma Communities in the Post-1989 Period and Roma Mobilization in Europe

The post 1989 period was a new phase in the economic and political history of Eastern and Central Europe. The end of communism and celebration of liberal democracy as the end of history marked a new shift towards market economy and democratization.

Abandoning state-led socialist economy in favor of the free market and the political structure based on “communist brotherhood” for the sake of liberal Western democracy has been a painful experience for the post-communist countries of the region. This new phase of transition has influenced the whole of society by eradicating long-time fashions for survival and by introducing new meanings (ideas, values) along with once foreign structures to their communist identity. Acquiring those new meanings of liberal democracy and market economy was in no sense a smooth process. Adapting to the rules of market economy and dealing with the loss of communist identity, peoples of Eastern and Central Europe have developed new strategies to cope with this transition.

In this context, now centuries-old residents of the region –Gypsy/Roma- have been one of the most visible victims of the transition. On the one hand, they have become mostly unemployed when their somehow “forced” employment in factories and on land by communist governments came to an end. In a market based economy, as unskilled and uneducated, they could not find jobs. As Barany asserts “In the postcommunist period, “the Roma tend to be fired first and hired last,” both because of these objective circumstances - people with no marketable skills and weak employment

records are hit especially hard in the transition to market economy- and because of the remaining prejudice against them. One of the underlying problems is that “most Roma lack the kind of training that would make them attractive to prospective employers.”⁵⁷ As a result, Romani unemployment has sharply increased in the region. Its average is 60-70 percent across the region, but in some areas it approaches 100 percent.⁵⁸

On the other hand, they have once again been pushed to the margins in the larger society in an era of resurgent nationalism in the region. As scapegoats in the revival of nationalist sentiments, Gypsy/Roma people in Eastern and Central Europe were re-constructed as “the condemned other” within the context of nation building. There are two main dynamics for the so called revival of nationalism and racism in the region. Firstly, as Gallagher argues, the *nomenklatura* –“the self-selecting communist elite that used to control state and society”- attempted to preserve its power by shaping politics in new conditions along ethnic lines. Gallagher claims that the mobilizing force of nationalism was already utilized by the communist leaders through appealing to the patriotic symbols, scapegoating minorities or reviving dormant quarrels with neighboring countries.⁵⁹

The argument that nationalism was attractive for the peoples of the region, since ethnic sentiments were oppressed under the umbrella of communist identity does not

⁵⁷ Zoltan D. Barany “Orphans of Transition: Gypsies in Eastern Europe”, *Journal of Democracy* 9, no.3 (1998), p.146.

⁵⁸ Barany, 1994, p. 331.

⁵⁹ Tom Gallagher, “Nationalism and Democracy in South-East Europe”, in *Experimenting with Democracy: Regime Change in the Balkans* edited by Geoffrey Pridham (London: Routledge, 1999), p.84.

make sense when the case of Yugoslavia is taken into account. The division of Yugoslavia into republics was conducted on ethnic lines and adherence to one's ethnic identity was not completely lost during the socialist era. Rather, the second dynamic for the revival of nationalism and racism in the region should be explored within the new ideological constructions of the political elite. Peoples of the region in the loss of meanings acquired through communist structuring of society have appealed to nationalism and have become the objects of the new ideological constructions of the political elite. Whether the political elites of the region had foreseen that the cost of their shaping politics through ethnic lines would be so high, remains unclear. The devastating experiences of the Bosnian and Kosova Wars and the still ongoing racist violence towards minorities at least mark the success of their project!

In the scope of transition to a new economic and political regime in the Eastern and Central Europe, nationalism, economic deprivation and high levels of unemployment have brought about the search for scapegoats and the Gypsy/Roma communities have once again become one of the most visible victims of that search. Setting the houses on fire and beating up Gypsy families began to occur in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.⁶⁰ Barany summarizes the most devastating racist violence towards Gypsy/Roma in the region in the following words:

In Romania, the virulently nationalist organization *Vatra Romcinească* (Romanian Hearth) has openly called for a bloody war against the Roma . In Hungary, the skinhead band *Gypsy Destroyer Guard Regiment* has been drawing large audiences to hear its hit song "Gypsy Free Zone" (lyrics include: "exterminate the Gypsies whether child, woman or man"). Physical violence against the Roma has occurred in virtually every country of the region. Romani dwellings have been burned down, many Roma

⁶⁰ Fraser, p. 289.

men killed, women raped. In September 1993 the Transylvanian village of Hadareni was the scene of the most serious attack on the Roma to date: 750 ethnic Romanians and Hungarians killed 4 Roma, destroyed 17 Romani dwellings and forced 130 to flee. As a general rule, the police are reluctant to interfere and do not provide sufficient protection. Governments have either neglected these problems, as have those of Albania and Bulgaria, or have blamed the Roma for growing crime and economic problems. Some governments, such as the Romanian, have urged the Roma to move on. In Hungary and the former Czechoslovakia, politicians have not taken sufficiently strong measures to halt anti-Romani violence committed by extreme nationalist elements.”⁶¹

Racist violence towards Gypsy/Roma in Eastern and Central Europe has been only the visible side of their further marginalization in the region after the end of communism. Official data on countries and fieldwork reports where possible, reveal some ideas on the current socioeconomic status of Gypsy/Roma in the region. Here are some examples: Roma children are usually segregated within national education systems. Even worse, in some countries they have been accommodated at schools for mentally disabled children. Research in the Czech city of Ostrava during the 1998-1999 school year showed that more than half of the students in “remedially special schools” for the mentally disabled were Roma. In Slovakia, official data for 2003 reveals that the percentage of unemployment among Roma was 87,5 while the general unemployment rate in the country was 14,2%. In the Czech Republic, sixty-one percent of Roma think that they are disadvantaged in the labor market due to racial discrimination of employers. Many Roma in the region live in slum ghettos or site locations lacking proper sanitary and social conditions. Romani researchers have found out that local authorities in Romania

⁶¹ Barany, 1994, pp. 331-32.

perceive Roma as a community undeserving social welfare support. Therefore, they apply discretionary means such as tests for eligibility for social benefits.⁶²

The only positive outcome of the end of communism for Gypsy/Roma in Central and Eastern Europe has been an increasing tendency among the Roma to get organized. In the newly democratizing postcommunist countries, freedom of expression and organization has become easier when compared to communist regimes. As Barany states Roma organizations and political parties were established which have been promoting their demands against the exclusion of Gypsy/Romacommunities in the larger society. In this sense, the political marginalization of Gypsy/Roma has partially diminished. However, since that Romani mobilization has usually been restricted to some Roma intellectuals and usually non-Roma activists, it has not yet permeated to Roma society at large.⁶³ Prospects and drawbacks of Roma mobilization in Europe and Turkey will be focused on in detail in next the sections.

The end of communism in Eastern and Central Europe brought about increasing Roma mobility across Europe as well. With the end of the restricted movement of the communist era and the application of postcommunist countries to the European Union, the somehow “interrupted Roma journey” has started once again. Due to the hardened economic conditions under market economy and racist violence towards them, Gypsy/Roma began to flee Western Europe. As stated in the EC 2004 report on the “The situation of Roma in an Enlarged Europe”, a large influx of Roma migrants and/or asylum seekers migrated to Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the

⁶² European Commission, pp. 17-30.

⁶³ Barany, 1994, p. 333.

Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. In those countries, media reports of “Gypsy invasions” dampened public panic strengthening anti-Roma sentiments in the larger society. As was the case in Germany and France, public authorities in Western countries adopted racially discriminatory measures including collective expulsions of Gypsy/Roma from their borders.⁶⁴

Having visited two campsites of Roma asylum seekers in Paris in 1999 (mostly composed of Roma from Romania), Pickup argues that the basic human rights of Gypsy/Roma in France were violated in many respects. The French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) usually rejected the application of Roma for asylum. Roma asylum seekers had the right to appeal to the Committee for Refugee Appeals (CRR). When CRR also rejected the application, they had the right to apply to the *Conseil d'Etat*. However, until a permanent decision was taken, they had no rights or benefits in France and no legal protection from deportation during the appeal process. Pickup observed that French authorities usually rejected their applications stating that Romania “was now a safer country to live”. The results were mostly devastating. Some Roma families were split up, when parents were sent back to Romania and Roma children stayed alone in France.⁶⁵

The brief history of Gypsy/Roma marginalization in Europe accompanied by postcommunist developments and the current status of Gypsy/Roma in Europe makes clear the motives of EU’s engagement with the Gypsy/Roma issue. As stated at the

⁶⁴ European Commission, p.7.

⁶⁵ Alison Pickup, “Denial of basic rights: the marginalisation of Romani refugees in France”. *Roma Rights* 1, (January, 1999), available(online): <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=573>.

beginning of this section, two dynamics of the Europeanization of Gypsy/Roma issue are already at stake: with the accession of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia to the EU, the candidate status given to Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey, and with the so-called potential member states of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosova, Roma became the largest ethnic minority within Europe. The number of Roma is estimated as about 10 million in Europe according to the EC Report on Roma.⁶⁶ When the marginalized status of Gypsy/Roma in new member and candidate countries has ceased to be negligible, the EU-old has not been able to turn a blind eye to its own Roma minority as well.⁶⁷ The commitment of the EU to human rights and minority protection has led to the urgent “handling” of Gypsy/Roma marginalized status across Europe.

Progress reports of candidate countries have often mentioned the status of Gypsy/Romacommunities and human rights violations towards them in the countries where they settle.⁶⁸ The new member states, either by engaging in “Decade of Roma Inclusion” and/or amending laws of anti-discrimination and in some cases by giving legal minority status to Roma (eg:Hungary)⁶⁹ have taken steps to diminish Roma

⁶⁶ European Commission, p.7.

⁶⁷ EC, 2004 report demonstrates the fact that Gypsy/Roma and other traveller communities in Western Europe are no less marginalized when compared to their fellows in the East. Some data in the report makes it more clear: “half of Roma and Sinti children in Germany attend school at all and of those who do attend, a high number-- reportedly up to 80% in some areas --attend “special schools”. In France, a number of départements appear to have given all files concerning Gypsies and Travellers (including those who do not travel) over to the special associations of “friends of the Gypsies and Travellers”. As a result, Gypsies and Travellers are not accepted in the municipal offices, and have to go to the specific associations designed “for them”. In Spain, half of Spanish Roma of working age are estimated not to have stable or legal jobs.”

⁶⁸ For more information see http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/key_documents/reports_nov_2006_en.htm.

⁶⁹ Giving minority status to Roma is among the prior recommendation of the EC in its 2004 report on Roma.

exclusion. However, when the current socioeconomic status of Roma groups in those countries are considered (EC, 2004) the process of their engagement in Gypsy/Roma issue poses suspicion. Amending laws, taking part in action programs but not forcing proper implementation of those measures pose the question whether the already member states took those actions in order to fulfill the Copenhagen Criteria of the EU which was necessary for their full membership.

The second dynamic, I put, for the Europeanization of the Gypsy/Roma issue seems “more alarming” for EU-old to take action for the well-being of Gypsy/Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. The public panic in the face of the large influx of Roma to Western Europe as migrants or asylum seekers is not staggering when the recent restrictive policies of the EU towards migration and asylum are taken into account. All the “non-European Others” are perceived as a threat to the European identity by the Western governments and in the imagination of the European public. Therefore, accommodating the Gypsy/Roma problem in the countries Roma communities have long settled in is one way to preserve the fleeing of Roma into Western Europe. As Petrova suggests, this is a racist twist of the EU. While focusing upon antiracism and enforcing the inclusion of Roma to the whole society in Central and Eastern Europe, Western European countries are not even admitting the Roma asylum seekers to their territories as was the case in France.⁷⁰ Such policies reveal the fact that strong adherence of EU-old to their nation-state structures is in conflict with the formal discourse and commitment of the EU as an institution to multiculturalism and human rights protection of minorities.

⁷⁰ Petrova, p. 148.

Opré, Roma!: Roma Mobilization in Europe

“Opré, Roma” has been the motto of the emerging Roma mobilization in Europe which started in the 1970s. The verb Opré means in Romani “arise, appear”. In this sense, the motto has been well-suited to the phenomenon it represents: The emergence of the long-oppressed Roma minority in Europe in political activism and the process of “*ethnogenesis*”. Gheorghe introduces the term ethnogenesis as “a social group, previously occupying a despised and inferior position, moving from this position to some kind of respectability with a sort of equality with other social groups in the hierarchy of social stratification on the basis of a revised perception of their identity”.⁷¹ In this sense, the mobilization of Roma communities in Eastern and Western Europe within Roma organizations and the appearance of Roma representatives in European parliaments can be identified broadly as *ethnogenesis* bearing the possibility of the emergence of Roma voice in key political institutions in which they were once invisible and unrepresented.

The beginning of the process of Roma ethnogenesis dates back to the early 1970s. Activists (Roma and non-Roma) who started to work on Roma rights in different parts of Europe gathered and agreed in 1971 on a common platform called the World Roma Congress (WRC). The World Roma Congress, later, fostered international mobilizing structures like the International Roma Union (IRU) and the Roma National

⁷¹ Nicolae Gheorghe, “The Social Construction of Romani Identity”, in *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity* edited by Thomas Acton (Hertfordshire:University Hertfordshire of Press , 1997), p.158.

Congress (RNC). In the 1970s, the main attempt of those international Roma organizations was to replace the negatively-loaded term *Gypsy* with that of *Roma* (in Romani, Rom means man, Romni means woman).⁷² Those attempts had, in general, proved to be successful. In international political settings, in media and in academic works, the term *Gypsy* was replaced by *Roma* which constitutes a “politically correct” way of representing the *Gypsy/Roma*.

The Romani movement gained momentum after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe due to two conflicting reasons. One of those was the increasing marginalization of the *Gypsy/Roma* communities in Eastern Europe. Such factors as the racist violence against the *Gypsy/Roma* and the emergence of the *Gypsy/Roma* as the most disadvantaged group in the labour market due to the transformation of post-communist countries to liberal economies, have all sustained a convenient political environment for Roma mobilization. The support from human rights organizations and the involvement of the EU in the Roma issue have led to the emergence of an increasing number of Roma organizations in Europe as well as the representation of Roma communities in European national parliaments and in the local political structures as well. Secondly, the leniency of the postcommunist regimes towards the right of expression and getting organized also decreased the political marginalization of the Roma and paved the ground for their getting organized.⁷³

⁷²Peter Vermeersch, “The Roma in domestic and international politics: an emerging voice?”, *Roma Rights*, no. 4 (February, 2001), available (online): <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=1274>.

⁷³Barany, 1994, p. 333.

The Roma mobilization in Europe should be regarded as unique and unprecedented when compared to other political mobilizations around an ethnic identity in different parts of the world⁷⁴ in terms of unifying a non-territorial community under international Romani organizations and constituting close links between local Roma NGOs for taking action and developing projects. However, there are mainly four issues that have been discussed intensely by Roma in the process of Roma ethnogenesis.⁷⁵ The first and most debatable one refers to the question of which direction Roma mobilization/movement should take. Should the Romani movement stay within the limits of struggling for the human rights of the Roma? Or should it demand minority status for the Roma communities within the European nation-states? Or should it take a secessionist version and struggle for the self-determination of Roma communities in the world under a unified nation-state? Those questions, thus, mainly relate to the question of which direction the identity construction of the Roma should take. Struggling for Roma human rights has been the main motive both in the international Romani movement and local Roma NGOs.⁷⁶ Regarding the second question, in Macedonia and Hungary, the Gypsy/Roma were able to gain national minority status. However, the socioeconomic situation of the Gypsy/Roma communities in Eastern and Western Europe has hardly changed despite the existence of intense Roma mobilization. Therefore, whether such an intense and increasing Roma mobilization should take a

⁷⁴ Petrova, 2001.

⁷⁵ I use the terms Romani movement and/or Roma mobilization broadly to refer to both the international Romani organizations composing Roma representatives from different countries, the local Roma NGOs in European countries which struggle at the national level for Roma rights but have close links to each other and the increasing Roma representation in national parliaments and local political institutions.

⁷⁶ Petrova, 2001.

secessionist version has been discussed by Roma activists.⁷⁷ However, what usually happens and is partly accepted is that the Romani movement at the national level, at least, should take different forms according to the characteristics of the political regimes it works upon.

The second debatable issue within the Romani movement is the existence of the large number of non-Roma activists. As Ristic suggests in the roundtable discussion of ERRC (European Roma Rights Centre):

On a larger level, the Romani movement does not exist. To the extent that the movement does exist on the European level, it is full of outside influences. To be honest, in reality, to me it looks more as if non-Romani people are presently making the Romani movement, with the participation of some Roma. So the Romani movement, in my opinion, has artificial appearance. Definitely we are "guests" on this planet and as guests; everything we have or receive is a gift for us. I think we need to change this situation.⁷⁸

In this context, the status and somehow “dominant, hegemonic” position of non-Roma within the Romani movement as non-sufferers of Roma marginalization has been regarded as a contradiction in terms when the still low level of participation of the Gypsy/Roma within the Romani movement is concerned.

The role of the emerging Roma intellectuals in the Romani movement and their attempts for the construction of ethnic consciousness around being a Roma constitutes the other realm which has been discussed. In Gheorge’s words:

Who is the actor promoting this kind of new Gypsy perception? Is it a legitimated actor who does it? Here again, bearing in mind the experience

⁷⁷ Gheorghe, p.160.

⁷⁸ Roundtable Discussion, “The Romani movement: what shape, what direction?” *Roma Rights* 4 (2001), available (online): <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=1292>.

of Eastern European countries I think that the reality which is now appearing is that of a small Gypsy bourgeois, an important group of people, educated and articulate, and sometimes integrated within the surrounding society and exposed to the ideological discourse in the political structures of these European countries. Many of us are part of this establishment, created by socialist and communist parties which did have a discourse with the poor, the disadvantaged and those who suffered from the fascist regimes. This happened in the 1950s and 1960s and it opened the doors of schools and social mobility for different ethnic groups including some Roma individuals who were promoted to different levels of political bureaucracy and administration.....I have been curious now to meet and recognize this type of person, educated, part of the establishment, who could create pressure within the establishment for us to be recognized as Gypsies.....I do not wish to elaborate further at this point but clearly this new stratum of Gypsy intellectuals is a phenomenon of wider interest in the study of ethnicity and the role of intellectuals and should be a subject of scholarly investigation and research. How many are there of this new kind of actor, these Gypsy entrepreneurs in the field of politics and administration? What will be the outcome of their actions? This needs to be studied and evaluated.⁷⁹

Apart from these debatable issues; the fourth one was about the low participation of the Gypsy/Roma and their lack of confidence in the Romani movement. Especially in the case of Roma political parties, as Vermeersch asserts, there is the problem of mass mobilization. “The gap between the Roma elites within politics and their constituencies in many cases proved to be unbridgeable. The elites were simply not known among local communities or their legitimacy as representatives was severely contested”⁸⁰

Since there is a wide range of issues that form contested domains in the Romani movement, the Roma mobilization is still unable to penetrate and influence the Gypsy/Roma communities in rural areas and at the outskirts of the cities. In many parts

⁷⁹ Gheorghe, pp. 158-159.

⁸⁰ Peter Vermeersch, “Roma Identity and Ethnic Mobilisation in Central European Politics” paper prepared for the workshop on identity politics, ECPR joint sessions, Grenoble, 6-11, April 2001.

of the continent, the marginalized and disadvantaged status of the Gypsy/Roma are still persistent as well as the racist violence against them. Nevertheless, the Romani movement has been triggered and fostered by the delivery of a large amount of funds by the EU and other international NGOs.

Existing Publications on the Gypsies/Roma in Turkey: Their Insights and Weaknesses

The status of the Gypsy/Roma community in Turkey has both similarities and differences when compared to its counterparts in Europe. There is a growing academic literature on the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey, although not at a comparable amount when the literature on European or American Roma is considered. However, the drawbacks of this literature necessitate further works to be produced. The main criticisms towards as well as valuable contributions of the existing literature can be briefly introduced as follows:

The already published works on Gypsy/Roma in Turkey can be examined within three groups: non-academic ones, books and articles based on quantitative data (surveys), and micro analyses based on ethnographies of Roma districts in different parts of Turkey. In the first group of non-academic works, Nazım Alpman and Mustafa Aksu's publications are the leading ones. Alpman as a journalist has written extensively on the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey. His two published books "*Başka Dünyanın İnsanları Çingeneler*" and "*Trakya Çingeneleri: Sınırdaki Yaşayanlar*" are based on interviews he made with the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey and in the Balkans. His books are composed of Roma narratives revealing their status in the margins. (eg: disappearance of traditional Gypsy occupations, Gypsy/Roma lacking even identity cards, stereotypes of local

authorities towards Gypsy/Roma and their perception as “criminals”, their low socioeconomic status etc.). Although interesting details can be found in these books, Alpman’s publications are unavoidably journalistic works and do not have the scope to offer deeper analyses on Gypsy/Roma.⁸¹

On the other hand, Mustafa Aksu has become a popular media figure in the last months when he declared that he was a Gypsy after long years of high-rank civic service. His life story is a clear example of how being a Gypsy is perceived in Turkish society among Roma and non-Roma alike as a barricade for higher class position. His book *Türkiye’de Çingene Olmak*⁸² is an autobiographic work revealing the tragic features of being a Gypsy in Turkey. Aksu has made significant contributions to anti-racism towards Gypsy/Roma by succeeding to have the stereotypical definitions of Gypsy/Roma removed from the dictionary and encyclopedia of Türk Tarihi Kurumu (Turkish History Association). However, he owes his popularity in the media to his declarations that many artists and singers, politicians in Turkey have in fact Gypsy origins.⁸³

The second groups of works on Gypsy/Roma communities in Turkey are mostly quantitative studies based on surveys conducted in Roma districts. Among those publications the ones produced by researchers in Bilgi University are rather significant. Bilgi University is located in Kuştepe and Dolapdere which are two districts in Istanbul,

⁸¹ Nazım Alpman, “*Başka Dünyanın İnsanları*” *Çingeneler* (İstanbul:Ozan Yayıncılık, 1993); Nazım Alpman, *Trakya Çingeneleri: Sınırdaki Yaşayanlar* (İstanbul:Bileşim Yayınları, 2004).

⁸² Mustafa Aksu, *Türkiye’de Çingene Olmak* (İstanbul:Ozan Yayıncılık, 2003).

⁸³ *Sabah*, 16 June 2006.

are densely populated by Gypsy/Roma communities. The university declares that those districts are chosen on purpose in order to contribute to the socioeconomic development of those regions. Therefore, Bilgi University conducts regular research on those districts in order to determine the patterns of social change. Bilgi University is also the only university in Turkey which has its own Romani Studies department. Therefore, it is the leading institution for Roma studies in Turkey, in the sense that it both encourages research on Gypsy/Roma and develops projects together with the Roma organizations. One of the published works of the university is *Kuştepe Araştırması 1999*.⁸⁴

Based on surveys and oral histories, it is argued that in Kuştepe Gypsy/Roma community is the second most populous ethnic group. (The first is the people from the Black Sea Region). It is also stated that one group of Gypsy/Roma are those whose grandparents came to the region in 1924 during the population exchange between Greece and Turkey. The second group is composed of those who were the early residents of Istanbul. The major findings regarding Gypsy/Roma in Kuştepe are as follows: they do not have regular jobs, they are usually collecting garbage and selling flowers in the streets, they do not have access to social services. Therefore, they usually engage in informal economy lacking a regular payment and health insurance. Although the book is significant in the sense that, through surveys, it has offered the first systematic data on the demography, socioeconomic status and origins of Gypsy/Roma in one of the districts they heavily populate; it lacks in-depth analysis. The articles in the

⁸⁴Gülten Kazgan, Hasan Kirmanoğlu, Çiğdem Çelik and Arus Yumul, *Kuştepe Araştırması 1999* (İstanbul : İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1999).

book do not go further than being a neatly organized statistical data. We do learn about the low socioeconomic status of Gypsy/Roma in the district, but the practices and processes leading to that status as well as the articulations of Gypsy/Roma and the strategies they develop regarding their marginal status are not elaborated. In this sense, most of the articles can not escape to be solely descriptive ones.

Suat Kolukırık is another researcher who extensively writes on Gypsy/Roma. His articles are usually on Gypsy/Roma living in the Tarlaşaı district of İzmir. Combining surveys and in-depth interviews, he examines, from a sociological perspective, a wide range of issues from political participation, and perception of identity to Gypsy occupations in his articles. Those articles based on his dissertation titled *Aramızdaki Yabancı: Çingeneler*⁸⁵ and his newly conducted research in Tarlaşaı , offer valuable insights. Engaging in an in-depth analysis of social and political patterns in Tarlaşaı district and the identity formation of the Gypsy/Roma community living there, his arguments offer significant points to merge on. His analysis of the stereotypes about Gypsies inherent in the very structure of the language like proverbs, idioms and tales make one recognize how pejorative understanding of an ethnic group is internalized through daily use of the language.

The problem with Kolukırık's perspective is the lack of a theoretical account that would support his arguments. Conceptualizing the low socioeconomic status of Gypsy/Roma, he applies terms like marginalization, and social exclusion but does not

⁸⁵Suat Kolukırık, "Aramızdaki Yabancı:Çingeneler",(Ph.D. diss., Ege Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2004).

engage in a theoretical discussion of them. Furthermore, his analysis and arguments on the various patterns of Gypsy marginalization and self-perception in Tarlabası as well as in Turkey in general offer significant insights which would motivate the scholars to ponder more deeply in analyses of Gypsy communities in Turkey from different perspectives. For the sake of a comparison of the Gypsy/Roma communities living in different regions of Turkey, his articles are also fascinating.

Romanies in the Metropolitan Municipality Area of İzmir (İzmir Büyükşehir Bütününde Romanlar) is an edited work based on a large scale survey conducted in 11 Roma districts of İzmir. The survey questions comprise demography, characteristics of the parish, characteristics of dwellings, patterns of political and local participation, and socioeconomic status.⁸⁶ The argument of Zerrin Toprak who is one of the editors of the book seems to dominate all the articles. Toprak suggests that the EU by supporting Roma mobilization aims to provoke Gypsy/Roma in Turkey for self-determination. She also suggests that the insistence of the EU on the amendment of the 1934 law of settlement has a hidden agenda. For Toprak, the EU aims to deport Gypsies on European territories and has chosen Turkey as the country where Gypsies could be accommodated.⁸⁷

Such a conspiratorial approach constitutes the first drawback of the study. Besides that, all the articles adhere to the idea that there is no systematic discrimination

⁸⁶ Zerrin Toprak, “Roman Yerleşiklerde Kamusal Yaşama Katılım ve Örgütlenme” in *İzmir Büyükşehir Bütününde Romanlar* edited by Zerrin Toprak, Ömür N. Timurcanday Özmen and Gökhan Tenikler (Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 2007), p.2.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.10.

towards Gypsy/Roma by the state. It is argued that from the Ottomans until today, Gypsy/Roma people in Turkey have enjoyed all citizenship rights and obligations. The survey results are claimed to support that legal status sociologically.⁸⁸ In this sense, Roma's marginalized status in Izmir is conceptualized as "social exclusion".⁸⁹ Here, social exclusion refers to not being able to penetrate social services, political participation and the social relations within the larger society. Along with Toprak and Anbarlı Yontar also adheres to the idea that Roma's social exclusion is a result of their poverty and lack of education.⁹⁰ However, the question of which practices and processes lead to Roma poverty and lack of education is not dealt with. The egg-chicken problem between the relation of social exclusion and Roma poverty accompanied by lack of education is left intact. That conceptual drawback of the study along with its conspiratorial arguments and its ignorance of the oppressive policies of the state and local governments necessitates a critical approach to the findings. However, the data obtained through the survey is still significant in the sense that it offers a brief analogy of the socioeconomic status and self-perception of Roma in Izmir with those of Roma in different regions of Turkey. Besides that, it may serve to hasten policy development towards the amelioration of Roma status in the region observed.

⁸⁸ Toprak, p.11.

⁸⁹ According to Anbarlı, in Europe Roma face discrimination, but in Turkey they are socially excluded. For a more detailed discussion see: Şeniz Anbarlı, "Sosyal Bir Kategori Olarak Romanlar ve Sosyal Dışlanmaya Bağlı Sorunları" in *İzmir Büyükşehir Bütününde Romanlar*, edited by Zerrin Toprak, Ömür N. Timurcanday Özmen and Gökhan Tenikler (Ankara:Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 2007), p.140.

⁹⁰ İbrahim Güray Yontar, "İzmir'de Yerleşik Romanlarda Yoksulluk Olgusu" in *İzmir Büyükşehir Bütününde Romanlar* edited by Zerrin Toprak Ömür N. Timurcanday Özmen and Gökhan Tenikler (Ankara:Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 2007), p.208.

The recent book on Roma in Turkey is *Romanlar ve Sosyal Politika*. The research was conducted in Zonguldak, Çanakkale, Batman, Nusaybin (Martin) and was cooperated by *Sosyal ve Kültürel Yaşamı Geliştirme Derneği*(Association for Developing Social and Cultural Life) and *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Politikalar Forumu*(Boğaziçi University The Social Policy Forum).⁹¹ Besides being an academic work, the research aims at proposing some policy recommendations for the improvement of the socioeconomic status of Roma in Turkey based on the data obtained from different Roma districts.

It is stated in the book that Roma in Turkey usually work in the informal economy without access to insurance. Their settlements have poor conditions lacking sanitation and hygiene. Roma children usually do not continue their education and begin to work for their families at an early age.⁹² When examining the socioeconomic status of Roma in those four districts, the authors use the term “social exclusion”. Social exclusion is conceptualized as a diversified process including economic, political, cultural and spatial exclusion. The authors state that the diversified social exclusion the Roma face brings about two effects: inconvenience and unpredictability of life. After that brief analysis of the data obtained from the research, the authors mostly focus on policy recommendations.⁹³ For them, the main problem is how to achieve “social inclusion of Roma” and the main formula for this is to strengthen the welfare state.

⁹¹ Başak E. Akkan, Goncagül Gümüş, Abdullah Karatay and Başak Erel, *Romanlar ve Sosyal Politika*, (İstanbul:n.p., 2008).

⁹² Ibid., p.14.

⁹³ Ibid, p.57.

Creating job opportunities for the Roma communities, enabling Roma children's access to education and sustaining better health services would be possible in that sense.

They also assert that the interaction between Roma and local governors should be better enabled, especially when possible transformations are attempted in Roma districts.⁹⁴ The findings of the research are significant in the sense that they allow us to determine some basic similarities regarding the socioeconomic status of Roma in different parts of Turkey. Conceptualizing Roma marginality as social exclusion which takes many forms, the book goes one step further than the previous works. However, the authors are far from focusing on the dynamics behind the social exclusion(s) the Roma communities face. Focusing on the significance of developing social policies towards Roma in Turkey, they do not question power structures, Turkish citizenship and the racist discourse towards the Roma communities. Mostly adhering to the policy framework of the EU regarding the Roma, the authors claim that a social welfare state along with increasing tendency among the Roma to get organized would alleviate Roma marginalization.

All the works reviewed above lack first of all a well-structured theoretical framework. Therefore, they usually remain as descriptive analyses. Secondly, they usually do not question the role of state policies and institutions and the scope of Turkish citizenship and nationality when explaining Roma subordination. In this sense, my research on the Gypsy/Roma community in Lüleburgaz will fill this gap dealing with those issues through a qualitative analysis in an understudied region.

⁹⁴ Akkan et al, pp. 86-97.

The Discourse of Racism: Some Theoretical Insights

Race and racism have been elusive phenomena scholars have attempted to develop universal, fixed conceptualizations to explain their ambiguous nature , but those conceptualizations have failed to work out in different spaces, times and contexts. As Miles points out, in the mid-nineteenth century, the assertion that the world population was composed of distinct races which held a biologically determined capacity for cultural development constituted the dominant theory of race. The accumulation of scientific evidence starting in the early twentieth century mostly counterfeited that assertion. However, when the National Socialists in Germany adhered to that dominant theory of race by the 1930s gathering so called anthropological data, the idea of race connoting biological inferiority/superiority began to circulate again in Europe and North America.⁹⁵ The Holocaust experience in Germany- systemic extermination of Jews

⁹⁵Robert Miles, “Apropos the idea of race . . . again” in *Theories of Race and Racism : Reader* edited by John Solomos (Florence, KY, USA: Routledge, 1999), p.125.

⁹⁶ John Solomos and L.Back, “Introduction: Theorising race and racism”, in *Theories of Race and Racism : Reader* edited by John Solomos (Florence, KY, USA: Routledge,1999),p.11.

⁹⁷ However, Bauman on the contrary claims that anti-semitism and the extermination of Jews during World War II, were in fact the very product of the modern structures and mechanisms driving them. For a more detailed discussion see: Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, (n.p: Cornell University Press, 2000).

along with Gypsies, homosexuals and the disabled based on the idea of the biological/scientific inferiority of those mentioned - can be regarded as the turning point for the revival of race studies.

As Solomos and Back assert research on political anti-semitism in the aftermath of the Holocaust – although the history of anti-semitism and thus racism goes back further- “has provided some important insights into the ways in which racial ideologies and practices are constructed by and through specific political movements.”⁹⁶ The tragedy of the Holocaust made a traumatic influence in the consciousness of “modern man” conflicting with the ideals of modernism which constructed humans as “rational, self-sufficient, logical” individuals devoid of floating in the extremes.⁹⁷ Since then , contributions from various scholars adhering to different intellectual/political traditions have been made in order to explain the “racist state of social phenomena”. As summarized by Goldberg, attempts to explain racism by Baker, Van der Berge , and Wilson treated racism as a function of strictly biological or sociobiological mechanisms; while Stember saw it as a function of sexual desires and fears. Kovel and Pettigrew , on the other hand, regarded racism as a product of our general psychological constitution.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ David Goldberg, “Raking the Field of the Discourse of Racism”, *Journal of Black Studies* 18, no.1 (Sep., 1987), p.59.

Starting in the 1960s, in the flourishing scheme of development theory, a more systematic analysis of racism came from the Marxists. Based on the assessment in German Ideology that ideology is “false consciousness”; Cox treated racism as the ideology of the ruling class, a mechanism to sustain and reproduce capitalist mode of exploitation:

“.....”But the fact of crucial significance is that racial exploitation is merely one aspect of the problem of the proletarianization of labor, regardless of the color of the laborer. Hence racial antagonism is essentially political-class conflict. The capitalist exploiter, being opportunistic and practical, will utilize any convenience to keep his labor and other resources freely exploitable. He will devise and employ race prejudice when that becomes convenient. As a matter of fact, the white proletariat of early capitalism had to endure burdens of exploitation quite similar to those which many colored peoples must bear today.....The capitalist exploitation of the colored workers, it should be observed, consigns them to employments and treatment that is humanly degrading. In order to justify this treatment the exploiters must argue that the workers are innately degraded and degenerate, consequently they naturally merit their condition. It may be mentioned incidentally that the ruling-class conception of degradation will tend to be that of all persons in the society, even that of the exploited person himself; and the work done by degraded persons will tend to degrade superior persons who attempt to do it.”⁹⁹

Wallerstein on the other hand, argues that peoplehood is composed of races, nations and ethnic groups and it is the institutional construct of historical capitalism; while classes are “objective categories”. The point is that the constructed “peoples -the races, nations, the ethnic groups-” are interlinked with “objective class”.¹⁰⁰ The rationale behind

⁹⁹ Oliver C.Cox, “Race Relations: Its meaning, beginning, and progress”, In *Theories of Race and Racism : Reader* edited by John Solomos, (Florence, KY, USA: Routledge,1999),p. 73.

¹⁰⁰ Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity” *Sociological Forum* 2, no. 2 (Spring, 1987), p.387.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

Wallerstein's argument is that his conceptualization of race, nation and ethnic group is subordinate to class relations. For him:

The concept of 'race' is related to the axial division of labor in the world economy, the core-periphery antinomy. The concept of 'nation' is related to the political superstructure of this historical system, the sovereign states that form and derive from the interstate system. The concept of 'ethnic group' is related to the creation of household structures that permits the maintenance of large components of non-waged labor in the accumulation of capital.¹⁰¹

Those Marxist accounts of racism that reduce "race and ethnicity" to class relations to "ideological constructs" of the ruling classes to better enable capitalist exploitation, have been criticized by the others. One of those influential critics has been John Rex. Adhering to the questions of whether class really has some kind of superior ontological status to race and whether class struggle is a more important, central structural and dynamic principle in sociology than race war; Rex offers the necessity for a reassessment of the role of the race concept in sociological theory.¹⁰² Rex admits that the position of the "negro" is related to his/her relation to the means of production, but believes that the criteria that determine who is to fill inferior working class roles are non-economic ones. In this sense, Rex offers that a general, universal sociological theory of race should be adopted that would make it possible to understand the race

¹⁰² John Rex, "Race Relations in Sociological Theory" in *Theories of Race and Racism : Reader* edited by John Solomos (Florence, KY, USA: Routledge Publications ,1999), p.119.

relations not only in the US but also in the Union of South Africa. Rex also argues that such an all-encompassing sociological account of race relations must bear:

“....”a situation of differentiation, in equality and pluralism as between groups; the possibility of clearly distinguishing between such groups by their physical appearance, their culture or occasionally merely by their ancestry; and the justification and explanation of this discrimination in terms of some kind of implicit or explicit theory, frequently but not always a biological kind.¹⁰³

Robert Miles, on the other hand, has been one of the most influential theorists of racism.

From a Neo-Marxist perspective -which keeps him away from a crude economic reductionism when examining racism- Miles removes his analysis more to the ideological blueprint of capitalist processes which produce and reproduce racism. His main discomfort with the existing theories of race and racism is their unquestioned adherence to the concept of race. - either as a reality-in-itself or as an analytical category. In this sense, Miles suggests that the attempt should be to “deconstruct race and detach it from the concept of racism.” For Miles, such an action would allow us to penetrate more deeply into the effects of the process of racialisation and the expression of racism within the dynamics of the capitalist world economic system.¹⁰⁴ Abandoning the concept of race totally, Miles argues that what is at stake is how the ideology of racism works through the process of racialisation which constructs the Other “as a specific and inferior category of being particularly suited to providing labor power within unfree relations of production”. Within this framework, he sees racism and racialisation not merely as ideologies of “false consciousness”, but as ideological forces

¹⁰³ Rex, p. 124.

¹⁰⁴ Miles, 1999, p. 140.

which enable certain populations to be accommodated in specific class positions. In this sense, they structure the exploitation of labor power.¹⁰⁵

As Solomos and Back assert, Miles when focusing on empirical cases in Britain and the rest of Europe, successfully uncovers the political, class and ideological relationships which help us to understand the racial conflict and change in those societies. His deconstruction of race by identifying it above all as “a political construct” and his analysis of the process of racialisation as not merely conducted for the need of the capitalist world economy for human mobility, but also as a process created by the state to set the limits of citizenship in a sense to draw the boundaries of human mobility are significant contributions to the understanding of racism

However, two drawbacks of Miles’s analysis can be mentioned. One of those is suggested by Anthias and Yuval-Davis. They assert that:

Miles restricts the use of the term racism to the ideologies but does not mention practices, institutions and structures of effects which work on supposed racial hierarchies. In this sense, many diversified forms of racism and racialisation like cultural exclusion can be out of concern which constitute significant forms of racism in contemporary societies and which are not necessarily and solely attempted by state mechanisms.¹⁰⁶

Secondly, although Miles points out how racialisation also enables the drawings of the boundaries of citizenship, his analysis inevitably prioritizes class struggle and capitalist exploitation in the last instance.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁰⁶Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval- Davis, *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-racist Struggle* (New York:Routledge Publications, 1993), p.11.

All those theories mentioned above deal with the phenomena of race and racism in a unitary, one-sided path. Claiming to have universal accounts for understanding racism elsewhere- in any time and geography-, they adhere to fixed, uncontested conceptualizations of race and racism. However, when implemented in a different case, they lose their relevance and accountability. It is what happens when racism towards Gypsy/Roma in Turkey and the process of their racialisation are concerned. Reducing Roma marginalization in Turkey to the stereotypes of the majority ethnic group regarding Gypsies' biological inferiority, or the sexual fears and desires of majority ethnic groups, or merely to class exploitation would be inadequate.

At this point, keeping a distance from universal and general accounts of racism and racialisation when understanding racial phenomena in different geographies and on different groups is quite significant.¹⁰⁷ It may be impossible, for instance, to utilize the same theory of racism and racialisation when analyzing racism towards African-Americans in the US and the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey; since Gypsies were not enslaved by the majority population in Turkey or they did not engage in an anti-racist struggle towards Whites, as did African-Americans in the US. Therefore, the temporality and spatiality of racialized processes which create specific forms of racist discourses as well

¹⁰⁷ The postmodernist turn in the social sciences somehow helps us to fill the vacuum in racism studies. Rejecting the prioritization of "the structures" and criticizing the strong adherence to class relations, those later accounts of race and racism offer new insights. Their focus on the very daily practices of power producing racist discourses, the emphasis to understand social phenomena within a more diversified and complex web of ethnic, cultural and economic relations specific to context and time, the claim on the unfixity and temporality of identity and the focus on agency constitute some of the conceptual innovations of those accounts.

as diversified effects on targeted groups should be taken into accounts.¹⁰⁸ The assertion that there is not racism, but racisms which are, as Solomos and Back suggest¹⁰⁹ specific to local manifestations, but have close relations with national public discourses will be my central departing point.

In my framework, racism towards and racialisation of the Gypsy/Roma communities necessitates more flexible and diversified conceptualizations cross cutting different forms of subordination. Instead of merely analyzing the mechanisms of racism and the process of racialisation with regard to uniform working of structures (capitalist mode of production and the labor market, concrete state policies of assimilation or extermination), what I attempt to demonstrate with regard to Gypsy/Roma in Turkey is how racism through the process of racialisation works through not a clearly identifiable, but complex web of interlinked social, political and economic phases. In this sense, as Gilroy suggests “racism is an interplay between struggles based around different forms of subordination.”¹¹⁰

The most significant challenge when adopting a framework for racism is how to identify it. The above mentioned Marxist theories of race and racism tend to regard

¹⁰⁸ Ali Rattansi, “Racism, Sexuality and Political Economy: Marxism/ Foucault/Postmodernism” in *Ethnicity and Economy : "Race and Class" Revised* edited by Steve Fenton (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.54.

¹⁰⁸ Solomos and Back,p. 24.

¹⁰⁹ Paul Gilroy, “*There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack*”: *The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (University Of Chicago Press, 1991), p.3.

racial phenomena as “ideology”. However, both the crude Marxist understanding of ideology and its later elaborative definitions introduced by Gramsci and Althusser are inadequate, when the complex dynamics, mechanisms and structure of racism towards Gypsy/Roma in Turkey is attempted to be uncovered. In this sense, following Goldberg , I suggest that racism is “a discourse which is composed of the practices related to its discursive formation”. Identifying racism as a discourse in a Foucauldian sense, allows one to grasp “all the various entities constitutive of it.”¹¹¹ Quoting from Foucault, Goldberg briefly suggests that:

A well-defined field of discourse arises out of a “discursive formation” consisting in a totality of ordered relations and correlations: of subjects to each other and to objects; of economic production and reproduction, cultural symbolism and connotation; of rules and moral rules; of social, political, economic and legal inclusion and exclusion. The sociodiscursive formation, in other words, consists of a large set of statements and expressions: “is’s” and “oughts”, “do’s” and “don’ts”; “cans” and “cannots”, “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not”. At a given historical conjuncture, the conditions of existence and coexistence, production and reproduction, preservation, transformation, and dissolution- all this promotes rules constitutive of a discursive field by defining an *object* that can be spoken of and the *mode* in terms of which it can be analyzed, its elements named and classified, its functions explained.¹¹²

Following the framework of analysis offered by Foucault for defining the field of discourse, Goldberg treats racism as the object of the discursive field which arises out of “the established and determined relations between subjects and institutions, economic and social practices; by patterns and principles of conduct and ethics; by classificatory systems and technologies.” However, Goldberg also asserts that one should be careful

¹¹¹Goldberg, p. 59.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 60.

when deconstructing racism since it is not simply reducible to one of the relations mentioned, and so cannot be solely explained with regard to economic determinism, sociological or biological reductionism.¹¹³ Thus, what I attempt to demonstrate is the necessity to grasp “racism” as a discourse constructed through the process of racialisation which would enable one with its conceptual flexibility to compose all different and sometimes contradictory forms of social, economic, cultural and political practices, rules, institutions and policies as well as the very everyday language and modes of conduct - all those creating the racialized entity by drawing the boundaries of the *habitus* for it in a given territory allowing it as well to develop strategies for survival in this discursively determined life space. In the coming chapters, all those mentioned constitutive determinants of the discourse of racism as well as the strategies developed by the racialized entity towards and through it will be made concrete.

In this sense, the process of racialisation through which the discourse of racism is constructed should be conceptualized as well. The most innovative contribution of Miles in his conceptualization of racism is his offering the term “racialisation”. However, Miles restricts the process of racialisation which creates racialized entities to the domain of class relations. In Miles, “racialisation is an ideological force of economic and political relations of domination which locates certain populations in specific class positions which better legitimizes the exploitation of their labor power.”¹¹⁴ However, when putting the process of the racialisation of Gypsy/Roma in Turkey within a context, referring only to class relations would be inadequate. Rather, as Small offers

¹¹³ Goldberg, p. 61.

¹¹⁴ Miles, 1999, p. 132.

racialization should be understood as a process in which “the distribution of valuable resources such as political power, employment, education and housing is done in such a way that sustains who owns what, works and lives where and has good health”. In this sense, “it refers to the normal, recurrent and routinized procedures of institutions that shape and constrain our daily lives, from politics, economics, education, health and other spheres of social life”.¹¹⁵ It is the process through which power operates and transforms and reforms social relations through racial categories and consciousness.¹¹⁶ What results within the dynamics of racialisation is “racialized entities/groups” who are attributed social, political, economic and cultural status within the overall structuring of society.¹¹⁷ . Being constructed and reconstructed recurrently, that process is never complete,

¹¹⁵ Stephen Small, “The Contours of Racialization: Structures, Representations and Resistance in the United States” in *Race, Identity, and Citizenship : A Reader* edited by Rodolfo D. Torres et al. (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), p.49.

¹¹⁶ Jo-Anne Lee and John Kutz. “Introduction: Towards a Critical Theory of Racisms , Anti-Racisms and Racialization” in *Situating “Race” and Racisms in Space, Time and Theory Critical Essays for Activists and Scholars* edited by Jo-Anne Lee and John Kutz (n.p.:McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), p.4.

¹¹⁷ That positionality of a racialized group which is the result of being attributed some kind of status in a society may not be always in the negative sense. For instance, Hungarians in Romania, Qatalans in Spain, Scottish in Britain have more privileged access to resources when compared to the other ethnic groups living in those countries.

¹¹⁸ Jeanette Armstrong and Roxana NG, “Deconstructing Race, Deconstructing Racism:A Conversation Between Jeanette Armstrong and Roxana NG” in *Situating “Race” and Racisms in Space, Time and Theory Critical Essays for Activists and Scholars* edited by Jo-Anne Lee and John Kutz. (n.p.:McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), p.39.

¹¹⁹ Lee and Kutz,p. 16; Anthias and Yuval-Davis,p.14.

fixed and permanent in nature and may take contradictory forms according to time and context.

In this context, through the process of racialization, racism as a discourse becomes systemic in the sense that “certain ways of doing things have become normalized or naturalized to the point that they become considered common sense”.¹¹⁸ The most significant difference between old and contemporary forms of racisms should also be mentioned. Racist discourses no longer refer to the biological/scientific difference but they work through the so called essential cultural behaviors of certain groups in society that are different from ours.¹¹⁹ The criteria for inclusion and exclusion can thus be settled through racist discourse condemning some to a marginalized status due to the inferiority and distinctness of their cultural behaviors and traits.¹²⁰

The effect of the racist discourse on racialized entities that is overwhelmingly important when the status of Gypsy/Roma in Turkey is considered is its link to citizenship. Here, the key point is who enjoys the benefits of citizenship and to what degree. As in the case of Gypsy/Roma in Turkey, a racialized ethnic group may entail citizenship status in a country; but as part of the nationalist project it may not be regarded as “part of the nation”. What results is a very limited access to citizenship benefits which composes the distribution of resources in a society. Therefore, that

¹²⁰For instance, Turks from Bulgaria are welcomed in the labor market and elsewhere by the residents of most of the cities in Marmara region, while Gypsy/Roma who have been long settled in the region have been attributed lower statuses in the social stratum. The motive behind that is the acceptable cultural traits and behaviors of Bulgarian Turks when compared with Gypsy/Roma.

interlink between nationalism and racism is quite significant and will be elaborated in the next chapter.

The racist discourse on Gypsy/Roma in Turkey which creates effects interlinked with the citizenship status of Gypsy/Roma is also significant, since Gypsy/Roma in Lüleburgaz construct their identity in terms of Turkish citizenship. Keeping in mind that subjects of a discourse are not passive recipients but also agents developing strategies of survival in the habitus created for them; racialized entities should be regarded as people “reshaping their own destinies and simultaneously reworking their social and cultural frameworks of living”.¹²¹ That focus on the “agency” of the racialized group –in my case the residents of the Alıyol and Kuştepe districts of Lüleburgaz- should be given specific attention.

Racism towards the Turkish Gypsies/Roma at the State and Societal Level and in the Labor Market

The departing point of this chapter is the assertion that racism as a discourse is constructed through the process of racialisation which entails social, economic, cultural and political practices, rules, institutions and policies as well as everyday language and modes of conducts. Hence, I will attempt to demonstrate how those racist manifestations

¹²¹ Steve Fenton and Harriet Bradley, “Ethnicity, Economy and Class: Towards the Middle Ground” in *Ethnicity and Economy : "Race and Class" Revisited* edited by Steve Fenton (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.30.

¹²²Solomos and Back, p. 24.

can be examined with regard to their effects on the residents of the Altıyol and Kuştepe districts of Lüleburgaz. It should be kept in mind that racist discourse against an ethnic group within a nation-state reveals itself through local manifestations while “having close relations to national public discourses.”¹²² This is why I argue that, the overall process of racialisation towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey should be briefly analyzed with respect to its historical manifestations before exploring the process of racialisation in Kuştepe and Altıyol in full terms.

In particular, what I will try to demonstrate are the ways in which the residents of the Altıyol and Kuştepe districts of Lüleburgaz have been constituted as a racialized group on the basis of Gypsiness at the state and societal level as well as in the labor market. Moreover, I claim that such processes cannot be grasped coherently without reference to the practices, rules and institutions regarding the Gypsy/Roma which have emerged in Turkey overtime. In doing so, I expect that the centuries long social, political, economic and legal construction of and exclusion of the Gypsy/Roma communities in Turkey will be further clarified. In particular, the ongoing continuities will be uncovered in the case of Lüleburgaz.

Racism at the Societal Level towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey

The discourse of racism functioning through the process of racialisation cannot be solely uncovered with regard to the unitary practices/policies of the state. It should also be understood as “the normal, recurrent and routinized procedures of institutions that shape

and constrain our daily lives, from politics, economics, education, health and other spheres of social life.”¹²³

In this section, I will focus on the process of racialisation against the Gypsy/Roma communities which has been functioning with regard to the discursive construction/imagination/projection of them by the majority ethnic group in Turkey. In this context, I will try to demonstrate the ways in which the discourse of racism towards the Gypsy/Roma communities in Turkey operate, being constructed and reconstructed in the “language, daily conduct, and everyday relations of power”. In particular, I will unravel the social attitudes of ethnic Turks in Lüleburgaz towards the Gypsy/Roma based on the in-dept interviews with several of them.

The discourse of racism operating at the societal level is significant to uncover, since both state racism towards the Gypsy/Roma communities in Turkey and the racism in the labour market -which will be elaborated in the next sections- are related in some respects to the discursive construction/imagination/projection by the ethnic Turks of the social identity of the Gypsies/Roma in Turkey. At this point, it will also be possible to detect how old racism(s) based on the idea of the biological inferiority of some “Others” have taken new forms which put the emphasis on culture- the so called inherent cultural traits of the “Others” which necessitate constituting them as outsiders in society.

In order to understand how those mechanisms of exclusion embedded in the stereotyped images of the Gypsy/Roma operate at the societal level –which, in turn, leads to the recurrent construction of the Gypsy/Roma community as a racialized entity-, I will also make use of psychoanalytic theories. That literature, I suppose, will help to

¹²³Small, p.49.

us understand how the majority ethnic groups justify and legitimize the marginality of the “Others” and their deprivation of basic benefits of citizenship in line with the discourse that the new forms of racism(s) rely upon

Representation of the Gypsy/Roma in Ottoman Society

The representation of the Gypsy/Roma communities in Ottoman culture can be observed in the accounts of European and Turkish travelers as well as in the Turkish oral tradition.¹²⁴ Those sources reveal that the Gypsy/Roma communities were stigmatized in the Ottoman society mostly through the stereotypes about their religiosity and sexuality. The common belief of the Ottoman subjects and the Ottoman administration regarding the Gypsies/Roma was that their religiosity should be suspected and kept an eye on.¹²⁵ As wanderers, they were perceived as irreligious people conducting their peculiar religious practices or as “pretenders” who confessed Islam or Christianity in pragmatist ways. As quoted by Oprisan, the following story found in one of the European traveler accounts confirms that common perception:

¹²⁴Faika Çelik, “Exploring Marginality in the Ottoman Empire : Gypsies or People of Malice(Ehl-i Fesad) as viewed by the Ottomans”, *EUI Working Paper RSCAS*, no:39 (2004), p.11.

¹²⁵Çelik, 2004; Marushiovaka and Popov, 2001; Eyal Ginio, “Neither muslims nor zimnis:gypsies in the Ottoman empire”, *Romani Studies* 14, no.2 (Dec 2004) ; Ana Oprisan, “Overview on the Roma in Turkey”, *Journal of Dom Research Center* 1, no: 7, (Fall/Winter 2002), also available (online):<http://www.domresearchcenter.com/journal/17/>.

The Sultan Suleiman, the first Ottoman emperor with this name (named also The Law Maker), when he had elaborated and enhanced his political canons and other regulations adequate to administration, wanted to enforce a law also for the Gypsies and, in this respect, he commanded that all the older Gypsies get together, no matter if they were Christians (because many of them walk around in the name of Jesus, linked by the Greek or by the Armenian church), or Muslims. And he asked everyone about his family and what religion he had. Some of them confessed they believed in Christ, but others in the Prophet Muhammad. Then, the Sultan fixed for the ones believing in Muhammad a place to stay in Constantinople's outskirts (where there was the old church of Vlaherne). He gave them Imams and Hodjas to teach the old people and the children the Mohammedan Law (shariat) and other arrangements and Muslim ceremonies, then to teach them to frequent the mosque, to veil their women and to make marriages according to the religious Law. But six months passed after this event and the Imams saw no Gypsies coming to the mosque. They heard that they had celebrated marriages without Imam's presence. It was this reason whereby the Sultan understood the bad situation they [Gypsies] lived in. Hearing this, the Sultan decreed that every Gypsy person had the liberty to choose their religion, adding also the favour to exempt from any tax the ones who confessed the Mohammedan religion. Making this decision public, he asked the tax collectors to record the number of the Gypsy people and those who said they were Christians received the haradj – the payment order and began to pay the taxes. After six months, the tax collectors found that none admitted to being a Christian Gypsy. Then, the Sultan commanded that the Christian Gypsies had to pay the haradj together with other Christians in the Empire and the Muslim Gypsies must pay double. This decree is still in power [1722] and this is the reason why all the Gypsies who believe in Muhammad (and there are a great number of them) pay double taxes. If the Christian Gypsy will pay five talents, the Muslim Gypsy is forced to pay ten. The conclusion is that, as in the past the Gypsies were not obliged to have any religion nor comply with any law; nowadays we see our Gypsies everywhere in the same situation".(EXCERPT from Dimitrie Cantemir, "The System or the Structure of the Mohammedan Religion").¹²⁶

The following part is quoted by Çelik from the famous *Seyahatname* of the well known Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi. Similar stereotyping was also reproduced by Çelebi in

¹²⁶ Ana Oprisan, "Overview on the Roma in Turkey", *Journal of Dom Research Center* 1, no: 7, (Fall/Winter 2002), also available (online):<http://www.domresearchcenter.com/journal/17/>.

his account: “The Rumelian Gypsies celebrated Easter with the Christians, the festival of Sacrifice with the Muslims and Passover with Jews. They did not accept any one religion and therefore our Imams refused to conduct funeral services for them but gave them a special cemetery outside Egri Qapu.”¹²⁷ It would be no surprise that a considerable number of Gypsies within the Empire, due to their long-time stigmatization since their arrival from India, practiced the religion(s) in a pragmatist manner. In order to be “included in and respected by” the majority and to benefit from the distribution of resources, the religion was their only weapon especially in the Ottoman Empire where religious affiliation determined the legal and social status of the subjects. However, since they had preserved their so called “paganist” practices as part of their nomadic culture, they were never accepted as devoted believers of Islam or Christianity which kept them from being totally included in any religious community within the Empire. Ginio quotes from the famous nineteenth-century philologist Alexandre Paspati when stating the results of the suspicion towards the religiosity of Ottoman Gypsies: “Their Muslim and Christian neighbours despised them as pagans who made their livings by cheating and stealing. They prevented the Gypsies from participating in religious events and forbade them from entering their mosques and churches. Their adherence to the established religion resulted, according to Paspati's informers, from their desire to receive benefits that they did not deserve.”¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Çelik, p. 11.

¹²⁸ Ginio, p.122.

¹²⁹ Ibid.,p.123.

Immorality and the sexual looseness of the Gypsies were other themes which dominated the representation of the Gypsies in Ottoman society. Ginio reminds the memoirs written by the Ottomans from the second half of the nineteenth century that mention “the provocative behaviors and unrestrained manners of the Gypsy women” compared to Muslim women. Those memoirs imply that “the Gypsies broke the gender boundaries and blatantly violated religious norms.”¹²⁹

Ginio, in his analysis of the Gypsy/Roma community living in Salonica during the Ottoman times, asserts that:

..... along with the Gypsies, the Blacks, the migrant Albanians and converts to Islam shared the common stigma of being foreigners and outsiders in Salonica. However, the ‘otherness’ of the Gypsies stemmed from what the surrounding society perceived as a vagabond routine of nomads and their alleged loose way of life...therefore, they were elusive people who could easily move from one place to another and therefore should be treated with suspicion and a firm hand.¹³⁰

In this context, the hatred/suspicion of the Gypsy/Roma people in Ottoman society which resulted in their racialisation and an emphasis on their irreligiosity and sexual looseness, should be analyzed, in part, with regard to the dichotomy between being sedentary and leading a nomadic way of life. According to McVeigh, sedentarism is “a system of ideas and practices which serves to normalize and reproduce sedentary modes

¹²⁹ Ibid.,p. 123.

¹³⁰ Ginio, p.121.

¹³¹Robbie McVeigh, “Theorising Sedentarism: The Roots of Anti-Nomadism” in *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity* edited by Thomas Acton (Hatfield:University of Hertfordshire Press,1997), p.9.

¹³² Sinead ni Shuinéar, “Why do Gaujos Hate Gypsies So Much Anyway? A Case Study” in *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity* edited by Thomas Acton (Hartfed:University of Hertfordshire Press,1997), p.30.

of existence and pathologize and repress nomadic modes of existence”.¹³¹ In this sense, the Gypsy/Roma who had been mostly nomadic in Ottoman society were stigmatized, since their way of life was far from being accepted as familiar by the settlers. Moreover, as Shuinear suggests, the settlers construct the nomads from the prism of a projection-screen through which they reflect the things they fear and hate within themselves.¹³² Therefore, the Gypsy/Roma in Ottoman society were perceived to be elusive, suspicious and mysterious peoples who should be controlled and kept an eye on. Their alleged irreligiosity and sexual looseness in fact projected the common frailties of settled Ottoman subjects.

Racialisation of the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey through Daily Language and Modes of Conduct

The Turkish language has become the other realm through which stereotypes about the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey have been internalized and transmitted to the next generations reconstituting the Gypsy/Roma community as a racialized entity. Several examples can be found in Turkish which denote the stigmatization of the Gypsy/Roma communities through the everyday usage of language: As Çelik asserts, the word *Çingene*(Gypsy) itself - which is used to identify the Gypsies/Roma along with *şopar* and *esmer vatandaş* - has a derogatory meaning in Turkish implying being shameless, impudent, ill-mannered, dishonest and miserly. In order to hurl someone, calling him/her Gypsy is one

of the worst insults in Turkish.¹³³ Apart from that, Turkish idioms and proverbs are also loaded with negative representations of the Gypsy/Roma. Kolukırık summarizes some of those proverbs and idioms:

Hair comes out of Gypsy's Bismillah [in the name of Allah] (indicating that Gypsies are unreliable and insincere about religious life);
Let neither plum in your garden nor Gypsy on your doorstep;
You are like a Gypsy child. (referring to those who stay in the sun for a long time and turns dark);
One should sleep with a Gypsy woman to break a spell of bad luck;
Half of 72 nations (half of a nation)
Gypsy plays the instruments, Kurd dances;
The Gypsy is noisy, his cart is lousy (refers to Gypsy's filthiness and lousiness);
Did you sleep with a Gypsy? (for one who speaks a lot);
Is there a Gypsy wedding? (for a noisy place);
Don't behave like a Gypsy (said to a miserly person);
Gypsy money (for change or coin); and
Gypsy fight (for verbal fight).¹³⁴

These examples from daily language reveal the long-time discursive construction of the Gypsy/Roma in which the social categorization of the community has been made by attributing it various negative characteristics. It is also possible to detect these stereotyped images of the Gypsy/Roma in several Turkish novels. Kolukırık's analysis uncovers that in Turkish novels from Ottoman times to the present, adjectives like "barefaced", "officious", "shameless", "ignorant", "wild", "nomadic", "the one who swaps his wife", "non-Muslim", "dirty", "cunning", "quarrelsome", "foulmouthed" and "thief" are used to define Gypsies.¹³⁵

¹³³ Çelik, p.12.

¹³⁴ Suat Kolukırık, "Türk Toplumunda Çingene İmgesi ve Önyargısı", *Sosyoloji Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8 (2) (Güz, 2005): 52-71. The Turkish version of this account can be found in Appendix A.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4.

Social and Discursive Construction of the Gypsy/Roma in Lüleburgaz by the Majority Population

During my fieldwork in Lüleburgaz I had the opportunity to conduct interviews with several non-Gypsy/ethnic Turks to understand their perceptions of the Gypsies/Roma living in Lüleburgaz. Not surprisingly, all of them had some memoirs regarding the Gypsies/Roma since the local population in Lüleburgaz has ongoing interactions with the Gypsy/Roma community on the basis of economic exchange in particular. Some of those memoirs and the legends/anecdotes that they shared are the ones transmitted to them by their grandparents due to the fact that the Gypsy/Roma community has been centuries-long residents of the town.

In this context, when the representation and perception of the Gypsy/Roma people in Turkish society from the Ottoman times to today are concerned, the findings of my interviews with the non-Roma(*gadze*) in Lüleburgaz are not surprising. The statements and perceptions of my interviewees regarding the Gypsy/Roma community in Lüleburgaz mostly refer to their sexual looseness, dirtiness and lack of work ethic. Among the various memoirs of my interviewees, the most recurrent ones refer to their “laziness, lack of work ethic, and their tendency for spending their money without future concern”. When asked why the Gypsy/Roma were among the poorest strata in Lüleburgaz, my interviewees responded as follows:

They have no will. Thus they have no money to save.¹³⁶

¹³⁶“*İrade yok . Zaten biriktirecek para da yok*”. (A.B. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 15 April 2008).

They are spending their money on wine. This is their life style. They earn today and spend today.¹³⁷

You don't trust them. They do not come on time. They have many excuses. They claim that they are excluded but they are not.¹³⁸

We were planning to move our house. We found two gypsies and agreed on payment. They walked up. There was the photo of my deceased husband on the wall. He said, "Has this agha died? I have grown with the clothes of this aga. I don't want money. I will carry all this staff for free." Then, they started working. There was an Auer stove. He said, "Call me that old aga." (He meant my father). My father came and said, "What is the problem, dirty Gypsy? He then said, "I would never carry this stove for that money. These stairs are too straight." The stove is on his back. We said, you promised not to take our money? He said "I am now throwing the stove off my back." What could we do? He could have thrown it. A mad guy... We paid more money...¹³⁹

So when we were moving to this house, my husband found two gypsies and took them to the house. He showed them the elevator and reminded that it would not be used to carry the furniture. They came to us and saw the goods. So the agreement was okay. They had just carried two pieces and gave up! We had to increase the payment. They were also fighting with each other.¹⁴⁰

Without considering the possible structural/historical reasons for the Gypsy/Roma's economic marginality, my interviewees legitimize and justify Gypsies' disadvantaged position by attributing them certain cultural traits which they take as the true causes of

¹³⁷“*Şaraba yatırıyorlar. Hayat tarzları bu. Bugün kazanıp bugün yiyorlar.*” (K.C. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 15 April 2008).

¹³⁸“*Güven sağlamıyorlar. Saatinde gelmiyor. Mazeret çok. Onlar dışlanıyoruz diyor, dışlanmıyorlar.*” (S.M. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 15 April 2008).

¹³⁹ The Turkish version of this account can be found in Appendix B.

¹⁴⁰“*Biz de bu eve taşınırken, bulmuş eşim iki Çingene eve götürmüş. Bak burası, asansör kullanılmayacak taşırken, yürüyerek taşınacak eşya diye uyarılmış. Bize de geldiler, eşyayı gördüler. Anlaşma tamam. Daha 2 eşya taşındılar, vazgeçtiler. Hemen zam geldi. Bir taraftan da kendi aralarında kavga ettiler.*” (L.M. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 15 April 2008).

their ever-lasting poverty. At this point, the racialisation of the Gypsy/Roma community in Lüleburgaz can be further elaborated with respect to the so called contemporary/neo/symbolic/differentialist racism discussed by many scholars. Although there is an ongoing discussion on whether the old forms of racism(s) differ significantly from the contemporary racism(s) , it has been widely suggested that the new form of racism(s) relies upon assertions regarding the cultural differences of minority ethnic groups in a society from those of the majority ethnic group. The discourse of new racism(s) functions without referring to the biological characteristics or skin color of the marginalized community. Rather it refers to the lack of fundamental social values such as work ethic, self-reliance, self-discipline, and individual achievement.¹⁴¹ Balibar defines contemporary racism as “neo-racism” and “differentialist racism” and asserts that “This racism does not suggest explicitly that a group is superior to others but assumes that the cultural differences cannot be overcome.”¹⁴² As LeCouteur and Augoustinos put forward, the contemporary racism which is a “complex blend of both egalitarian and illiberal principles lead in turn to legitimate and justify discriminatory practices and the existence of inequalities between

¹⁴¹ Martha Augoustinos and Katherine J.Reynolds, “Prejudice, Racism, and Social Psychology” in *Understanding Prejudice, Racism, and Social Conflict* edited by Martha Augoustinos and Katherine J. Reynolds (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.:SAGE, 2001), p.3.

¹⁴² Etienne Balibar , “Bir “yeni-ırkçılık” var mı?” in *Irk ulus sınıf: Belirsiz kimlikler*, trans. N. Ökten, edited by S. Dolanaoğlu and S. Sökmen, (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2000.).

social groups.¹⁴³ In this sense, by attributing such traits as laziness, lack of work ethic, untrustworthiness and inability to economically organize/stabilize their lives to the Gypsy/Roma community in Lüleburgaz, the discourse of racism functions to racialize them on the basis of their so called “deviant, inherent, cultural traits.”

When asked what their perceptions regarding the Gypsies/Roma in Lüleburgaz were, my interviewees’ first remarks were about their alleged sexual looseness which wasthought to go against the moral rules of conduct:

They experience everything unconstrained. They come to the school garden. Elementary and secondary school, too. They are always in close embrace. They always kiss each other...There is always something disgraceful. Then, they pull themselves together...¹⁴⁴

Maybe they are living without official marriage. Most of them are like this.¹⁴⁵

They are running off with others while married.¹⁴⁶

Quoting from Quasthoff, Wodak and Reisigl argue that:

Stereotype is the verbal expression of a certain conviction or belief directed toward a social group or individual as a member of that social group. The stereotype is typically an element of common knowledge, shared to a high degree in a particular culture. It takes the logical form of a

¹⁴³ Amanda LeCouteur and Martha Augoustinos, “The Language of Prejudice and Racism”, In *Understanding Prejudice, Racism, and Social Conflict* edited by Martha Augoustinos and Katherine J. Reynolds (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.:SAGE, 2001), pp.229-230.

¹⁴⁴“Her şeyi çok rahat yaşıyorlar.Okul bahçesine geliyorlar ya. İki okula da ortaokula da. Sürekli sarmaş dolaş. Sürekli öpüşmeler...hep birşeyler oluyor. Üstler toparlanıyor.” (C.A. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,15 April 2008).

¹⁴⁵“Belki onlarda nikah bile yok. Geneli nikahsız onların..” (İ.K. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,15 April 2008).

¹⁴⁶“Evliyken başkasına kaçıyorlar.” (S.T. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,15 April 2008).

judgment that attributes or denies, in an oversimplified and generalizing manner and with an emotionally slanted tendency, particular qualities or behavioral patterns to a certain class of persons.¹⁴⁷

In this sense, my interviewees construct their attitudes regarding the Gypsy/Roma in Lüleburgaz in terms of common knowledge generalizing some patterns they have observed regarding the Gypsy/Roma to the whole Gypsy/Roma community. The assertion that most of the Gypsy men and women do not get married, but live together and have children or are unfaithful to their mates is related to attributing certain “immoral” characteristics to the Gypsy/Roma community and constructing them as “disobedients” when the accepted norms of the society are concerned. My interviewees’ categorization of the Gypsy/Roma community in Lüleburgaz as “sexually and morally deviant” is striking in the sense that the stereotypes constructed in Ottoman society regarding the Gypsies/Roma’s immorality and sexual looseness have been transmitted for centuries by marking the Gypsy/Roma community as a socially racialized entity. Rattansi suggests that racism should not be deconstructed without reference to the psychoanalytic theories. In this sense, without reference to the splitted subjectivities between consciousness and unconsciousness, the centrality of sexuality in the discourse of racism, and the phenomena of fantasy, pleasure and projection (to project the negative/abnormal characteristics inherent in someone to some Others); mechanisms of racism cannot be understood.¹⁴⁸ Rattansi also argues that racist discourse operates

¹⁴⁷R.Wodak and M. Reisigl, “Discourse and Racism: European Perspective”, *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 28, (1999), p.188.

¹⁴⁸ Ali Rattansi and Sallie Westwood. *Batı cephesinde ırkçılık, modernite ve kimlik*. Yayına hazırlayan;türkçesi Sevda Akyüz (İstanbul : Sarmal Yayınevi, 1997), p.92.

through a duality of meaning. Accordingly, while condemning the racialized Other as threatening, the racist discourse also marks it as “exotic, erotic and potent”.¹⁴⁹ In this context, recurrent references to the sexual looseness of the Gypsy/Roma community can be considered a typical example of the duality of meaning that Rattansi formulates. The Gypsies/Roma, while being stigmatized on the basis of sexual looseness and immorality, become an object of fantasy and pleasure in the imagination of the majority blaming them.

The legends about the Gypsies told for centuries and transmitted by the Turkish oral tradition is another source for their stigmatization. The common legend -which takes different forms in different space and time while always arriving at the same conclusion- narrates why the Gypsy/Roma communities were doomed to suffer, it is about a Gypsy man named Chen who committed adultery with his own sister Guin. Çelik quotes the legend from an account of a European traveler as follows:

When the Gypsies, driven out of their country, arrived at Mekran, a wonderful machine was made, the wheel of which refused to turn until an evil spirit disguised as a sage, informed the chief of the Gypsies, who was named Chen, that it would do so only if he married his own sister Guin. The advice was followed and the wheel turned, but from the incestuous marriage the people not only earned the name Chenguin but also the curse, which was put upon them by the Moslem saints, that they should be wanderers excluded from among the races of mankind.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹Rattansi, p. 91.

¹⁵⁰ Çelik, pp.11-12.

Similar to the general idea of the legend above, one of my interviewees told me the following legend about the Gypsies which she believes led to the classification of the Gypsy/Roma community as “the half nation” among other races of the world:

Even God declares them as outside of the 72.5 nations. One of the prophets was escaping. He was hiding in a mill. God put a huge stone and closed the mill’s door. Many people tried yet could not move the stone. It was said that two siblings must commit adultery to be able to move this stone. Then, they were not yet the Gypsies. Two siblings said that they could do it if the stone would move. They did it and the stone moved. Then, God said, “You will be damned as homeless, without a country” since the two siblings committed adultery for money. The God says, “You are inferior to the 72.5 nations.” Since these are damned, they are doomed to suffer. Just eat whatever you find today. Tomorrow God may help. This story was not in the Quran but may be found in one of the Hadith books. All the real stories are written in the Hadith books.¹⁵¹

The legend which has been told for centuries now, reveals a blend of the stereotypes of the Gypsy/Roma communities: their sexual deviancy, their irreligiosity since they committed a sexual crime strictly forbidden by Islam (incest), their pragmatism at any expense. My interviewees shared another legend with me that they were told by their grandmothers. This is a story narrating the impossibility for a Gypsy to discard her/his malignant habits:

One of the sultans gets a Gypsy woman as a wife. The Gypsy can’t give up her habit...She was living within the palace. The sultan was spying on her one night. She laid down a cover and started begging in the name of the God. Even within the palace, she was doing the same thing! She had everything yet did not give up her habit!¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ The Turkish version of this account can be found in Appendix C.

¹⁵²“ *Sultanın biri Çingene bir kadın alıyor. Çingene huyundan vazgeçmez ya..Sarayın içinde yaşıyor ama Çingene. Sultan o gece gözetliyor, karısı ne yapıyor diye..Açmış bir örtü, Allah rızası için diye dileniyormuş. Sarayın içinde ama yine aynı şeyi yapıyormuş yani. Herşeyi var ama yine de huyundan vazgeçmiyor.*” (Y.E. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,15 April 2008).

The discursive construction of the Gypsy/Roma in Lüleburgaz with whom social interaction should be kept at a minimum due to their malicious cultural traits might take a contradictory turn, in some instances, by referring to the existence of some “exceptional” Gypsies in terms of their positive characteristics such as work ethic. It is confirmed that social contact can be sustained with such exceptional Gypsies:

Our doorkeeper...is indeed a very honorable woman. She is also a clean lady. I call her Kıymet Hanım and she answers me as “Yes ma’am Rahime.” When we decide to drink a coffee, I ask her if she wants one. She says, “Yes. That would be nice. I have not yet drunk one today .” As if she drinks coffee everyday. ¹⁵³

My deceased grandmother had apprentices and shepherds. Since native gypsies were economically well-off, they made them work. We do not see them as gypsies. We visit them, we eat what they cook. We worship together.. ¹⁵⁴.

Quoting from Billig, Wodak and Reisigl state that “racist discourses should not be viewed as static and homogeneous but as dynamic and contradictory. Even the same person can voice contradictory opinions and ideological fragments in the same discursive event.”¹⁵⁵ In this sense, racism embedded in the language towards the

¹⁵³ “Bizim kapıcı...Ama hakikaten çok onurlu bir kadın, temiz de kendisi..Kıymet hanım diyorum. Efendim, Rahime abla diyor. Kahve içiceğiz. Yapayım mı sana da diyorum. Ne iyi olur, bugün içmemiştim. Sanki her gün içermiş..” (B.M. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,15 April 2008).

¹⁵⁴ Rahmetli ninemlerin çırakları, çobanları vardı. Yerli çingene..Onlar, biraz durumları iyi diye çalıştırıyorlardı onları. Hala daha babama ağacım...ve biz de hiç çingene gözüyle bakmıyoruz.Biz onlara oturmaya gidiyoruz, yaptıklarını yiyoruz. Onlar bize okumaya geliyorlardı(Ş.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,15 April 2008).

¹⁵⁵ Wodak and Reisigl, p.194.

Gypsy/Roma community in Lüleburgaz operating discursively that there are “exceptional Gypsies” with whom social conduct should be permanent, in fact, functions to reinforce the already-constructed stereotyped projection of the Gypsy/Roma community.

State Racism towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey: From the Ottomans to Today

The direct and indirect practices of the state towards an ethnic minority within its national territories constitute one of the major components of the discourse of racism. Laws, procedures, mechanisms of naturalization are some of those practices that have the potential to produce racist effects for certain ethnic minorities within a nation-state. The key point here is the necessity to deconstruct the racism-nationalism/nation-building as binary processes. As Miles argues historical analysis enables us to reassess the relationship between racism and nationalism. The idea of “race” (and ethnicity) may be used to draw the boundaries of the nation. According to Miles, as in the case of English nationalism, racism may constitute one of the components of the construction of the so called “imagined community”.¹⁵⁶

In line with this argument, when the state practices towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey are examined by considering the “breaks and fractures over time”, the racism towards the Gypsy/Roma seems to have operated through the process of racialisation via the construction of the Gypsy/Roma community as a racialized entity. It should also be

¹⁵⁶ Robert Miles, “Recent Marxist Theories of Nationalism and the Issue of Racism”, *The British Journal of Sociology* 38, no. 1 (March 1987), p.41.

mentioned that the state racism in Turkey towards the Gypsy/Roma should be examined in a context-specific manner since it significantly differs from such examples as the Nazi persecution of Gypsies, the policies in some post-communist countries towards their Gypsy population and very recent state policies in Italy towards the Gypsy/Roma. Rather than carrying direct discursive and physical violence towards the Gypsy/Roma, the related state policies in Turkey should be analyzed with regard to their racist outcomes for the Gypsy/Roma communities.

State Policies vis-à-vis the Gypsy/Roma in the Empire: “Marginal, yet Essential” Subjects of the Ottoman Empire

The state policy of the Ottoman Empire vis-à-vis its Gypsy/Roma subjects offer significant insights to understand and examine the subsequent state practices towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey. Interestingly, both the ways the Empire handled with its Roma subjects and the stereotypes of Ottoman society about the Gypsy/Roma constitute the basis of the later racist practices towards them. The Gypsy existence in the Ottoman lands dates back to the fourteenth century. Ottoman penetration into the Balkans in the fourteenth century subjected the Gypsy/Roma population in those regions to Ottoman administration. From then on, the Gypsy/Roma existence and the state policies towards them can be uncovered in the censuses, tax registers and *mühimme* registers (the records of the Imperial Assembly).¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Çelik, pp.2-5 ; Marushiakova and Popov,pp. 23-26.

The political structure of the Ottoman Empire was “a hierarchical complex interlocking military-based administrative, economic and religious structure under the firm control of the sultan.”¹⁵⁸ The subjects of the empire were also classified according to several categories and religious affiliation constituted one of them. That categorization divided the population into the true believers (the Muslims) and the Christians (non-Muslims), plus the Jews as a third category. That religious categorization of the population which is called the *Millet* System is significant. On the one hand, it demonstrates how the Empire dealt with its multiethnic population and on the other hand, it determines the status and obligations of peoples adhering to different religions.

The main paradox of the Empire when dealing with its Gypsy/Roma population was the treatment of the Gypsy/Roma on an ethnic basis.¹⁵⁹ Since the *Millet* System was based on the religious affiliation of the subjects, that demonstrates the discriminatory attitude of the Empire towards the Gypsy/Roma on an ethnic basis. There are several manifestations that reveal how the Gypsy/Roma were treated on an ethnic basis in contradiction with the *Millet* System.

The first can be detected in the population registers of the Empire. Quoting from Karpat, Çelik states that, in the population registers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the subjects of the Empire were classified as either Muslims or non-Muslims. However, there was a specific third category which was used to identify the Gypsies

¹⁵⁸ Marushiakova and Popov, pp. 23-26.

¹⁵⁹ Çelik, p. 6; Ginio, pp. 117-118; Marushiakova and Popov, p. 132.

residing in the Empire: Kıpti (which in Ottoman Turkish means “native Egyptian”).¹⁶⁰ That constitutes an explicit manifestation of how the Gypsy/Romacommunities were perceived by the Ottoman administration. Being left out of the religious classification of the *Millet* System, as Altınöz asserts “...they were never granted *Millet* status and never attached to any Muslim or Christian confessional community. Indeed, they were treated as a guest being awaited in the hall.”¹⁶¹

The second manifestation which strengthens the argument that the Gypsy/Roma were treated on the basis of ethnicity by the Ottoman administration was their exemption from the *Devşirme* (Recruitment) system. The *Devşirme* system was one of the rare opportunities in the Ottoman society for upward social mobility leading to a higher class status. It was practiced by “the periodic levy of (mainly) Christian boys”. However, the Gypsy/Roma were probably never given that opportunity, since as Çelik asserts, they were stigmatized as a morally and sexually corrupt people”.¹⁶² It was also not possible for the Gypsy/Roma to escape their “inferior status through education, settlement or manumission.”¹⁶³

Another indication of the discriminatory treatment of the Gypsy/Roma on an ethnic basis under Ottoman rule was related to their military status. The Gypsy sanjak (*Çingene sancağı or Liva-ı Kibtiyan*) which comprised Kırk Klise (Kırklareli) as the center was not the usual territorial unit of the Empire, but a place in which a group of

¹⁶⁰ Çelik, p. 7.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p.7.

¹⁶² Ibid., p.7.

¹⁶³ Ginio, p.123.

Gypsy population serving as auxiliaries in the army resided.¹⁶⁴ The Gypsy sanjak was composed of both Muslim and non-Muslim Gypsies, a trend that was also uncommon in Ottoman administrative policy.¹⁶⁵ The problem regarding the services held by the Gypsy/Roma people in the Ottoman army was that they never gained high military status. As Çelik suggests, the Gypsy/Roma communities were not among the ruling echelons of the army, but instead were identified as *Müsellem* (literally means exempt). As the *Müsellems*, they were casting cannon balls, carrying and repairing guns and building roads. Although their services in the army were taken seriously, they were neither given land to cultivate nor were permitted to achieve *askeri*(military) status.¹⁶⁶ In addition, Ginio reminds us that:

It seems that local authorities frowned upon the Gypsies' recruitment and perceived them as a useless group that caused more harm than good to the army. Palpable evidence can be found in an edict that was issued by the Sublime Port. The edict lamented the poor quality of those who were recruited to serve as drivers of ox-carts (*arabaci*) in recent military campaigns. It complained that all the recruits were either youths or children (*oglan ve usak*) who did not know how to steer the wagons or soldiers and Gypsies who deserted from the army ranks. Their recruitment hindered the military operations. The edict demanded the enlistment of more reliable and skilful soldiers in the future.¹⁶⁷

Among all the manifestations of the inferior treatment of the Gypsy/Roma people on ethnic basis under Ottoman rule, the taxation policy towards them was of utmost

¹⁶⁴ Marushiakova and Popov, pp. 34-35; Sinan Şanlıer, May 2007, “Standartların iki yatay kutubu:Doğu ve Batı”,available(online): <http://www.cingeneyiz.org/dogubati.pdf>.

¹⁶⁵ Çelik, p. 7.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

¹⁶⁷ Ginio, p.125.

importance as mentioned by various scholars.¹⁶⁸ It is possible to uncover the taxation and other state practices towards the Gypsy subjects of the Empire by analyzing tax registers (*Kanunnames*) specific to the Gypsy/Roma communities.

The first *Kanunname* that mentioned the Gypsy/Roma –A Decree on the number of the sheep of the Turks in Rumelia- was issued during the reign of Mehmet II (1451-1481).¹⁶⁹ That register confirms that all Gypsies in the Empire were obliged to pay the poll tax (*cizye*) of 42 akche.¹⁷⁰ That practice was the first manifestation of the ethnisist treatment of the Gypsy/Roma by placing all the Gypsies in one-tax unit (making them pay *cizye* which was only taken from the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire) regardless of their religion. As Ginio asserts, in those times, “..Muslim Gypsies were a group of Muslims that was segregated from their fellow Muslims and treated as a distinct category outside the Muslim community.”¹⁷¹

The following *Kanunnames* that were specific to the Gypsy/Roma communities seem to have made more compatible with the understanding of the *Millet* System. The most detailed one among those *Kanunnames*, was a “law concerning the Gypsies in the province of Rumelia” (*Kanunname-i Kibtıyan-i vilayet-i Rumili*,1530). Accordingly,

The Muslim Gypsies from İstanbul, Edirne and elsewhere in Rumelia pay 22 akche for each household and each unmarried person. The infidel

¹⁶⁸ Çelik, 2004; Ginio, 2004; Oral Onur, “Çingeneler”, *Tarih ve Toplum* 23, Sayı 137 (Mayıs 1995); Marushiakova and Popov, 2001; İsmail Haşım Altınöz, “Osmanlı Toplumunda Çingeneler”, *Tarih ve Toplum* 23, Sayı 137, (Mayıs 1995).

¹⁶⁹ Çelik, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.,p.17.

¹⁷¹ Ginio, pp. 117-118.

(Christian) Gypsies pay 25 akche, and as for the widows, they pay one akche tax.¹⁷²

The above statement reveals the Ottoman taxation mentality (which is based on the religious division of the subjects according to the *Millet* System) visible in the differentiation of the money that the Muslim and non-Muslim Gypsies had to pay. However, the following articles suddenly disrupt that balance. In the next Kanunname, the marriage charge and fines for crimes and wrongdoings that had to be paid by both Muslim and non-Muslim Gypsies were specified. These payments were, in general, only specific to the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire.¹⁷³ It is obvious that the Ottoman administration did not include even the Muslim Gypsy/Roma within the “privileged” community of its Muslim subjects.

In addition to the tax regulations, the Kanunnames also reveal the state mechanisms of punishment implemented against the Gypsy/Roma in case of “resistance”. All the Kanunnames concerning Gypsies clearly assert that the Muslim Gypsies when they nomadise and mix with infidel (Christian) Gypsies will be “admonished and punished by fine”.¹⁷⁴ While the Muslim Gypsy/Roma were not regarded as equal to their Muslim fellows, they were also attempted to be taken under control by mechanisms alien to any other community. The punishments and severe taxes imposed on the nomadic Gypsies can be considered among those aforementioned mechanisms. The nomad Gypsies were claimed to plunder, steal, cause unrest and

¹⁷² Marushiakova and Popov, p. 32.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p.33.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p.33.

trouble the population. Therefore, their horses were, in some cases, taken away to hinder their nomadic way of life. Such a policy was probably followed due to the difficulties of collecting taxes from the nomadic subjects of the Empire. Moreover, regulating the movement of the Gypsies within the empire was also a method of changing the existing demographic structure in certain regions.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, such settlement policies concerning the nomadic Gypsy/Roma had not been achieved properly until the decline of the empire.¹⁷⁶

The view that the condition of the Gypsy/Roma communities under Ottoman rule was far better than their counterparts living in Europe is held by many scholars working on the topic.¹⁷⁷ The relative autonomy of the settled and nomadic Gypsies to lead their own way of life when compared to the systematic persecutions and even enslavement of Gypsies in certain parts of Europe was, in general, given as evidences by these scholars.

The Ottoman administrative policy based on the *Millet* system was upset in the nineteenth century due to self-determinist separation of some groups from the Empire. In this period, the policy of Ottomanism was advocated by the group known as the Young Ottomans as a viable option for “keeping the Empire in place”. However, all the attempts to keep the Empire together failed. The Ottomanism of Young Ottomans and the Islamism of Abdülhamit II were all discredited. Starting from the Second Constitutional period (1908-1912), it was Turkism which dominated the administrative policy of the Empire. However, as Ülker and İşyar suggest, the Balkan Wars and the

¹⁷⁵ Marushiakova and Popov, pp. 35-36.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁷⁷ Marushiakova and Popov, 2001; Ginio, 2004; Çelik, 2004; Şanlıer; Altınöz, 1995.

Albanian revolt were the corner-stones for the flourishing of Turkism.¹⁷⁸ When the CUP (The Committee of Union and Progress- İttihat ve Terakki Partisi) gained the power by a coup d'état in January 1913, “the nationalist project of Turkification was launched in a deliberate manner.”¹⁷⁹

Ülker, by drawing attention to the “Turkification” efforts of the CUP rulers, argues that it was also the nation-building process in the multiethnic Ottoman Empire.

For Ülker, Turkification has two dimensions:

The first is the geographical nationalisation of specific areas in order to turn them into a basis wherein the nation-building project would be implemented. This process is to be seen as one of distinguishing the imperial core that has to be transformed into a nation from the periphery of the empire. The second dimension concerns the question of which peoples and communities of the empire are to be included in the empire’s core nation. This results in the assimilation of some communities and the dissimilation of others on the basis of inclusion into or exclusion from the core nation.¹⁸⁰

These were attempted by the CUP through the settlement of Muslim immigrants in the regions from where non-Muslims were deported.¹⁸¹ In this sense, the Muslim subjects of the empire were to fulfill the Turkification of Anatolia. That dimension of Turkification, Ülker suggests, was the attitude of Young Turks to “combine the ethnic identification of Turkishness with the older pattern of Islamic interpretation of Ottomanism. While the effect of the latter led to the exclusion of non-Muslims from the emerging Turkish

¹⁷⁸Erol Ülker, “Contextualising “Turkification” Nation-Building in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918” *Nations and Nationalism* 11, no. 4 (2005), p.621 and Bora İşyar, “The origins of Turkish Republican citizenship: the birth of race” *Nations and Nationalism* 11, no. 3 (2005), p.343.

¹⁷⁹ Ülker, p. 622.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 615.

¹⁸¹ For forced eviction of and ethnic treatment of Armenians, see: İşyar, 2005.

nation, the former necessitated the assimilation of non-Turkish”. In this sense, Turkification was not a sharp break from Ottomanism, but instead evolved from that.¹⁸²

Although the treatment of the Gypsies within the Ottoman Empire was uncovered by scholars to some extent, starting from the CUP rule up until today, we have really poor accounts regarding state policy vis-à-vis Gypsies. Scholars who focused on the nation-building process in the late Ottoman period and early republican era, mentioned the treatment of non-Muslims and Muslim non-Turks by the state and examined how the policies towards them determined the structure of Turkish citizenship and the scope of Turkishness. Unfortunately, the Gypsies-constituting a considerable number among the Muslim non-Turkish population of the empire- who were included in the resettlement policies of both the CUP and the early republican elites are seriously absent from the related analyses and studies. This can be, in part, related to their disappearance from the state accounts as well, as a completely negligible ethnic group, not deserving to be dealt with systematically. While it is impossible to present a full account of the treatment of the Gypsy/Roma communities in the Turkish nation-building process within the limits of this study, its main contours should be briefly introduced.

The very limited data regarding the ramifications of the Turkification process on the Gypsies during the CUP rule comes from Dündar. Dündar asserts that the Muslim immigrants who were settled in Anatolia in the first years of the CUP rule included also the Muslim Gypsies from the Balkans. However, the Third Article of Draft Bill on Immigration (*Asair ve Muhacirin Kanun Taslağı*) prepared by the CUP in 1918 states that along with prostitutes, gamblers, anarchists and criminals; the Gypsies would not be

¹⁸² Ülker, p. 632.

allowed in the borders. Those nomadic Gypsies already in the country would be made settled and worked in the factories to be established.¹⁸³ The content of the draft bill is open to various interpretations. First of all, it demonstrates the racist attitude towards the Gypsies in the sense that, while the Muslim groups were incorporated to the nation-building process and naturalized during the Turkification process under the CUP rule; its attitude towards Muslim Gypsies in 1918 was a clear exception to this general policy line. Secondly, racism towards Gypsies is explicitly evident in their classification along with prostitutes, gamblers, anarchists and criminals. As “undesirables”, the CUP administration was determined to further marginalize the Gypsies in the dissolving empire.

State Policies vis-à-vis the Gypsy/Roma from the Early Republican Era onwards:
Breaks and Fractures in the Construction of the Gypsy/Roma in the Imagination of State
Elites

During the Independence War (1919-1923), Turkishness was an umbrella identity. It was encompassing and inclusive for all the Muslim communities. In this construction, religion turned to be the common ground for the national identity to fully mobilize all the Muslims for the war.¹⁸⁴ After the war, it was a crucial task for the republican elites to

¹⁸³Fuat Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskan Politikası (1913-1918)* (İstanbul:İletişimYayınları,2007)

¹⁸⁴Ahmet Yıldız, “Kemalist Milliyetçilik” in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm* edited by Murat Belge (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001),p.229.

¹⁸⁴ Soner Çağaptay, “Citizenship policies in interwar Turkey”, *Nations and Nationalism* 9, no. 4 (2003), pp.611-612.

redefine the scope of Turkish citizenship and Turkishness. Article 88 of the 1924 Constitution stated that “the people of Turkey regardless of their religion and race are Turkish in terms of citizenship.” The definition of Turkishness along with Turkish citizenship as stated in the 1924 Turkish Constitution carries the understanding of civic nationalism based on territorial criteria rather than ethnic lines. However, certain practices of the state in this period were not in line with the premises of this article. As Çağaptay suggests:

Non-Turks could also become Turkish citizens if they fulfilled specific criteria such as de facto conversion, possession of valuable technical skills, and marriage to a Turk or a record of service for Turkey. Yet, with the notable exception of the White Russians, nominal adoption of Islamic identity through the embracing of a Muslim name was the common dividend of most of these cases. Hence, it can be assumed that, at least superficially, Islam was a *sine qua non* for Turkish citizenship in the minds of the Kemalists. For this reason, the republic was lenient in granting citizenship to scores of Christian or Jewish East-Central Europeans, Hellenic Greeks and Balkan Slavs, if they were willing to adopt Muslim-Turkish names or to convert. However, even then, what is striking is that the republic did not extend its leniency towards the Armenians.¹⁸⁵

The 1924 population exchange between Turkey and Greece also reflects the tendency of Kemalists to embrace being Muslim as the sole criterion for the naturalization of the emigrants from Greece. One of the main manifestations of this understanding of the Kemalist elite in the 1924 population exchange reveals itself in the naturalization of the Gypsy/Roma from Greece. Kolukırık’s oral history research among the Gypsy/Roma residents in the Tarlabaşı district of İzmir sheds light on the issue. As Kolukırık suggests, since the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 - in which population exchange between

Turkey and Greece was agreed upon-did not consider an ethnic-base census in the exchange, it is not possible to detect the number of Muslim Gypsies who arrived in Turkey. The new residents of Turkey were settled mainly in Edirne, Balıkesir, Istanbul, Bursa, Kırklareli, Samsun, Kocaeli, Izmir, Niğde and Manisa.¹⁸⁶ This fact constitutes the reason for the existence of a large Gypsy population in those cities. However, as Kolukırık suggests the population exchange was not finalized in 1924 since the resettlement policy – a significant practice of Turkish nation-building process- was still being implemented in the 1930s. It is possible to have significant insights into the narratives of the Gypsy migration from Greece from the following quotes of Kolukırık’s interviewees:

My father came from Drama. (A.İ.), they left Drama during the First World War. There was oppression in Greece. (N.O.), My father told that there was a population exchange between us and foreigners (D.Ç.), We came from Salonica. (R.Ç.), From the village of Proscan (R.Ç.), I was born in Drama. (R.Ç.), We fled from Salonica, since it was rumored that they would cut the muslims and the Turks. (R.Ç.), We came to Adapazarı from the Sardıvan village of Drama. (N.O.) We had a farm in Salonica. (N.O.), We came from the Rauka village of Proscan. (N.O.), we are from Drama.. (D.Ç.), In the identity card, we are declared to come form Drama.. (D.Ç.), We went to Sinop from Drama. (D.Ç.), They allotted us forty inches field a three-storeyed building in Sinop. (R.Ç.), My parents came from Drama.(Y.P.), We came from Drama.(E.Y.), We came to our native land, Turkey. (N.O.), Our native land is Turkey. (N.O.), We came as émigrés. (H.K.). Atatürk brought us here. (E.Y.), Atatürk brought my parents here. (H.K.), When Atatürk invited them, my parents came here. (A.İ.), Atatürk invited us. (R.Ç.), Atatürk gave the right of settlement in Adapazarı, but my parents resided here. (N.O.), Atatürk allotted us sixty inch field, but my parents were not able to look after it. (N.O.), Atatürk

¹⁸⁶Suat Kolukırık, 26 May 2006, “Geçmişin Aynasında Lozan Çingeneleeri:Göç, Hatıra ve Deneyimler”, *Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Sosyolojik Araştırmalar e-DERGİSİ*, available (online)://www.sdergi.hacettepe.edu.tr/index.htm).

gave the right of settlement, but my parents did not benefit from it. (A.İ.).¹⁸⁷

In parallel with the narratives Kolukırık compiles, the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts in Lüleburgaz reveal similar facts about their origin going back to Greece:

They became basketry. They were like farmers in Salonika, were like natives among Turks.¹⁸⁸

My fathers were from Greece.¹⁸⁹

Atatürk gave land to everybody at the time being.¹⁹⁰

Brother, most of our Roma in Altıyol came from Serez, Salonika at the time of Atatürk. For example, my grandfathers were accommodated Demirköy at first. They were given land but they ran away to Muratlı because of fear.¹⁹¹

Interestingly, the most challenging task of the fieldwork in the Altıyol and Kuştepe districts of Lüleburgaz was to encourage my interviewees to talk about their past: when and how their grandparents came to Lüleburgaz, what their grandparents told them about the places they came from and the migration process to Turkey. They were usually either unwilling or unable to give any details. Therefore, the oral history narratives of the interviews always remained incomplete and thus, uncovered. It was as if the “present” with its unbearable difficulties conquered them so much that the past became negligible

¹⁸⁷For the Turkish version of the narratives in Kolukırık’s article can be found in Appendix D.

¹⁸⁸“*Yok burada sepetçi olmuş onlar. Selanik’te çiftçi gibi bir şeydiler yerli gibi birşeydiler orda yani Türklerin arasında.*” (P.Ö. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

¹⁸⁹“*Yunanistan’dan gelme babamlar.*” (M.Ö. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

¹⁹⁰“*Atatürk herkese yer verdi zamanında.*” (E.A. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

¹⁹¹“*Abi bizim Altıyol’daki Romanların çoğu Serez’den Selanik’ten gelme Atatürk zamanında. Benim dedemleri mesela ilk Demirköy’e göndermişler. Bunlara arsa vermişler falan ama bunlar korkudan kaçmışlar Muratlı’ya.*” (M.Ö. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

and unnecessary to dwell on. Moments of silence interrupted our conversations when, in “*kahve sohbetleri*” (talks in coffeehouses), I mentioned what the books tell us about the Gypsies and their treatment by the state during Ottoman times and in the early republican years. In those times, after sheltering in silence, they usually could not hide their surprise and anxiety. Their parents and/or grandparents leaving no written documents behind about the past, made them learn about the past from “an enthusiastic foreigner”!

The narratives Kolukırık obtained in Tarlabası and the aforementioned ones that I picked up in Kuştepe and Altıyol, at least, coincide in the sense that the parents and/or grandparents of the interviewees migrated to Anatolia during “the times of Atatürk” when they were also given territory. Those oral history accounts reveal two points at once. Naturalizing the Muslim Gypsy/Roma people from Greece confirms the argument that in the early years of the republic (1920s), the Kemalist elites incorporated the Ottoman *Millet* System in their path to nation-building. Being Muslim was considered sufficient to become a Turkish citizen. Those Muslim non-Turkish peoples were to be assimilated by being made “to forget” their ethnic affiliations, cultural traits and native languages. Secondly, the Muslim Gypsy/Roma people were also among those Muslim non-Turks that were given “a chance” to adopt Turkish national identity. Their incorporation to the population exchange and the territories they were given can be considered as evidence of this argument. That assimilationist tendency towards them was to be continued until the 1930s. From then on, a more racialized treatment by the state is obvious towards its Gypsy population.

The Turkish nation-building process and the construction of Turkish national identity along with the scope of Turkish citizenship was not a smooth process. Though the 1924 Constitution referred to a territorial understanding of nation-building, the understanding in the Lausanne Treaty determined the scope of the Turkish nation which incorporated the Ottoman *Millet* System by applying religious criteria for naturalization. However, that somehow more “encompassing” understanding of constructing Turkish national identity was to gain a more ethnisist character in the 1930s by surpassing both non-Muslim and Muslim non-Turkish subjects of the republic.

When the Kemalist elites succeeded in establishing a secular Republic by surpassing (but not necessarily eliminating) religious affiliations, it was time to devote more time and energy to nationalism. The 1930s were those times which witnessed the rise of nationalism in Eastern Europe as well. Therefore, in the light of an international conjuncture which had nourished the revival of racism, Turkish nationalism also flourished and the Turkish nation-building process was accelerated.¹⁹²

The *Turkish History Thesis* and *Sun Language Theory*¹⁹³ were the so called “scientific” constructions of Kemalist elites in the 1930s that served to emphasize the role of race and ethnicity in redefining the Turkish nation. As Çağaptay suggests, those

¹⁹² Çağaptay, p. 601.

¹⁹³ As Ersanlı states *Turkish History Thesis* and *the Sun Language Theory* accompanying it were shaped in the years from 1929 to 1937. Its “scientific correctness” was declared and celebrated during the 2. National Turkish History Congress. The main assumptions of the thesis were as follows: 1- Turks do not belong to the yellow race, but they are of the Aryan race. 2- Turks migrated from Central Asia. 3- Turkish origins go back to 9.000 to 12.000-20.000 BC. 4- Turkish language had a striking influence on other major languages of world civilization. 5- Turkish history did not start with the Ottomans. Before Islam and the Ottoman past, Turks had proven their existence with the 18 states they established. 6- Ottoman policies had damaged the great Turkish civilization. Therefore, when examining Turkish political and cultural identity, Ottoman past should not be considered as the sole criterion. For further information regarding Turkish History Thesis, see : Büşra Ersanlı, “ Bir Aidiyet Fermanı: “Türk Tarih Tezi” “, in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Milliyetçilik* Cilt 4, edited by Tanıl Bora, (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları, 2003).

scientific constructions were based on the main idea that “Turks are a glorious nation” stemming from the superior Turkish race.¹⁹⁴ It was a tendency that can be considered to be at the hearth of many racisms around the world- privileging one’s own race among others-.Attributing the Turkish race such a “privileged status” in the history of world civilization was an attempt to indoctrinate the “masses” with the consciousness of national identity that would in turn lead to a secure and complete Turkish nation-building process.

Scientific inquiry was utilized by Kemalist elites between 1925 and 1939 in order to construct a firm basis for *Turkish History Thesis* and *Sun Language Theory*. As Maksudyan argues, anthropology as “a scientific discipline biased with racist fundamentals, was employed as the normative base or the source of legitimation for the prevalence of race in the nationalist discourse.”¹⁹⁵ While a series of official conferences and publications emerged which emphasized the role of race and ethnicity in defining the nation (which were mainly held by the scholars of Ankara University Language, History and Geography Faculty), numerous PhD dissertations on Turkish blood groups, characteristics of Turkish hair and brain were produced.¹⁹⁶ However, among those attempts to legitimize the superiority of the Turkish race, state-sponsored

¹⁹⁴ Çağaptay, p.601.

¹⁹⁵ Nazan Maksudyan, “Gauging Turkishness : Antropology as Science-fiction in Legitimizing Racist Nationalism (1925-1939)” (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2003), p.175.

¹⁹⁶ Çağaptay, p.601; Maksudyan, p. 101.

anthropological measures were the most striking ones.¹⁹⁷ In 1937, Afet İnan for her dissertation on “*Türkiye Halkının Antropolojik Karakterleri*, (Anthropological Characteristics of the People of Turkey)” made a directly state-funded, large-scale survey on 64,000 people. The survey was conducted by measuring the skull, height, weight of the ethnic Turks and categorizing blood types, eye and hair colour. The military directly assisted İnan by allowing her to conduct measurement on soldiers. Similar large-scale surveys were also conducted by the Turkish Institution of Anthropology on secondary-school children.¹⁹⁸ Those anthropological surveys resemble the ones conducted in Germany in the same era. Like those in Germany, the main motive of the state elite was to utilize anthropology to legitimize the idea that Turkish race as belonging to the Aryan/Ari races has a privileged status among the other race groups in Anatolia. Demonstrating the superiority of the Turkish race by scientific criteria was to strengthen the necessity of emphasizing race when redefining the Turkish nation.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Emre Arslan, “Türkiye’de Irkçılık” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Milliyetçilik* edited by Tanıl Bora, (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları, 2003), p.412 Maksudyan,p. 102.

¹⁹⁸ Maksudyan, pp. 99-137.

¹⁹⁹As stated by Özdoğan during the 1930s, the “flirting” of the state with the pan-Turkist activists and theorists is also worth mentioning. In those years, although the pan-Turkists differed in their theoretical and practical insights, they were all against the non-aggression policy adopted by Turkey towards German-Soviet conflict. They were all anti-communist and anti-Soviet. Although the Kemalist nationalism and pan-Turkism did not necessarily overlap, some pan-Turkists like Zeki Velidi Togan had partly official interactions with the German officials. Those interactions were known by the Turkish military and the CHP government and even sometimes arranged by them. For more information see: Günay Göksu Özdoğan, “*Turan*” dan “*Bozkurt’a*”: *Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük(1931-1946)* (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları, 2002). The statements of one of the famous pan-Turkists, Nihal Atsız, regarding Gypsies is worth paying attention too. As quoted by Arslan, Atsız states that The Gypsy is the pain within us who should be mentioned as well. Turkification of the Gypsies, admitting them within the nation and in this way adulterating the Turkish blood would be devastating (“*Çingene de bizim aramızda değinilmesi gerek olan yaradır. Çingeneleri Türkleştirmek, aramıza katmak ve Türk kanının saflığını bozmak cinayettir.*”).

Strengthened by those “scientific” attempts, the new construction of Turkish national identity on an ethnic basis brought about some “unbearable” costs for some of the citizens of the republic. New exclusionary practices towards the non-Turkish groups were now at stake. Direct state practices including the amendment of procedures and laws were also apparent. Those state practices referring to race in defining the Turkish nation paved the ground for granting certain privileges to the ethnic Turks while discriminating the rest.²⁰⁰ For instance, starting in the 1930s, for recruitment in Maden Tetkik ve Arama Enstitüsü and military schools the necessity to belong to the “Turkish race” was declared. The non-Muslim civil servants were dismissed from their jobs in this period. The campaigns of “Vatandaş, Türkçe konuş!” (Speak Turkish) were to create tensions among the non-Turkish people. In 1943, those racist practices reached their peak, when the Property Tax was imposed on the non-Muslims seriously upsetting their socioeconomic status.²⁰¹

Among those state practices that sparked racism, the amendment of the “law of settlement” is worth mentioning when the treatment towards and perception of the Gypsy/Roma in those times by state elites are concerned. The Law on Settlement was enacted on 14 June 1934. It is significant in the sense that it has so far been used for admitting people to Turkish citizenship.²⁰² In this sense, the 1934 Law on Settlement carries striking features that reveal the scope of Turkish citizenship and the new

²⁰⁰ Maksudyan, p.182.

²⁰¹ Arslan, p.412.

²⁰² Nalan Soyarık-Şentürk, “Legal and constitutional foundations of Turkish Citizenship: Changes and Continuities” in *Citizenship in a Global World: European Questions and Turkish Experiences* edited by E. Fuat Keyman and Ahmey İçduygu (London: Routledge, 2005), p.128.

construction of Turkish national identity in the imagination of the state elites from the 1930s onwards.

The language and mentality in the Law on Settlement demonstrates the shift in the transformation of Turkish nationalism. As Soyarik-Şentürk states, the first article of the law regulated the dispersion and the settlement of the population according to the degree of adherence to Turkish culture. In this context, Turkish territory was divided into three regions. “The first region was the territory where the population with Turkish culture desired to concentrate. The second region was the territory spared for the settlement of those who were to be assimilated into Turkish culture. The third region would be evacuated for health, political, military and security purposes and; settlement in that region would be prohibited. (Article 2)”²⁰³ The adoption of adherence to Turkish culture as the criterion for naturalization, settlement and dispersion of the population echoes German-type romantic nationalism that calls for the attachment to national culture in drawing the boundaries of the nation. Thus, the enactment of the law upset the understanding of the 1920s, which was officially based on a territorial tendency in nation-building and a religious one in practice, but which was still more encompassing.

As quoted by Soyarik-Şentürk, on the day of the enactment of the Law on Settlement, Kütahya deputy, Naşit Hakkı Bey, made the introductory speech in which he asserted:

“.....”the importance of unity in language, culture and ideals, and added that this law would help the assimilation of those who regard themselves as non-Turkish, or who had lost Turkish identity. By taking measures for people to speak Turkish, and abolishing tribal organizations, those who were from

²⁰³ Soyarik-Şentürk, p. 129.

other cultures or who spoke other languages would be absorbed, and assimilated into the Turkish culture.”²⁰⁴

The ArticleS 4 and 9 of the Law on the Settlement directly refers to the Gypsy/Roma and until 2006 were in implementation. The articles state that:

Those who did not adhere to Turkish culture, anarchists, spies, nomadic gypsies, and those who were deported, would not be admitted as émigrés.(article 4)...The nomadic gypsies of Turkish nationality would be dispersed to villages of Turkish culture; foreign nomadic gypsies and nomads who did not adhere to Turkish culture would be deported.(article 9)²⁰⁵

The language of the above articles above regarding the Gypsies, first of all, reveals the construction of the Gypsy/Roma by the Kemalist elites in those times. Those who would not be admitted as émigrés to Turkey (and thus would not be naturalized) are the Gypsies along with the anarchists, spies and those who were deported.²⁰⁶ (Nomadic) Gypsies were represented among those who were the most “unwanted/undesirable/hostile” groups for the new republic. Therefore, being constructed on the basis of long-time stereotypes, the nomadic Gypsy/Roma were marked as a racialized group that should be kept away from the scope of the Turkish nation which was redefined during the 1930s on an ethnic basis. Secondly, the articles indicate and confirm the transformation of Turkish nationalism during the 1930s. The scope of Turkish citizenship which was constructed on the basis of being Muslim during the 1920s, was now replaced by the” mystified, ambiguous” notion of Turkish culture.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.,p.129.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p.129.

²⁰⁶ The article has a direct quotation form the law bill of 1918 proposed by the CUP. When Turkification practices of the CUP accelerated towards the end of its rule, gypsies along with the Armenians became the targets of scapegoating. The same mentality seems have worked during the early years of the republic. The similarity between the language of the CUP law bill and the above articles depicts that the law bill of the CUP regarding Gypsies was adopted by ex- CUP member Kemalist elites.

Nomadic Gypsies, even if they were Muslims, would not be accepted as émigrés, though they were naturalized during the 1920s on the basis of being Muslim. That is also a clear depiction of how the Gypsies were excluded from the imagination of Kemalist elites in the sense that they were not constructed anymore among those who would be assimilated into Turkish culture. Article 9 of the law reveals the formulation for those of the nomadic Gypsies who were already Turkish citizens. They were attempted to be settled in Turkish villages (which were considered as the “true carriers” of the mystified Turkish culture-which has again a strong connotation to German nationalism) in order to adapt to Turkishness.

Akman, in his analysis of the Turkish national identity, distances himself from the spatial and contextual analysis of Turkish national identity and argues that Kemalist elites’ construction of national identity should be understood with reference to “modernist nationalism”. For Akman, “the Turkish national identity project was grounded not in an assertion of ethnic or racial purity, but in a modernist agenda of total social and political metamorphosis. In other words, rather than aspiring to be an ethnocentric project of authenticity, Turkish nationalism was a modernist project of total cultural transformation.”²⁰⁷ In this context, Akman’s depiction of the Turkish nation-building process refers to the cultural adaptation of the citizens of the new republic in Westernist lines. The state elites, detaching themselves from the Ottoman heritage, attempted to eliminate all religious and ethnic affiliations in the construction of the Turkish nation. The “new” citizens of the republic would be Western ones who would

²⁰⁷ Ayhan Akman, “Modernist nationalism: Statism and National Identity in Turkey”, *Nationalities Papers* 32, no.1 (2004), pp.24-25 .

become “rational” in the sense of not shaping their lives in spiritual lines (Islamic way of life), would be “enlightened” in the sense that they would adhere to the intellectual and artistic values of Western culture and would even dress in the way Western people do. In this sense, the new republic would situate itself among the Western nations, breaking from the past.

Although Akman’s conceptualization of the Turkish national identity fails to uncover the transformation of Turkish nationalism in the 1930s towards an ethnic basis, it is striking since it points out the “intrinsic” element of Turkish nation-building which was in place both in the 1920s and 1930s: modernizing/Westernizing the peoples of Anatolia.²⁰⁸

Akman’s argument is significant at this point, since I suppose that by departing from it, the construction of the Kemalist elites of the Gypsy/Roma people during the 1930s can be uncovered in some respects. As I suggest, with the Law on the Settlement, the Gypsy/Roma communities were excluded from the “potential” pool of Muslim non-Turkish people who could be assimilated into Turkish culture. That tendency on the one hand refers to the racist perception of the Gypsies/Roma and on the other hand has connotations, that refer to the modernist character of Turkish nationalism. I suggest that the Gypsy/Roma communities imagined as “elusive” wanderers, unwilling to be educated, having a “loose and unpredictable” way of life style, were not fit to be subverted to “Western subjects”. As long-time nomadic peoples, they were probably

²⁰⁸ The modernist character of Turkish nationalism, while attempting to Westernize the peoples of Anatolia, also imposed the unitary/homogeneous Turkish national identity, which in turn led to the oppression of all differences based on ethnicity. Such kind of authoritarian modernism, promising to create equality among Turkish citizens under a unitary identity –from above-, in fact resulted in tensions among non-Turkish citizens as apparent in the Kurdish problem.

considered as unable to adapt to a “structured, modernized” way of life which leaves no space for the unpredictability the nomadic life style bears in itself. Therefore, those already naturalized and settled since the Empire, were kept as “economic niches” and were attempted to be taught “Turkish culture” in the villages they were to be made resettled in; while potential émigrés to Anatolia were discarded on the basis of such an understanding.

The 1934 Law on Settlement, while revealing the basic construction of the Gypsy/Roma identity on a racist basis, was not the only demonstration of the discriminatory treatment targeting them during the early republican years. In with the the Ottoman policy of identifying Gypsies as “Kıpti-Muslim” in censuses (which was unique to them, since in Ottoman censuses the main distinction employed for the categorization of the population was being Muslim or non-Muslim), the label “Kıpti” was inserted in the national identity cards of the Gypsy/Roma well into the 1950s.

The article of the 1924 Constitution formulating/ defining Turkishness states that those residing in Turkey are identified as “Turkish”. Identifying the Gypsy/Roma in their identity cards as “Kıpti-Muslim” -a state policy that was not practiced for the legal minority groups- is another evidence displaying the racist state practices in the early republican era.

Starting from the Ottoman period up to the 1950s, despite its difficulties, it is possible to detect and uncover to a significant extent, the direct state practices that had created racist effects on the Gypsy/Roma population in Turkey. However, the academic literature indulges in silence, when the ongoing state practices against them are considered. From the 1950s onwards, the Gypsy/Roma communities in Turkey seem to

be perceived as “physically existent, but not necessarily “deserving to be dealt with” by the state. I suppose that although the discourse of racism towards the Gypsy/Roma has been at stake, it is hard to talk about state practices regarding the Gypsy/Roma until recently. What we encounter is the law bills drafted by the CHP deputies (mostly from the Thrace electoral districts) in the parliament to ask for certain amendments in the Law on the Settlement which carries clear discriminatory statements regarding Gypsies. The article was, in fact, amended in 2006,²⁰⁹ most probably due to the persistent reference to it in the progress reports of the EU. In this sense, the recent reappearance of the Gypsies/Roma in state policies results from the close inspection of the EU the of socioeconomic status of the Gypsy/Roma communities in Turkey.

Local Manifestations of State Racism towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey: The Case of Lüleburgaz

In this part, I will attempt to demonstrate the “local” state practices in Lüleburgaz that should be thought along with the above mentioned “racist state discourse” in Turkey towards the Gypsy/Roma. The historical accounts of state racism and the construction of the Gypsy/Roma by the state elites, I suppose, become “concrete” when the attitudes and practices of the local governors and their effects on the daily lives of the residents of the Kuştepe and Altıyol districts of Lüleburgaz are considered. Local manifestations construct the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe as “a racialized community”, which I will try to reveal through the statements of local governors as well as the narratives of my interviewees.

²⁰⁹ *Sabah*, 26 September 2006.

Residents of the Kuştepe and Altiyol districts of Lüleburgaz, on many occasions, perceive their overall marginalized status as a result of their “unjust treatment” by and the “discriminatory policies” of the local governors- the mayor and district governors (*Kaymakams*) of Lüleburgaz and the *muhtars* (elected rulers of the smallest local units).

The local government has been criticized by the residents of Kuştepe and Altiyol districts mainly with regard to two problems: One of them is the usurpation of their wheelbarrows by the local officers; the other is their sense of being neglected by the mayor just after the local elections. Those who earn their lives through garbage collection resent that they are not able to carry out their job due to the restrictions put by the local government:

Someone in Lüleburgaz is constantly saying that gypsies are doing robbery, I did not do robbery. They took my son’s wheelbarrow; they are not giving it back. Everybody is more or less using their wheelbarrows; I was unable to get ours back.²¹⁰

Ahmet was good while he was mayor. What has the current mayor done? He took our wheelbarrows. He was not born in Lüleburgaz. You cannot visit him when you wish so.²¹¹

When you buy a tomato, a pepper, when you put a cucumber and when you go to bazaar to sell them, five municipal polices pile on. Municipal captain took the scale. He orders you to sell the vegetables in Altiyol, he sends you to Altiyol. But a rich man pulles the car by making the traffic dangerous. The car coming from that way cannot also pass. Neither municipal policeman nor traffic policeman intervenes. But misery poor

²¹⁰“Lüleburgazda hırsızlık yapıyorlar deyip duruyorlar. Ben hırsızlık yapmadım. 4 aydır aldılar kızanımın arabasını vermiyorlar. Herkes iyi kötü arabasını kullanıyor, alamadım kızanın arabasını. Kurunun yanında yaş da yanyor bu Burgaz’da.” (A.B. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,21 April 2007).

²¹¹ “Ahmet, belediye başkanıyken ne iyiydi. Bu ne yaptı. Bir el arabamız vardı onu da aldı. Bu Burgaz çocuğu değil. Yanına gitsen görüşemezsin.” (S.Y. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,16 April 2007).

man cannot earn any money for his children because five municipal policemen are expropriating his car.²¹²

These narratives and many similar ones clearly demonstrate that certain policies of the local government unjustly restrict the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe from conducting their jobs as garbage collectors or sellers in the streets. The local officers, claiming that garbage collectors are illegal workers and who conduct petty offences, usurp their wheelbarrows. The result is claimed to be devastating for them:

They took his wheelbarrow. Then they are throwing it away. Then what is happening? Our children are hungry. How can my children attend school? I am sick and cannot work.²¹³

The residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts also complain that the recent mayor has turned a blind eye on them after he won the local elections. None of his promises concerning the restructuring of the districts by building new settlements for those living in the tents, reorganizing the utilities of the districts and offering opportunities of work have come true. A woman living in a tent made of plastics with her husband and 5 children cries:

This girl.. She is also sick. If she were well-off.. I wish the state provided us a room, a kitchen. Now elections will take place. We will vote for candidates. There is no such thing as gypsy, we will vote. I voted for Emin Hale in the last election. Emin Hale did not help me. I sulked him.²¹⁴

²¹² The Turkish version of this account can be found in Appendix E.

²¹³“*El arabasını aldılar. Sonra atıyorlar bir kenara. Sonra ne oluyor. Çoluk çocuğumuz aç susuz kalıyor. Nasıl çocuk okula gitsin. Ben hastayım, çalışmıyorum*” (Ö.E. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

²¹⁴ “*Bu kız... o da rahatsız. Hali vakti olsa ...şu devlet bir oda bir mutfak..Seçimler olacak şimdi. Oy atacağız. Çingene diye birşey yok oy atacağız. Emin hale 'ye attım oy, geçen seçimde. Emin Hale bana yardım etmedi ben ona darıldım.*” (P.Ö. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

I brought him two doves with my wife. ²¹⁵

We moved around Emin Hale. After that, we voted for him. I went to him. I am a gypsy but I have my self-respect. I am a real gypsy but I showed my respect to him. I told him look I am in tent. I willingly bought two doves in a box and a great bunch of flowers. ²¹⁶

I said “just open these”. He said what are they? I said these are from Ecevit. He opened and said how beautiful they are. Then, take them now and throw them out from the window, I said. ²¹⁷

The dialogue between two residents of Kuştepe also illustrates their attitudes towards the local government:

-Will this be your reward? Are you going to do the same thing when he comes again?

- Yes, I am. I will keep my promise. Because it was Ecevit who saved us. I would never act malevolently. Someone on the path of the God could not misbehave. You know what I did? Emin Hale was a kid then. I was selling perfumes. I started yelling. My mayor was just a kid. I had distributed all the perfumes in my neighbourhood for free. I started sticking the flags around...I am waiting for help from Emin Hale. He has never helped me but I will visit him once again. He promised me. He should keep it. ²¹⁸

District governorate is another institution that is a cause of anxiety for the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts. They are mostly bothered about their treatment by the

²¹⁵ “İki tane güvercin götürdüm eşimle ona.” (P.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey, 21 April 2007).

²¹⁶ “Bu Emin hale’nin arkasında biz koştuk gezdik. Ondan sonra mı. Oy attık. Yanına gittim. Çingeneyim ama saygım var. Asıl çingeneyim ben, ama saygı yaptım ona. Dedim bak ben çadırdayım. Gönlümden geçti. Kutu içine de aldım iki tane güvercin. Bir de koca demet çiçek. Dedim bunları açıyosun. Dedi ne bunlar. Bunlar dedim Ecevit’ten kalma dedim. Açtı bu, aman dedi ne güzel bunlar. Al dedim şimdi bunları camdan dışarı at.” (P.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey, 21 April 2007).

²¹⁷ “Dedim bunları açıyosun. Dedi ne bunlar. Bunlar dedim ecevitten kalma dedim. Açtı bu, aman dedi ne güzel bunlar. Al dedim şimdi bunları camdan dışarı at.” (P.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey, 21 April 2007).

²¹⁸ The Turkish version of this account can be found in Appendix F.

district governate when the distribution of state grants for the poor are carried out. For my interviewees, in the district governate they are often treated unjustly or ignored in their attempts to benefit from those state grants- coal for the winter, education funds for the school children or benefits for the widows and the disabled. The following statements reveal their anxiety:

Kuştepe will be demolished or not...It is not a big deal! How does the head official of the district (kaymakam) treat you when you attend his office? How do the girls there treat you? Aren't they saying coarse, Gypsies, dirty dogs?²¹⁹

Yes they are...Maybe they are throwing our petitions right into the trash. I went there three or four times but he did not appeared. He was not there.²²⁰

Whenever we go there he is not in his office.²²¹

In the head office of the town, we just go there and ask for those benefits provided by the state. Why don't you give them to us? They are insulting us in a way that you can't imagine. He says exactly that he would get me arrested. He would call two police officers now. Where does he get this courage? He would not let us see the district governor although we prepared our petitions. Can you imagine such an insulting sentence? If I am a citizen of Lüleburgaz, I should be able to see the head official of the district. I should be able to present my problem. However, they are not giving this right to me.²²²

²¹⁹“*Kuştepe kalkacakmış, kalkmayacakmış boşverin şimdi. Kaymakam oraya gittiğiniz zaman kapısına size nasıl bir muamele oluyor. Oradak kızlar size nasıl davranıyor? Adiler, çingeneler, pis köpekler demiyorlar mı?*” (S.O. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,26 January 2008).

²²⁰“*Doğru diyorlar..Belki de dilekçeleri çöpe atarlar. 3-4 kere gittim çıkmadı. Ben öyle bilirim.*” (K.L. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008).

²²¹“*Ne zaman gitsek, kaymakam orada yok*”. (M.A. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,26 January 2008).

²²² The Turkish version of this account can be found in Appendix G.

I would not recognize the head official of the district. I have never seen him. They do not let us see him. They do not let us have a word with him.
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These highly passionate objections in Altıyol and Kuştepe districts about their treatment in district governate reflect the tension in the subjectivities of the residents regarding their “racialized” treatment by the local governors. As the citizens of the Turkish Republic and residents of the town, they object to not being able to reach the district governor who should be in his office to serve them. They claim that by being ignored and in some cases “harassed” in local state institutions, they get the sense of being excluded from the rights and the benefits that their citizenship status offers. Since most of the people in Kuştepe and Altıyol are dependent on state funds due to the high level of unemployment in the districts and/or their low socioeconomic status, it seems that they have been stigmatized racially as peoples “undeserving” to benefit from the state funds. The discursive construction in district governate, when the demands of the residents of Kuştepe and Altıyol districts are considered, reveals how they are condemned as racially and culturally “undeserving” to have access to state benefits.²²⁴

Master,when we mention these points raised by my brother, with the head official of the district or with any officer, they respond like this: He should go and work.²²⁵

²²³“*Ben kaymakamı görsem tanımam. Hiç görmedim ki. Göstermiyorlar. Görüştürmüyorlar.*” (H.A. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,26 January 2008).

²²⁴Those state benefits should not be considered within the context of the social welfare state. Those are “temporary”, low amounts of money that are distributed on the basis of the income level of the demanders. The problem is that they usually contribute very slightly to the budget of the receivers.

²²⁵“*Hoca hanım, bu kardeşim anlattıklarını kaymakama herhangi bir görevli kişiye anlattığımız zaman diyor ki gitsin çalışsın.*” (B.A. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008).

All the villagers are rich. They are all getting money from the state as subsidies²²⁶

The demarch (*muhtar*) who is the elected governor in the district, is also highly criticized by the residents of Kuştepe and Altıyol districts. According to my interviewees, the demarch discriminates them on the basis of “Gypsiness” and restricts their access to the state funds distributed for the poor by refusing to officially acknowledge their low income level.

We also have some complaints about the demarch. He protects the people from the Mountains. He is not serving us. I asked for the paper proving my poverty He said there is a deed registered on you. The people are living in the apartment flats but you do not see them. When I own my house, then I am counted as not poor? If you are not giving that paper, OK then I said, and went. I could not get a Green Card. It is impossible to call that my place as a proper house, though. You should come and see it. My neighbors all knew it.²²⁷

We visited the demarch for coal benefit. I told him that I had 4 children, so I was needy. He shouted and asked me “did you ask me when having so many children? He said that ‘Go away, Gypsy’.²²⁸

In this part, what I attempted to demonstrate overall was that despite the breaks and fractures, state practices towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey can be referred to as the discourse of racism, which has constructed the Gypsy/Roma as a racialized community

²²⁶“Köylülerin hepsi zengin. Hepsi yardım parası alıyor.” (L.A. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008).

²²⁷“Muhtardan da şikayetçiyiz. Dağlıları kolluyor, bize hiçbir şey yapmıyor. Dedim ver fakir kağıdı. Sende tapu gözükiyor dedi. Millet dairelerde oturuyor onları görmüyosun benim yer evim olunca mı fakir olmuyorum ben dedim. Tamam vermezsen verme dedim, çıktım. Yeşil kart alamadım. Ev de ev diyemezsin yani. Gel de gör. Konu komşu biliyor”(G.B. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008).

²²⁸“ Muhtara gittim kömür yardımı çıkartmak için. 4 tane çocuğum var dedim. Bana mı sordun 4-5 tane çocuk yaparken dedi. Yürü git çingene dedi. Bunu dedi gerçekten.” (İ.P. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008).

starting from the Ottomans up until today. Concentrating on the legal documents, policies of settlement and naturalization regarding the Gypsy/Roma communities, it seems that state policies and practices towards the Gypsies/Roma have had a “discontinuous” character, inclusion to some degree on the basis of being Muslim, but exclusion in times of heightened nationalism.

However, when they were considered among the non-Muslim elements that should be assimilated in the nation-building process, this optimism rapidly failed and the related policies faded away as well. They were the formal citizens yet silenced to the extent of being invisible and not being counted among the true and respectable elements of the nation. The direct and indirect effects of the state practices and discourses reproduce this silencing and their inferior social and economic status. Therefore, they should be considered as racist discourse and practices, despite the fact that the Gypsies/Roma have never been made targets of ethnic cleansing as was the case during the Nazi rule in Germany.

In the context of the racist discourse of the state, the practices of the local state institutions in Lüleburgaz, when dealing with the Gypsy/Roma community, reveal their racialisation at the state level. Based on the statements of my interviewees, the practices of the local state institutions in Lüleburgaz – the Gypsies/Roma’s being condemned on the basis of culture, being perceived as “undeserving” state benefits, their “harassment” in local state institutions (as claimed by them)- demonstrate how these racist practices are “deeply rooted” in state institutions.

Racism towards the Gypsy/Roma in the Labour Market

So far I have engaged in the analyses of state racism and racism at the societal level towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey with specific attention on Lüleburgaz. In this section, I will attempt to clarify the ways that these mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion operate against the Gypsy/Roma within the relations of the labour market. While I will try to demonstrate the transformation of the life-earning facilities of the Gypsy/Roma community in Turkey from the Ottoman times to today, the dynamics of Roma marginalization in the local economy of Lüleburgaz will also be uncovered. In general, I will argue that the Gypsy/Roma is a racialized community in terms of their exclusion from the booming capitalist economy of the town.

In terms of exploring the relations between race/ethnicity and class, the first systematic analyses came from the Marxist scholars. Although their analyses differ in some respects, Marxist accounts on the nature of the relationship between race and class emphasize the necessity of privileging the class factor over race and ethnicity. Wallerstein argues that race, nation and ethnic group are the constructions of capitalism for the sake of sustaining “the axial division of labour in the market economy.”²²⁹ For Cox, the capitalists exploiters “will devise and employ race prejudice when that becomes convenient” in order to justify the exploitation of the colored workers in the most degraded occupations.²³⁰ From a Neo-Marxist stance, Miles pays attention to the significance of the ways that ideologies function. Accordingly, racialisation and racism

²²⁹Wallerstein, p.375.

²³⁰ Cox, p.73.

are “the ideological forces which, in conjunction with economic and political relations of domination, located certain populations in specific class positions and therefore structured the exploitation of labour power in a particular ideological manner.”²³¹

Those analyses, reducing racism to class relations at the last instance, remain insufficient when the complex, diverse and cross-cutting forms of domination of the contemporary age are taken into account. In this context, emphasizing “the persistence and relative temporal stability of the relations of difference (ethnicity, class, gender or sexuality)” argue that the relationship between ethnicity/race and economy/class should be analyzed in a variable and context-specific manner. Such a framework will help us in understanding the ways used by the capitalist class to “devise and employ race prejudice when that becomes convenient.”²³² In this sense, when talking about Jews and the Roma in Europe, Fenton and Bredley suggest that rather than being exploited in the most degrading jobs based on biological and cultural inferiority – as in the case of African-Americans in colonial times to onwards-, Jews and the Roma were encapsulated in economic positions determined by the occupational specialization in very restricted economic activities. Jews as money lenders and the Roma as horse traders are examples of this occupational specialization. The problems regarding the occupational specialization of Jews and the Roma within national economies have two dimensions: On the one hand, they were excluded from the key economic and political roles by the majority and encapsulated in limited economic activities. On the other hand, they

²³¹ Ibid., p.73.

²³² Fenton and Bredley, p.19.

gradually lost their monopoly positions in some of the occupations assigned to them on the basis of ethnicity due to the changes in the mode of production.²³³

In line with the above argument regarding the economic positioning of Jews and the Roma in Europe, I argue that, although the Gypsy/Roma communities in Turkey have been at some instances employed in the most undesirable occupations, the main trend which reveals their relation to the local and national economy has been their occupational specialization. Being excluded from the key economic positions in the labour market and in public institutions, the Gypsy/Roma people in Turkey have assumed “limited but necessary tasks” for the local economies. The persistent trend of attributing them specific occupations within the economic niches constitutes the first phase of their racialization in the labour market. Furthermore, their recent marginalization/exclusion in the labour market due to their loss of those economic niches in light of the capitalist transformation of production has deepened their racialized status. The case of Lüleburgaz, I suppose, will shed light on this second phase of their racialisation in a local economy.

Apart from my interviews and observations in the Gypsy/Roma districts of Lüleburgaz, the findings of a 2008 recent research by Keyder and Buğra titled “Kent Nüfusunun En Yoksul Kesiminin İstihdam Yapısı ve Geçinme Yöntemleri (The Employment Structure of the Most Impoverished Sectors of the Urban Poor and Their Ways of Livelihood) ”²³⁴ would, I suppose, confirm my arguments regarding how the

²³³ Ibid., p. 19.

²³⁴ Çağlar Keyder and Ayşe Buğra Kavala, Şubat 2008, “Kent Nüfusunun En Yoksul Kesiminin İstihdam Yapısı ve Geçinme Yöntemleri”, available(online): http://www.spf.boun.edu.tr/docs/kent_yoksullugu_rapor.pdf “The research aims to uncover the nature of

discourse of racism operates by excluding the Gypsy/Roma from the growing capitalist economy of Lüleburgaz.

In the Ottoman Empire, the occupational specialization of the Gypsy/Roma was clear and fixed. Although, as Ginio, Çelik and Marushiakova&Popov suggest, at some instances they were employed in the occupations undesirable by the majority like execution and prostitution²³⁵, the Gypsy/Roma constituted an *ethnic jati* within the Empire²³⁶. In the Ottoman times, the Gypsy/Roma were musicians, carters, horse traders, cart-markers, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, tinsmiths, miners, goldsmiths, and seasonal farm workers.²³⁷ Gypsy/Roma within the empire were especially famous with blacksmithing and their musical talents so that they held the “monopoly” for conducting

the relationship of the “poorest” segment of the urban population with employment and the labour market, and attempts to gain a better understanding of the other means whereby these households maintain their livelihood. In addition, the research attempts to draw this picture in various cities with different population levels, and growth rates, which are assumed to provide different environments from the point of view of employment opportunities. Thus, we conducted the fieldwork in İstanbul and the following eight cities: Erzurum, Lüleburgaz, Konya, Mersin, Muş, Salihli, Samsun, Zile. We tried to reach the households in the poorest neighbourhoods of the selected cities; and through questionnaires and in-depth interviews, we collected information on the nature and duration of the employment that household members have had access to, and other sources of income generation. We attempted to understand this picture in different urban environment.”(Keyder and Buğra, 2008, www.spf.boun.edu.tr). The research is significant in the sense that the surveys in Lüleburgaz are mostly conducted in the Roma settlements of Lüleburgaz, since the poorest segment of the population in Lüleburgaz reside in those districts. Therefore, the statistical data of the research are available for me to confirm my evidence obtained through in-dept interviews in the Roma disticts of Lüleburgaz.

²³⁵ Ginio, p.126, Çelik, p.9 and Marushiakova&Popov, p. 67.

²³⁶ The term *ethnic jati* is suggested by Hübschmannova for the understanding of Roma society elsewhere. For Hübschmannova, *jati* “is a group which interacts with the rest of society (in India, with other *jatis*) on the basis of economic complementarity: distinct *jatis* exchange products and services, deriving from their specific *jati* professions(s). While there is indispensable exchange in the economic sphere, other conceptually delimited spheres of social production and communication are limited within the *jati* boundaries, which are fortified by status barriers and regulations of social distance.....*Jati* as a social formation manifests a double character: being fully economically dependent on other *jatis*, it is a social group; being isolated and self-contained in other spheres of social life, it has many features of a complex society.”For a detailed discussion see: Milena Hübschmannova, “Economic Stratification and Interaction: Roma, an Ethnic *Jati* in East Slovakia” in *Gypsies An Interdisciplinary Reader* edited by Diane Tong (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), pp.64-67.

²³⁷ Marushiakova and Popov,pp. 64-67.

those jobs. For instance, in Istanbul in the seventeenth century and onwards, music and dancing, horse trading, blacksmithing were practiced only by the Gypsy population. During the building of the Süleymaniye Mosque, most of the blacksmithing were handled by a famous Gypsy blacksmith Çingene Derviş.²³⁸ In this sense, as Ginio asserts, “Though marginal within the Empire, the Gypsies were still significant to society in certain niches and social contexts. Like the Jews who served as moneylenders in Mediaeval Europe by performing despised, yet necessary tasks, they made their own particular contributions to local society.”²³⁹ By these means, they had occupied an indispensable economic position within the local economy. For instance, some of the Ottoman Gypsies who were blacksmiths were given *müsellem* status by the state and exempted from certain taxes in return for their auxiliary service in the army.²⁴⁰

As “nomad craftsmen and/or settled musicians in the cities”, the Gypsy/Roma had long been part of the local economies as ethnic jatis not only in Turkey but also around Europe. As Fraser suggests,

Population growth and increasing land shortage, sedentarization, having to live close to the *gadzo/gadze* (Gypsy word for non-Gypsy), motorized transport, industrialization, or fluctuations in earning opportunities did have an influence on Gypsies’ life styles. While some old occupations such as music and other entertainment, fortunetelling, agriculture and horticulture continue to be practiced among Gypsies both in the east and the west, horse-trading, basket-making, scrap collecting, chair-bottoming; and ,for women, peddling baskets were about to wholly eliminate.”²⁴¹

²³⁸ Egemen Yılıgür, “Çingenerin Adı İstanbul’da Konuldu”, available(online): <http://www.cingeneyiz.org/eskisite/istanbulcingeneleri.htm>.

²³⁹ Ginio, p. 126.

²⁴⁰ Çelik, p. 10.

²⁴¹ Fraser, p.306.

For Mezarcioglu, adjacent to the loss of traditional “Gypsy occupations” in Europe due to the capitalist transformation, the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey like their counterparts in Europe have abandoned their nomadic way of life. Since those occupations were practiced by wandering, the Gypsies, in the past, were producing crafts and going around to find “markets” for them. They were going out to look for customers, from door to door or enterprise to enterprise, offering a range of goods and services. When those products became unnecessary and the demand for them disappeared, the Gypsies abandoned their nomadic way of life and became mostly settled. The result was awful. Being wanderers for centuries, they lacked the ownership of private property, either territory or houses. Therefore, for Mezarcioglu, lacking property ownership is still a crucial factor in distinguishing them from the other settled groups.²⁴²

Marginalization in the labour market: The Case of Lüleburgaz

In Lüleburgaz, it is not surprising to observe that the traditional Gypsy crafts like blacksmithing, coppersmithing, tinsmithing and basket-making are no longer practiced since capitalist mass production has made those services redundant and the demand for them has largely disappeared. As my interviewees point out, there are only one or two families left who still engage in tinsmithing and basket-making. Currently practised life-earning facilities in Kuştepe and Altıyol districts are music and

²⁴² Ali Mezarcioglu, June 2007, “Kaybettiklerimiz (1) Meslekler”, available(online): <http://www.cingeneyiz.org/eskisine/mezarcioglukaybettiklerimiz.htm>.

entertainment, garbage collection, selling in the local bazaar, cartering, and shoe-painting and cleaning the apartments (for women). The Gypsy/Roma communities have, for long, held “monopolies” in those occupations and contributed to the local economy of the town within those limited, but necessary economic niches. The recent statistical evidence regarding Lüleburgaz which were mostly obtained in the Gypsy/Roma districts of the town confirms the characteristics of that occupational specialization. In the aforementioned research conducted by Keyder and Buğra to explore the patterns of employment in the poorest districts of nine cities in Turkey, Altıyol and Kuştepe districts were the major districts where the surveys for Lüleburgaz were conducted. Compared to the other cities, Lüleburgaz has the highest percentage of “irregular, manual occupations” (selling in the bazaar, shoe-painting, cartering and garbage collection which are the so-called Gypsy occupations in the town). In the districts of Lüleburgaz where the surveys were conducted, the major life earning activities 31,9 percent are those irregular, manual occupations with the, while the second major occupation appears to be working at people’s houses as cleaners and/or baby-sitters (17 percent).²⁴³

The main characteristics of the occupations that the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe work in are flexibility, low level of income and lack of insurance.²⁴⁴ The

²⁴³ Buğra-Kavala and Keyder, pp.34-36.

²⁴⁴ Statistical evidence from the research of Buğra and Keyder confirms the low level of income in the Roma settlements of Lüleburgaz. According to Keyder and Buğra, this observation could be taken to support the hypothesis that the poverty might have an ethnic dimension. In fact, poverty is more widespread among those different ethnic groups that were integrated to the urban populations. This finding could be supported, in particular, by the field works based on face to face interviews to support such a hypothesis. This hypothesis about the ethnic dimension of poverty was also confirmed in the case of the Roma population by the results of the questionnaires as well as face to face interviews. For example, in Lüleburgaz- a town with a relatively higher level of social and economic development-the

flexibility of those occupations is due to their irregularity. The residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts make money only when there is demand for their services by the larger community. For instance, musicians are able to work only during the summer, since it is the wedding-season. During the winter, they have to sustain their lives by the income they obtain during the summer months or they have to engage in some other economic activity like cartering. Sellers in the bazaar are complaining about the declining demand for the products they sell due to the increasing number of supermarket chains in Lüleburgaz which offer lower prices for fruits and vegetables. Garbage collectors state that it is becoming hard to collect garbage everyday, since the municipality restricts the garbage collection by usurping their wheelbarrows. Gypsy women, on the other hand, who usually contribute to the family budget as cleaners in the apartments, complain about their replacement in cleaning by women migrating from Bulgaria.

Macırs (Bulgarian immigrants) have now captured our stairs. They have captured the restaurants. Macırs have taken everything nothing is left for the local poor. Compared to my neighbors I am far better, thank God. But wherever you go, you meet with the Macırs. Since we are stigmatized as the Roma or as the Gypsies, we all lag behind in these things wherever we go. Since it is known as the Roma fight or Gypsy fight, we always lag

poverty is hitting the Roma population in particular. This situation is also reflected in the sample taken to represent the town. In Lüleburgaz, the rate of households without any employed members to the town sample is around 16.7 per cent which is a rate clearly below the general average of the sample (22.3 per cent) . Besides, the employment rate of the women is the highest in Lüleburgaz (20.6 per cent) compared to the other cities. This rate is well above the general average of the sample (9.41 per cent) . Similarly, among the households with two employed people, Lüleburgaz ranks the second (20.6 per cent) after Mersin . However, the median of the household income is the lowest in Lüleburgaz (410 YTL) . This finding is directly linked with the quality of the jobs assumed in the town. For the overall sample, the average rate of wandering and unqualified workers is around 9.6 per cent while this rate rises to 27.7 per cent in Lüleburgaz. Similarly, the average rate of those who are working in the houses of others is 2.2 per cent while this rate is 17 per cent in Lüleburgaz. for the general sample. Those households outside the formal insurance system (SSK, Bağ-Kur and Emekli Sandığı) is 67.4 per cent in Lüleburgaz while the average for the sample is 53.5 per cent. This rate is only higher in Muş (74.3 per cent) than Lüleburgaz.

behind. The problem is lack of education, ignorance and poverty. That's all.²⁴⁵

According to the statements of my interviewees, those usual occupations tend to offer declining incomes for the Gypsy/Roma—playing in the weddings may be considered as an exception:

I am wandering around these dumps. I am just getting two-three million. Then, I am buying bread-cheese and putting them in front of the children.²⁴⁶

We are giving whatever we collected to the scrap dealers. 150.000 is the price of a kilogram of tin. It is not worth of your efforts.²⁴⁷

In fact, lack of insurance from the occupations conducted by the Gypsie/Roma constitutes the other drawback for the Roma employment in Lüleburgaz. Most of my interviewees state that, since they have no health insurance, they usually get green cards that the state provides for the poor. According to the statistical data in Buğra and Keyder, in the poorest districts that the surveys were conducted, Lüleburgaz after Muş, has the highest percentage when lacking insurance and possessing green cards are concerned (82,9% and 46,8%).²⁴⁸ As stated by one of my interviewees:

²⁴⁵“*Macırlar (Bulgaristan göçmenleri) bizim merdivenleri tuttu. Lokantaları tuttu. Buranın fakir halkına macırlardan birşey kalmadı. Komşularıma nazaran ben iyiyim allaha şükürler olsun. Ama..nereye gidersen git macırlar. Roman damgası, çingene damgası yediğimiz için nereye gidersin git bu işlerde geri kalırız. Roman kavgası, çingene kavgası diye bilindiği için geri kalırız. Sorun cahillik ve eğitimsizlik, fakirlik hepsi bu.*” (L.A. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008).

²⁴⁶“*Bu etraftaki çöpleri dolaşıyorum. Alıyorum 2-3 milyon. Ekmek-penir alıyorum, koyuyorum çocukların önlerine.*” (P.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,21 April 2007).

²⁴⁷“*Hurdacılara veriyoruz topladıklarımızı.. 150 bin tenekenin kilosu. 10 kilo toplasan 1,5 milyon yapıyor. Uğraştığına değmez.*” (S.K. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,21 April 2007).

²⁴⁸ Buğra-Kavala and Keyder,p.39.

I have a Green Card yet I still need money to go here and there. You need money for a medical operation. It is reduced just to 5 if it is 10 billion. When I go to a doctor, he writes a prescription. The pharmacist asks 5-6-7 million from me. Where can I find it? My daily earning is just 5-6-7 million. I can't feed my children. I need a serious medical operation. What would happen if the state helped us a little more? Then we could recover a bit. I am not asking something significant. It should make me a room and a kitchen...²⁴⁹

Due to the characteristics of the Gypsy occupations in Lüleburgaz (flexibility, low level of income and lack of insurance), the residents of the districts can be considered as marginalized and disadvantaged in the labour market. However, the mechanisms and processes that can be defined as their racialisation in the labour market mostly become evident when the booming capitalist economy of Lüleburgaz is considered. Recently, Lüleburgaz has been transformed into an industrialized region where plenty of factories have been established. As the research of Buğra and Keyder suggest, among the sample cities where surveys were conducted, Lüleburgaz is the fourth city where the level of socioeconomic development is the highest. However, among the cities concerned, Lüleburgaz constitutes the first city where the percentage of those who have irregular, lower income, and manual occupations is the highest.²⁵⁰ When the decreasing demand from the majority population for the services the Gypsy/Roma sustain in their economic niches is coupled with their marginalized and disadvantaged position in those occupations; most of my interviewees stated their wish to be employed in the factories where they would reach a regular income and insurance.

You see there are lots of factories in our Turkey. They should give some favors to our children in them. The state should provide employment for

²⁴⁹ The Turkish version of this account can be found in Appendix H.

²⁵⁰ Buğra-Kavala and Keyder, p. 41.

them. It should then set a precondition: If we do not work and steal, the state will put us in a prison. The state should enforce us to work in the manner that the foreigners do. If our prime ministers act like this, there will be nothing left here with the name of Gypsies or the Roma.²⁵¹

I am not asking for a ton of coal...If the state finds a job for me with a salary of 800 million. I don't want to wait in front of the cart in the early morning. Then, the state should give me a job. I don't want the coal. I don't want the Green Card either. The state just should find me a job with a salary of 800 million. Master said something very beautiful. 10 ton of coal or food, these are not obligatory. State should find me a job. Am I not right Master?²⁵²

Stereotypical construction of the Gypsy/Roma communities mostly refer to them as “lazy, unwilling to work, and lacking work ethic” who cannot stand being employed in the waged, regular labour. Moreover, ethnographic studies regarding the Gypsy/Roma communities in different parts of Europe which deconstruct racial prejudices towards the Gypsy/Roma also assert that the Gypsy/Roma communities internalize economic flexibility, working on their own accounts, staying outside the realm of paid work. This literature suggests that economic flexibility and unwillingness to engage in waged labour have been the strategies of the Gypsy/Roma to secure their existence independently from that of gadze/gaujo.²⁵³ However, my interviewees –either men or women- in Kuştepe

²⁵¹“*Bak bizim bu Türkiye’de ne kadar fabrikalar var. Oralarda çocuklara bir imkan gösterebilirler. İşe soksun devlet. Desin ki çalışmaz, çalarsan içeri atarım seni. Zorla çalıştırsın devletler. Nasıl gıvur çalıştırıyor. Eğer başbakanlar bizim öyle olsa burada çingene namına roman namına birşey kalmaz.*” (Y.F. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

²⁵²“*Ben ne 1 ton kömür isterim...bana devlet bir iş bulursa 800 milyon maaşla ben sabah kalkınca at arabasının önünde beklemek istemiyorum. O zaman devlet bana iş versin. Ben istemiyorum kömür. Yeşil kart da istemiyorum. Versin bana 800 milyonluk bir iş. Hocam çok güzel birşey konuştu. 1 ton kömür ya da yiyecek. Bunlar zorunlu değil yani. Bulsun devlet bana bir iş. Doğru mu söylüyorum hocam. Bulsun bana sigortalı bir iş.*” (A.B. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 26 January 2008).

²⁵³ Fraser, p.307; Kata Horváth, “Gypsy Work-Gadjo Work”, *Romani Studies* 15, no. 1 (Jun 2005), p.45.

and Altiyol districts recurrently state their wish to engage in regular, waged labour which, they assume, would provide them predictability and security in life. The problems regarding the economic position of the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts become clear at this stance. My interviewees insistently claim that they are discriminated and excluded from the job opportunities in Lüleburgaz:

I have gone everywhere. They don't want us. They don't hire us. They say that you do not have literate people. They are not hiring us simply because we were not able to attend school. They are not hiring me because I am a Gypsy. They might think that I would steal. They may think in many ways. They are despising us wherever we go.²⁵⁴

If the state provides us land, then men could deal with the land. His daughter would not go anywhere. She could have education. Then, she could be hired in a factory. If she were in İstanbul, this girl could earn her life. There is no job in Lüleburgaz. She was bringing 700 million to me when she was working in the textiles. However, we do not have these here. Here we have race discrimination which is not the case in İstanbul. In İstanbul, they are the Roma not the Gypsies. They are visiting each other in İstanbul. In our Thrace, there are the Gypsies. The Kurds are coming to Burgaz. They can't despise them as the Kurds. They are giving them a very good treatment.²⁵⁵

Why aren't they hiring you in the same factory where he was hired? Why are these Bulgarians able to work everywhere while you are not?²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴“Her yere gittim. İstemiyorlar, almıyorlar. Okuryazarımız yokmuş. Okula gidemediğimiz için almıyorlar. Belki Çingeneyim diye almıyorlar. Çalar falan diye düşünebilirler. Her türlü düşünebilirler. Nereye gitsek aşağılıyorlar yani.” (M.Ö. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

²⁵⁵“Devlet bize arsa verse. Adam o zaman çiftçilikle uğraşır. Kızı sağa sola gitmez. Tahsil alır. Fabrikaya girer o zaman. Zaten İstanbul'da olsa bu kız ekmek tutar. Lüleburgaz'da yok ki çalışma. 700 milyon getiriyordu bana, tekstilde çalıştı ama, burada yok. Burada ırk ayrımı var, İstanbul'da yok ki. İstanbul'da Çingene yok, Roman var. Birbirlerine gidip geliyorlar. Bizim Trakya'da Çingene var. Kürt geliyor Burgaz'a. Onlara Kürt diyemiyorlar. Onları el üstünde tutuyorlar.” (H.Ç. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

²⁵⁶Onun girdiği fabrikaya seni niye almıyorlar. Neden bu Bulgaristanlılar her yerde çalışıyor da sen çalışamıyorsun. (M.Ö. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

I am not asking for a ton of coal...If the state finds a job for me with a salary of 800 million. I don't want to wait in front of the cart in the early morning. Then, the state should give me a job. I don't want the coal. I don't want the Green Card either. The state just should find me a job with a salary of 800 million. Master said something very beautiful. 10 ton of coal or food, these are not obligatory. State should find me a job. Am I not right Master? ²⁵⁷

There are three young boys and girls in my home. Excuse me but they are lying there like the animals. If they are hired in a factory, then things will change. It would change from the essence. If the job opportunities increased, such poverty would be overcome. Unemployment, unemployment...The children are losing. ²⁵⁸

If my child is employed in a factory, then the problem is over. ²⁵⁹

What happens when they apply to the factories in Lüleburgaz is narrated by many of them as follows:

My husband has so many times visited the Employment Institution. He has applied to the factories. They say that "leave a form and we will let you know." There is no news, though. ²⁶⁰

I am selling skirts. I could not sell any until now. I am hungry. This woman is hungry, too. I am visiting the shops to apply for a job. They are asking the neighborhood that I am living in. Then, it is over...A small shop of confection was opened in the Süleyman Street. I went there. He asked me where I am living. I said Kuştepe. He said no because that

²⁵⁷“Ben ne 1 ton kömür isterim...bana devlet bir iş bulursa 800 milyon maaşla ben sabah kalkınca at arabasının önünde beklemek istemiyorum. O zaman devlet bana iş versin. Ben istemiyorum kömür. Yeşil kart da istemiyorum. Versin bana 800 milyonluk bir iş. Hocam çok güzel birşey konuştu. 1 ton kömür ya da yiyecek. Bunlar zorunlu değil yani. Bulsun devlet bana bir iş. Doğru mu söylüyorum hocam. Bulsun bana sigortalı bir iş.” (A.B. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,26 January 2008).

²⁵⁸“Evde 3 tane delikanlı çocuk, 2 tane delikanlı kız. Hayvan gibi affedersin yatıyorlar. Bu çocuklar fabrikaya girseler iş değişir. Temelden değişir. İş imkanları açılın inan bu kadar mağdurluk olmaz. işsizlik..işsizlik..Çocuklar kaybediyorlar.” (H.A. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008).

²⁵⁹“Bak şimdi benim çocuk bir fabrikaya girse, bitti iş.” (A.G. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey, 26 January 2008).

²⁶⁰“Eşim kaç kere İş Bulma kurumuna gitti. Fabrikalara başvurdu. Form bırak haber verimiz diyorlar. Haber de yok.” (H.A. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008).

neighborhood is far away from here. If I am living in Kuştepe, does this mean that it is far away from here? I will come on foot. There is no need for a service. I have no husband. I am single. Shall I practice prostitution now? Shall I steal to eat bread? I don't want money but a job. Even when I borrow from the grocer, he will know that I will pay when I get my salary. I don't want help from the government, either. What shall I do? I will be waiting for a woman to buy a skirt from me...²⁶¹

When you give your address, then it is over. (He means the application form for a job in the factory)They say we will call you. They never call you. They have the address there.²⁶²

Contrary to the stereotyped images regarding the Gypsy/Roma and the literature that suggests the Gypsy/Roma's unwillingness to work in waged labour, the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts –men and women alike- recurrently state their wish to be employed in the factories of the town. They claim that they are usually given no responses from the employers when they apply for even non-qualified positions in the factories. They also share the information that when they are rejected for the position they applied to, they are mostly given no reasonable excuses for it. My interviewees claim that the Kurds and the ethnic Turks and Muslims who have recently migrated from Bulgaria to Lüleburgaz are employed in these factories, though they have no better extra qualities and experience. In this sense, based on their statements, the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts are excluded from the job opportunities that the booming capitalist economy of Lüleburgaz is offering. While being marginalized and disadvantaged in the labour market through conducting their occupations which were attributed to them

²⁶¹ The Turkish version of this account can be found in Appendix I.

²⁶² *Mahalle adresini verdiği an bitti iş(fabrikadaki başvuru formunu kastediyor).Diyorlar ki biz size telefon açarız. Telefon hiç açılmıyor. Var ya orada adres.* (M.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,26 January 2008).

overtime, those who are unable to position themselves within those economic niches are excluded from the labour market. Those instances, I argue, demonstrate how the discourse of racism towards the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe operates through the racialisation of the residents in the labour market by either making them disadvantaged in the occupations they conduct or completely eliminating the chances of their being employed in the positions the local economy bears in itself.

CHAPTER III

FROM THE SURVIVAL/COPING STRATEGIES TO JUSTICE CLAIMS

So far, I have engaged in a brief analysis of why the Gypsy/Roma peoples have become an object of intense study and how this has been linked to “the Europeanization of the Gypsy/Roma” issue. Besides that, I attempted to offer a theoretical/historical account which demonstrates how the discourse of racism has been functioning about the Turkish Gypsy/Roma at the state and societal level and in the labour market. Specifically, I also argued that local manifestations of that discourse can be observed with respect to the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe which are reproducing them as a racialized group. Based on my interpretation of their narratives, I attempted to demonstrate that the ongoing process of their racialisation has serious conclusions such as being marginalized politically as “undeserving” fragments of the nation, socially as “undisciplined, lazy, sexually loose people” with whom social contact should be kept at minimum and economically as those who should be kept away from the advantages of the booming capitalist economy of the town.

However, such an analysis based on the specific theoretical and analytical tools/frameworks which signifies them as a racialized entity would be inadequate without uncovering my interviewees’ self-perceptions regarding their ethnic identity and their current socioeconomic status. Moreover, how my interviewees respond/react to their disadvantaged position at the discursive and action level should be studied to throw

light on their agency. Therefore, this chapter will aim to go beyond my analysis of their current socioeconomic status as a racialized group and highlight how the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts define their identities while being defined/condemned/racialized by the majority as the Gypsies, how they perceive their current socioeconomic status with respect to it and how they deal with their “poor/subaltern”²⁶³ position -as they define themselves- at the discursive and action level.²⁶⁴

Identity Construction/Perception of the Residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe Districts

In the last two decades, the revival of ethnicity/culture based struggles has led to the transformation of the very structures that were once sustaining nation-states. In most of these struggles- that may also take secessionist forms in some instances-the ethnic groups cry for the affirmation of “their ethnic/cultural identity” and demand rights that would safeguard them from the hegemony of national identity. As Fenton and Bredley

²⁶³The term “subaltern” first appeared in the writings of Gramsci to identify the poor who were non-proletaria. The term has been widely used in the last decade in the literature on poverty for signifying the urban poor, marginalized ethnic minorities living in ghettos and street children, etc. I will also be using the term as a conceptual complement to the term “poor” throughout this chapter.

²⁶⁴ Though seeking to make their own voices heard, I will still be operating within my own world of meanings and through my own analytical and theoretical tools when analyzing and deconstructing their own perceptions of identity and strategies of survival. As Erdoğan suggests all the representations of the “subaltern” by the researcher as such would never completely penetrate/touch upon all the complexities and diversities of the lives of the subaltern. But indeed, Erdoğan adds quoting from Bahtin (1981), that the autonomous and sometimes contradictory voice of the subaltern can be hoped to be heard within the text beyond his/her representation by the researcher. For a more detailed discussion see: Necmi Erdoğan, “Yok-sanma: Yoksulluk-Maduniyet ve “Fark Yaraları” in *Yoksulluk Halleri: Türkiye’de Kent Yoksulluğun Toplumsal Görünümleri* edited by Necmi Erdoğan, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), p.48.

argue, the rise of the ethnic-based identity politics has been due to the key changes in global political and economic relationships:

The break-up of the Soviet Union brought to our notice new or transforming ethnic conflicts in many Eastern and Asian societies, while an increasingly global economy has produced new patterns of migration and altered the flow of peoples between the more and less developed nations. In the Western societies ethnic hierarchies are also changing as economies transform, with some ethnic minorities benefiting from opportunities for upward mobility while others suffer from heightened exclusion and marginalization.²⁶⁵

As Laclau argues, in contemporary times, the death of the Subject (the absolute subject with a capital “S” which represents the so called “universal” structures of state, nation, class, national identity and so on) has been replaced by an increasing interest in multiple identities. (which represent particularism(s) as opposed to the universal).²⁶⁶

The revival of ethnicity/culture based struggles along with religious, ecological and gender based ones has fueled academic debates as well, almost dominating the agenda of social sciences. Empirical research as well as theoretical debate has been focusing on a range of issues from the very nature of identity to what characterizes the motives and directions of identity struggles.²⁶⁷

While a detailed analysis of these discussions will not be attempted in this part, I will briefly engage in a critique of the theoretical position that essentializes the very nature of “identity” and struggles based on identity by treating them as “ever-constant,

²⁶⁵ Fenton and Bredley, pp. 1-2.

²⁶⁶Ernesto Laclau, “Universalism, particularism, and the question of identity” in *The Identity in Question* edited by John Rajchman (New York : Routledge, 1995), pp.93-94.

²⁶⁷ Those discussions are based on the binary of recognition vs. redistribution., in fact the tension between culture based and class based analyses, to understand social phenomena.

fixed” constructions free from time and context.²⁶⁸ Scott argues that- when criticizing the theory of multiculturalism and its adherence to respect the diversity of identities-, “....”identity is taken as the referential sign of a fixed set of customs, practices and meanings, an enduring heritage, a readily identifiable sociological category, a set of shared traits and/or experiences.”²⁶⁹ Such a position involves the risk of “the representation of certain groups” by naturalizing their identities without really taking into account their own self-perception of identity, be it religious, ethnic, cultural identities or gender. As Stuart Hall impressively puts it:

What is more is that identity is always in part a narrative, always in part a kind of representation. It is always within representation. Identity is not something which is formed outside and then we tell stories about it. It is that which is narrated in ones own self. I will say something about that in terms of my own narration of identity in a moment you know, that wonderful moment where Richard II says, Come let us sit down and tell stories about the death of kings. Well, I am going to tell you a story and ask you to tell one about yourself. We have the notion of identity as contradictory, as composed of more than one discourse, as composed always across the silences of the other, as written in and through ambivalence and desire. These are extremely important ways of trying to think an identity which is not a sealed or closed totality.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ For instance, İncirlioğlu while criticizing the academic literature on the Gypsy/Roma argues that not only the research on the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey but also those in Europe attribute Gypsy/Roma certain identity characteristics and treat them as “*the object of the study*”. However, the necessity is to take Roma agency into consideration and make them speak, rather than speak on their behalf . For a more detailed discussion see: İn Emine Onaran İncirlioğlu, p.171-171.

²⁶⁹ Joan W.Scott, “Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity” in *The Identity in Question* edited by John Rajchman (New York : Routledge, 1995), p.5.

²⁷⁰ Stuart Hall, “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities” in *Theories of Race and Racism : Reader* edited by John Solomos (Florence, KY, USA: Routledge, 1999), p.147-148.

In this sense, the best way to free empirical and theoretical analyses on identity from essentialism and reductionism is to treat identity as “unstable, contradictory, unfixed, contextual and never-secured, but always in being”. As Scott argues:

“...”identities are historically conferred, that this conferral is ambiguous (though it works precisely and necessarily by imposing a false clarity), that subjects are produced through multiple identifications, some of which become politically salient for a time in certain contexts, and that the project of history is not to reify identity but to understand its production as an ongoing process of differentiation, relentless in its repetition, but also – and seems to me the most important point- subject to redefinition, resistance and change.²⁷¹

In the light of the above theoretical discussions, I will try to display the “unstable, fluid, contradictory” aspects of the identity construction that I observed in the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe. As the following analysis based on the narratives of my interviewees demonstrates, they tend to perceive being a Roma/Gypsy not as an ethnic affiliation but as a social/cultural and class position. Their poverty, lack of education, their inability to express themselves properly at the discursive level accompanied at some moments by the internalization of the stereotypes towards them regarding their laziness and being the undeserved, are the main components of Gypsy/Roma identity for my interviewees. In this sense, both the rejection of the ethnic affiliation of being a Gypsy/Roma and its perception as a social/cultural and class position (which becomes more meaningful in their justice claims at the discursive level analyzed in the next section) and the ebbs&flows (contradictions, conflicts) in the narratives of my interviewees at the moments they ponder the reasons for their poverty/subalternity, point

²⁷¹ Scott, p.11.

out the defaults of the theoretical position which essentializes identity claims as “fixed, stable”.

Being a Gypsy/Roma Refers to Poverty and Lack of Education, Nothing More!

The most challenging sessions of my in-dept interviews and informal focus groups (in tea houses) have taken place over the question of how the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe define their ethnic identity. Their responses differed in context, time or in terms of their residential or occupational status. For instance, while the musician residents of Altıyol district (who usually tend to distance themselves from the other residents as “creative artists” “appreciated by the majority” and who are somehow better off economically) define themselves as the Roma, they strictly reject the term Gypsy and attribute Gypsiness to the ones living in the tents. Some of the residents of Kuştepe living in tents usually do not hesitate to describe themselves as Gypsy. However, they seem to feel “harassed” when an outsider uses the term Gypsy to define them. Some of my interviewees strictly reject being defined either as Roma or Gypsy, stating that their identity cards declare them to be Turkish citizens. There were even such cases that someone who defined himself/herself as Roma in the previous talk, changed his mind in our next encounter and claimed that there was in fact no such thing as being a Roma or Gypsy. In the jungle of those conflicting and contradictory statements of my interviewees,²⁷² it is still possible to detect some common patterns regarding their ethnic

²⁷² Those contradictions might directly refer to their own confusion regarding their identity. In the last few years, Roma identity has been marketed in the media, while my interviewees have also encountered so many researchers asking them about their Roma origins. Roma identity gaining credit and visibility in public discourse make them feel confused, since until a few years ago, their so called ethnic identity was a sign of shame for them. Secondly, as residents of districts ghettoized in the sense that they have no social

and religious identity construction and how those common patterns overlap and intersect with the citizenship demands.

When I asked my interviewees what is the meaning of being a Roma and/or Gypsy is for them,-regardless of residential status, occupational affiliation or their gender-, most of them responded as follows:

Our only handicap is illiteracy and lack of education. Nothing more! Everybody is calling us Gypsy or Roma. Nobody questions what it really means (to be a Gypsy or Roma). The state should prevent it. Everybody must accept us as we are.²⁷³

My interviewee, a middle-aged woman cleaning apartments and residing in Kuştepe, defines being a Roma/Gypsy as being uneducated and poor. Her narrative becomes obscure when demanding the state to eliminate “Gypsiness”- that connotes the necessity of eliminating poverty- on the one hand, and to “recognize them as such,” on the other hand, as Gypsies.

Our sole problem is poverty. There is no such thing as being a Gypsy or Roma. Because we do not know Romani, we do not know their religion, we do not know their race. But, it is poverty, illiteracy. We are unable to look after ourselves. We are unable to dress well. We cannot adorn ourselves.²⁷⁴

As that narrative demonstrates, another woman from Kuştepe completely rejects the ethnic affiliation which being a Gypsy/Roma would connote. Being unable to

contact with the “outside” except economic exchange, they may have felt unwilling to reflect their own identity perception in front of an outsider.

²⁷³“*Sorun cahillik ve eğitimsizlik fakirlik hepsi bu.... Tutturmuşlar bir çingene, roman. Neden çıkmış bu sormazlar. Devlet buna temelden engel olacak. Bizim insanımızı böyle kabul edecekler.*” (Ş.A. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 28 January 2008).

²⁷⁴“*Bizim bütün sorunumuz fakirlik yavrum. Romanmış, çingeneymiş diye bişey yok. Çünkü ne dil biliriz, ne din biliriz ne ırk biliriz. Ama işte eğitimsizlik, fakirlik. Kendimize bakamayız. Giyinemeyiz. Güzel süslenemeyiz.*” (P.D. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 28 January 2008).

speaking Romani is the most reasonable excuse for that. As her neighbour, being uneducated and poor along with being unable to adorn herself are the reasons for being defined as a Gypsy.

That is why they call us Roma. We are poor. Nobody became a doctor or nurse in our community. It is clear under what conditions our fathers lived. Now we do portering, etc. If some of us had been able to have (reputable) occupations, it might have been different. To be a Roma means to be poor..²⁷⁵

As these narratives reveal, being a Gypsy and/or Roma, in general, does not signify an ethnic affiliation for the residents of Kuştepe and Altıyol. Although, in some instances, they do not hesitate to define themselves as Roma or Gypsy, what those definitions refer for them is usually ambiguous in terms of ethnicity. Either relatively well-to-do musicians or those living in tents deprived of very basic needs to sustain their lives, regard Gypsiness or being a Roma as a “class position”. One instance during the fieldwork was quite interesting. After talking long hours on how the Roma suffer from various injustices in Lüleburgaz, one of my interviewees stated that “In fact, I am neither Roma nor Gypsy”. He insistently took me to his house and asked “Is it like a Roma settlement (resident?) that you imagined?” The house was not different from the middle-class household in Turkey with all the furniture and electronic devices in it. For him, his overall social and economic status was an evidence to distinguish him from either Roma or Gypsy identity. He claims to be one of the “normal” residents of Lüleburgaz.

²⁷⁵ “Ondan işte bize Roman derler. Fakiriz biz. Bizden hiç çıkmadı bir hemşire, bir doktor. Babalarımız da zaten ne durumdaydı belli. Şimdi hamallık falan. Bizden de çıksaydı belki öyle meslekler başka olurdu. Roman olmak fakir olmak yani.” (P.D. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 28 January 2008).

At this point, poverty and lack of education are the characteristics that my interviewees underline as the reasons why they are continuously defined by the majority as “the Gypsies”. Being enclaved in the economic niches attributed to them and not being able to have reputable occupations such as nursery and medicine are the reasons they put forward for their “Gypsiness”. Their rejection of the ethnic connotation of being a Roma/Gypsy is usually accompanied by their narratives regarding the manifestations of their high level of poverty. When I asked one of the families living in the tent at the outskirts of Kuştepe how they spent a day, they responded accordingly:

My day is passes as half hungry and half full. I collect a sack of garbage. 2-3 millions. When I need, I collect bread from the dumps and bring them to my children.²⁷⁶

My interviewees in Kuştepe living in the tents, as the previous narrative reveals, mostly stated being deprived of their basic needs as food, lacking access to proper accommodation, sanitation or health care. Gathering remains of food from the dumps to satisfy their hunger was the most evident reason for their poverty, leaving me silent and hesitant to ask further questions. Another interviewee in Kuştepe told me why her son could not go to school for days. In a mood of anxiety, my interviewee tried to demonstrate her poverty by stating that she could not afford the money to buy her son new shoes: “My child had once failed to attend the school for nine days. Why? He did not have shoes.”²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶“Yarı aç yarı tok geçiyor. Bir çuval çöp topluyorum. 2 milyon 3 milyon. Yettiremediğim yerde çöplerden ekmek topluyorum, çocuklara getiriyorum.” (P.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,21 April 2007).

²⁷⁷“Benim çocuğumun 9 gün gitmemişliği vardır okula. Neden ayakkabıları yoktu.” (K.M. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008).

Another interviewee in Kuştepe believes that the reason for their condemnation by the “others” is their poverty. She also does not refer to the Gypsy/Roma identity as part of the explanation: “Kuştepe is the poorest stratum of Lüleburgaz. There are even some who fail to give school-money to their children. There are some who fail to buy shoes. I mean they despise us here.”²⁷⁸

Another theme which frequently recurs in the narratives of my interviewees is how their poverty/subalternity is closely related to and in some instances stems from their inability to raise their voices properly in state institutions and struggle against injustices. My interviewee, who runs a tea house in Kuştepe, stresses:” I say that we are the Roma. A poor stratum. We are not able to stand for our rights. We do not have elder brothers or uncles in Ankara. This is the way it works. This is what I think, Master. Besides, is there an alternative?”²⁷⁹

Not having “reputable relatives” in Ankara, not being able to utilize clientelist networks due to their subaltern status as low-income groups are the reasons he underlines for their inability to have access to resources for remedying their poverty. However, his following statement is also compatible with the narratives of my other interviewees which links their discursive defaults in the public sphere with their illiteracy. In their imagination, their inability to express themselves properly is

²⁷⁸ “Lüleburgazın en fakir tabakası burasıdır, Kuştepe. Öyle insan var sabahları çocuğuna okul parası veremeyen insan var. Ayağına ayakkabı alamayan insanlar var. Yani bizi çok aşağı görüyorlar burada.” (A.Ö. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 26 January 2008).

²⁷⁹ “Ya diyorum biz Romanız. Fakir tabaka. Biz hakkımızı arayamıyoruz. Abimiz, dayımız yok Ankara’da. Böyle gidiyor bu iş. Ben böyle düşünüyorum hocam. Başka bir alternatifi var mı yani.” (N.A. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 26 January 2008).

intensified by their illiteracy which, in turn, reproduces their poverty/subalternity. As the narratives reveal:

Why are our people lagging behind? They are not going to school. Look at the Kurds today. You will see that all the court hall is full of the Kurds.²⁸⁰

We can't even put two words together when we meet a prosecutor.²⁸¹

We do not know how to speak. Look the teacher lady came here. But we are ashamed of speaking.²⁸²

Their comparing themselves with the Kurds who are believed to be able to raise their voices in the courts while they feel embarrassed speaking with the educated like me also reveal, awareness about their subaltern status. As Erdoğan suggests, quoting from Bourdieu, the hierarchies of class and culture in society encompass the language and ability to express oneself. The sphere where discursive exchanges take place is at the same time part of the processes in which social differences are (re)produced. In this sense, discursive practices objectify the social differences. Therefore, for Erdoğan, the poor/subaltern is usually well aware of how her/his inability to express herself/himself

²⁸⁰“Neden geri kalıyor bizim insanımız? Okumuyor abicim. Bugün Kürtleri al başına bak. Bakacaksın mahkeme salonu Kürt.” (S.Ö. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 26 January 2008).

²⁸¹“Bir savcının karşısına çıkınca iki kelimeyi bir araya getiremiyorsun.” (S.Ö. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 26 January 2008).

²⁸²“Biz zaten konuşmayı bilmiyoruz. Bak öğretmen hanım gelmiş. Biz sıkılıyorz zaten konuşmaktan.” (R.E. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 26 January 2008).

properly and/or his/her silence, inability to raise his/her voice towards injustices sharpen his/her position as the poor/subaltern within social and economic hierarchies.²⁸³

The contradictions in the narratives of my interviewees in defining being a Gypsy/Roma as a class position become more evident when they put forward other causes for their poverty. For instance, most of them tend to see the state and/or government as responsible for their economic and political problems. It is only these agents that, in their imagination, could eliminate their construction as “the Gypsies” and free them from their subaltern position:

You see there are lots of factories in our Turkey. They should give some favors to our children in them. The state should provide employment for them. It should then set a precondition: If we do not work and steal, the state will put us in a prison. The state should enforce us to work in the manner that the foreigners do. If our prime ministers act like this, there will be nothing left here with the name of Gypsies or the Roma.²⁸⁴

Which prime minister promised to abolish Gypsiness? They did not attempt to do it.”²⁸⁵

In addition to their self-definition of the Roma and/or Gypsy identity as a social/cultural and class position (due to earning less without insurance or being totally excluded from the job opportunities of the local economy, living in improper houses without sanitation

²⁸³ Necmi Erdoğan, “Yok-sanma:Yoksulluk-Maduniyet ve “Fark Yaraları” in *Yoksulluk Halleri: Türkiye’de Kent Yoksulluğun Toplumsal Görünümleri* edited by Necmi Erdoğan, (İstanbul:İletişimYayımları, 2007), pp.59-60.

²⁸⁴ “*Bak bizim bu Türkiye’de ne kadar fabrikalar var. Oralarda çocuklara bir imkan gösterebilirler. İşe soksun devler. Desin ki çalışmaz, çalarsan içeri atıcam seni. Zorla çalıştırsın devler. Nasıl gavur çalıştırıyor. Eğer başbakanlar bizim öyle olsa burada çingene namına roman namına birşey kalmaz.*” (U.Z. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,21 April 2007).

²⁸⁵ “*Hangi başbakan çıkıp ben Çingeneliği kaldıracam dedi. Yapmıyorlar.*” (U.Z. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,21 April 2007).

or being uneducated and unable to express themselves properly what was surprising to detect in their narratives was their internalization of the stereotypes which attribute their poverty to their alleged laziness, lack of discipline and work ethic. Regardless of their social and economic positions, most of my interviewees demonstrate “splitted subjectivities” (while accusing the majority for stereotyping them, they also adopt some of these stereotypes) in the related accounts of their impoverished status. A common legend widespread among the residents of Kuştepe district narrates the story of two men working on land:

Shall I tell you how Gypsiness appeared? My mum told me that story. Two men are harvesting wheat. One has a plow, the other has a hook. The one who has the hook cries:” Look I have digged up *karamuk* (a black vegetable) from the soil.” The Turk continues harvesting with the plow. The Gypsies are using the hook for harvesting wheat. The Gypsy cries: Karamuk, karamuk..The Turk tells him to continue harvesting. The Gypsy insists on eating karamuk.The Turks says I am not interested in karamuk,I am interested in harvesting. The Gypsy stops harvesting and begins to eat karamuk.Another man watching them asks who wishes to have the plow, who wishes to have karamuk.The Turk grasps the plow. He says “ Ok, we got it, they are Chin. Not Gypsy, but Chin. From then on, the foreigners started to call us Gypsies.The man chose the plow, the Chin ate karamuk. Why do the Turks have fields and so on? When you visit villages, you see the richness. Why do we have nothing? We went to work with my son. We were searching for garbage. We were digging up the soil. We found snakes and killed four of them. I found Gypsy *gerger* (a plant that can be eaten).I started to eat it. My son asked me to continue digging up garbage. I said to him, “Come on, let’s eat some *gerger*. He also stopped working and began eating. We gave up the work. ²⁸⁶

According to the legend, the so called Gypsy gives up cultivating the land for the sake of eating the vegetable –called “*Karamuk*” (a black vegetable)- while his fellow who is identified as the Turk continues working. Therefore, some residents of Kuştepe believe

²⁸⁶ The Turkish version of this account can be found in Appendix J.

that they deserve to be defined as Gypsies, since their laziness for cultivating the land made them unemployed and eliminated the chance of being landowners. Similar to the main idea of the legend, my interviewees accuse their fathers for leaving the land given to them by Atatürk for the sake of conducting their own occupations as “nomad craftsmen”:

My grandfather was a blacksmith. Once they were given field and vineyard. They sold all of them. They deserved it. Our grandparents made mistakes, now we suffer from their mistakes. Stupid, why did you sell your field? You may have still practiced blacksmithing in your village. But, he preferred to go to another village to do extra work. He sold his field and went to another village. I wish he had stayed in his village. Our grandparents are guilty, that is the whole story. They made a village for them. They left their village for basketry.²⁸⁷

Another narrative from a Kuştepe resident - which resembles the previous one- states that their fathers did not like working and their fathers’ way of life should be forgotten to have better lives: “Our fathers were lazy. We should not resemble them.”²⁸⁸

The below narrative, however, directly refers to the alleged laziness of Kuştepe residents and their lack of work ethic while the interviewee shares his concerns for the children. Hoping that the young people shall not resemble them and will have, at least, a regular job with insurance demonstrates his belief in the necessity to have work discipline as well as his adherence to and celebration of the idea of a regular and insured job as most of the residents. “We do not work. We are used to it. But we

²⁸⁷ “Benim dedem demirci. zamanında büyüklerimize tarla, bağ vermişler. Onları da satmışlar. Bizimkilere hak yani. Bizim büyüklerimiz yaptı. Biz de çekiyoruz. Aptal ne diye satıyorsun tarlanı. Köyünde yap demirciliği. Gitmiş bakmış başka köyde daha çok demir işi oluyor. Satmış tarlalarını gitmiş o köye. Köyünde kalsana sen. Büyüklerimizde suç yani başka bir şey yok. Adamlara köy yapmışlar. Köyü bırakmışlar sepet yapmışlar diye.” (Y.Z. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007)

²⁸⁸ “Babalarımız kalpazandı. Biz, babalarımıza benzemeyelim.” (R.E. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 26 January 2008)

have children. We have to think our future. Our teenagers must work. They should at least have health insurance.”²⁸⁹

The internalization of the stereotypes about the Gypsies/Roma by the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe coincides with Benhabib’s following assertions. Referring to Honneth, Benhabib talks about how a group’s sense of collective worth may be damaged. Honneth describes such a process as one which comes into existence when the self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem of a group is damaged due to lack of recognition by significant others. When one’s collective identity is degraded in the public sphere, individuals in a group may lose self-confidence and internalize hateful images of themselves. This self-hatred, Benhabib states, has been widespread particularly among members of outcast and “feared” minorities, like homosexuals, Jews at one time in history, and Gypsies still today.²⁹⁰ In this framework, most of my interviewees while accusing the state/government for their poverty/subalternity, or those who inferiorize them by attributing them Gypsiness may, at some moments, turn their anxiety towards themselves and accuse their fathers and even themselves for lacking certain “normalities” as the desire to work harder. The inflexible and irregular character of the jobs that their fathers and they entail is taken to be evidence for their alleged laziness and unwillingness for regular and hard work. In those accounts, the so called inability to engage in farming and/or work at a factory are put forward as evidence for

²⁸⁹ “Biz çalışmayız tamam. Biz alışmışız yani. Ama bizim çocuklarımız var yani. Geleceğimizi düşünmek lazım. Gençlerimiz çalışmalı. Hiç olmazsa bir sigortası olsun yani.”(A.K. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 26 January 2008).

²⁹⁰ Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p.51.

why they “deserve” their subaltern position. Their concerns for their children are objectified in their hopes for finding a regular jobs for them.

From Strategies of Survival/Coping to Raising Justice Claims

The growing literature on “subaltern studies” extensively talks about the ways/strategies of resistance that the urban poor/subaltern develops in order to bear the burden of being marginalized economically, socially and politically. The common assertion which underlies most of those analyses is that the urban poor/subaltern is not the passive recipient of the structural enclaves surrounding her/him (unlike most of the previous literature on poverty which depicts the urban poor), but has an “agency” devising daily resistance/coping/survival strategies for sustaining her/his existence -though silently and without attempting to disguise existing relations of power.²⁹¹

The theoretical and empirical insights of the literature on “the strategies of the urban poor/subaltern”, I suppose, would make sense in this section in which I will attempt to show how the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe respond to/deal with the structural constraints which marginalize them and what kind of politics they entail in doing so. I will argue that, while the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe –as the urban

²⁹¹James C. Scott, “The Infrapolitics of Subordinate Groups” in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990); Asef Bayat, “From ‘Dangerous Classes’ to ‘Quiet Rebels’: Politics of the Urban Subaltern in the Global South”, *International Sociology* 15, no.3 (2000); Necmi Erdoğan, “Garibanların Dünyası: Türkiye’de yoksulların kültürel temsilleri üzerine ilk notlar”, *Toplum ve Bilim* 89, (Yaz 2001).

poor/subaltern- have been devising coping/survival strategies similar to the ones that literature talks about, there is an ongoing process in which these strategies are gradually being replaced by their justice claims both at the discursive and action level. This observation will be my main focus in the coming pages.

As one of the leading scholars on the daily resistance forms of the subaltern, James C. Scott conceptualizes the arts of resistance the urban poor/subaltern employs as “hidden transcripts.” Conceptualizing the *public transcript* “as a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate which usually appeal to the expectations of the powerful”,²⁹² Scott argues that “Through public transcripts, subordinates offer a performance of deference and consent while attempting to discern, to read, the real intentions and mood of the potentially threatening powerholder.”²⁹³ However, for Scott the relationship between the subordinate and the powerholder(s) cannot be grasped coherently without merging in the acts of the subordinate which he defines as “hidden transcripts”. Scott argues that the term *hidden transcript* “is the discourse that takes place ‘offstage’, beyond observation by powerholders?”. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript.”²⁹⁴

In this sense, Scott asserts that those forms of disguised, low profile, undisclosed resistance may be defined as “infrapolitics” which take many forms such as poaching,

²⁹²Scott, 1990,p 2.

²⁹³ Ibid.,p.3.

²⁹⁴Ibid., p. 4.

squatting, desertion, evasion, foot-dragging or may appear as cultural practices of rituals of aggression, tales of revenge, gossip and rumor. What distinguishes the infrapolitics – hidden transcripts- from the open politics of modern democracies is the fact that no public claims are made. The resistance is sustained through informal networks of kin, friends and neighbours rather than formal organization. However, for Scott, infrapolitics conducted through hidden transcripts is real politics which through history has been “the building block for the more elaborate institutionalized political action that could not exist without it.”²⁹⁵

Scott’s analysis on the arts of resistance by the subordinate mostly owes to the Foucauldian conceptualization of power-resistance opposition. Depending on the dispersed and daily character of power relations and assuming that every act of power would be accompanied by resistance, he tends to deepen the scope of the sphere in which the subordinate would devise resistance. That is why even gestures, gossip and rumor are among the hidden transcripts through which the infrapolitics capable of being the building block of institutionalized political action would take place. Although, as Bayat argues, “the resistance literature” Scott leads, reminds us to grasp the agency of those who were once represented as “passive/submissive/apolitical”, to uncover the daily power relations as well as the politics of the subaltern and to recognize that the local is also a significant site of struggle; attributing *any acts* of the subordinate the form of

²⁹⁵Scott, 1990,pp. 198-201.

resistance pose problems.²⁹⁶ Attributing a loaded and somehow imaginary agency to the subaltern in terms of his/her resistance capacity would be intellectual romanticism.²⁹⁷

In this framework, rather than arts of resistance, the strategies of the subalterns towards the structural constraints that marginalize them should be conceptualized as “arts of coping strategies.” As Erdoğan suggests, the arts of coping strategies, rather than being public and collective forms of resistance usually are silent, autonomous, unsystematic, indiscernible, single acts which attempt to deal with hardships of life and alleviate the burden of injustices encountered without touching upon the existing relations of power.²⁹⁸ Asef Bayat conceptualizes those arts of coping strategies as “quite encroachment”.

Bayat defines quite encroachment as “the silent, protracted but pervasive advancement of the ordinary people on the propertied and the powerful in order to survive and improve their lives. This is marked by quiet, largely atomized and prolonged mobilization with episodic collective action –open and fletting struggles without clear leadership, ideology or structured organization.”²⁹⁹ In this sense, for Bayat, there are two major goals that are attempted by quite encroachment:

The first is the redistribution of social goods and opportunities in the form of the (unlawful and direct) acquisition of collective consumption (land, shelter, piped water, electricity, roads), public space (street pavements, intersections, street parking places), opportunities (favorable business conditions, locations and labels) , and other life chances essential for survival and minimal standards. The other goal is attaining autonomy,

²⁹⁶ Bayat,p.542.

²⁹⁷ Erdoğan, 2001,p. 17.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.,p.15.

²⁹⁹ Bayat,pp.545-546.

both cultural and political, from the regulations, institutions and discipline imposed by the state and modern institutions. In a quest for an informal life, the poor tend to function as much as possible outside the boundaries of the state and modern bureaucratic organizations, basing their relationships on reciprocity, trust and negotiation rather than on the modern notions of individual self interest, fixed rules and contracts. Thus, they may opt for jobs in self-employed activities rather than working under the discipline of the modern workplace; resorting to informal dispute resolution rather than reporting to police; getting married through local informal procedures rather than by governmental officers; borrowing money from informal credit associations rather than modern banks. This is not because these people are essentially non or anti-modern, but because the conditions of their existence compel them to seek an informal mode of life.³⁰⁰

The coping (and at some instances survival) strategies conceptualized as “quite encroachment” by Bayat make sense when the ways the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe employ for struggling with various forms of marginalization they encounter are considered. My interviewees practice coping strategies such as garbage collection, waiting in long queues in the municipality every Friday to enjoy the food benefits, encroachment of the streets as vendors, living in the tents in the outskirts of Kuştepe by squatting the public territory, voting for a party in return for free fuel, not getting married formally, begging, depending on solidarity networks in their local district (such as demanding money or food from the neighbours as in the words of my interviewee: “All day you wander around with an empty stomach. You may find food or may not. You come home. The kid asks for bread. When the smaller one insists on bread, you

³⁰⁰ Bayat, p. 548-549.

have a serious problem. Then, what shall I do? I never lie. I go to the neighbor and say, “my neighbor, my kid came from school. Give me bread, if you have.” She gives...”³⁰¹

Even theft can be mentioned among the coping strategies as one of my interviewees stated:” I stole coal yesterday. At night, I would go to the neighbor with my pot and ask for food”.³⁰²

In order to cope with the lack of very basic needs for survival as in the case of stealing coal in the winter, asking for some wood shavings from the carpenter to heat the house or demanding some food from the neighbours, in order to create their own space to earn a living as in the case of garbage collection or vending in the streets, in order to guarantee a regular monthly payment by insisting on getting partial state benefits; the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe seem to lead a life which is impoverished but autonomous, not necessarily modern but mostly shaped by local solidarity networks in their “closed habitus.”

Their “quite encroachment”, at least, works in many cases for survival, but those tactics to deal with their poverty and marginalization, I argue, no longer sustain their existence properly. Their established strategies are no longer helpful in the light of the new developments that are observed in the local economy in particular.

Bayat claims that the poor/subaltern, in some instances, integrate to the existing relations of power by attending school, clinics and so on but while vacillating between

³⁰¹ “*Bütün gün aç açına gez. Ha buldun ha bulamadın. Geliyorsun eve. Çocuk başlıyor, ekmek diye. Ufak olan tutturdu mu ekmek diye yandın. Bu sefer napıyorum. Bende yalan yok. Gidiyorum komşuya. Komşu çocuk okuldan geldi, varsa bir ekmek. Veriyor.*” (R.E. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

³⁰² “*Dün gece kömür çaldım. Akşam alır çanağı giderim komşuya, ver bana yemek derim*”. (G.R. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 28 January 2008).

autonomy from the state and majority population and integration, they usually prefer to be autonomous in terms of continuing their quite encroachment in their closed life spaces.³⁰³ Contrary to this assertion, however, I argue that surviving through coping strategies is not currently the only alternative for the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe. Rather, despite the possibility of losing their autonomous habitus, they are raising their justice claims for further integration to the state apparatus, labour market and the majority population. In this sense, at the discursive and action level, they want to make their voices heard based on their attempts to oppose the injustices they face.

However, their justice claims put forward for integration to the existing structures differ at the discursive and action levels. While demanding access to work opportunities, better education and better housing at the discursive level as “equal Turkish citizens sheltering within the Islamic identity”, their justice claims at the action level tend to differ from and contradict the former by getting organized under Roma associations which are supposed to develop policies on the basis of Roma ethnic identity. By getting organized, their position as “quite perpetrators of survival” has been transformed into negotiating actors demanding justice on the basis of Roma ethnic identity. That dilemma regarding their conflicting character of justice claims at the discursive and action level as well as the drawbacks and prospects of their attempts to democratically seek justice by getting organized will be dealt with in the next sections.

³⁰³ Bayat, p. 548-549.

Justice Claims at the Discursive Level: Proper Muslims, Turkish Citizens

Defining being a Roma and/or Gypsy with reference to their socioeconomic status determined by poverty and lack of education becomes more meaningful, when it is observed that such perceptions are accompanied by the justice claims of the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe at the discursive level. As the following narratives demonstrate, sheltering within the Islamic identity, my interviewees claim to be equal Turkish citizens and at some moments turn their anxiety towards other minority ethnic groups in Lüleburgaz, and demand justice in terms of having equal access to the distribution of resources in the society.

In this sense, when asked how they feel about being defined as “Gypsies” by the majority , most of my respondents employ a similar reasoning:” We believe in the same God. We are all brothers.”³⁰⁴. Other narratives follow the same line: “In foreign countries, there is no such thing. There is no racial segregation in those countries, but there is here in Thrace. We also believe in Islam. Ok, there may be different sects.

³⁰⁴ “*Allahımız bir. Kardeşiz yani.*” (R.E. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

Alevis, pomaks, gacals and so on. But they call us Gypsies..”³⁰⁵ “I always worship, but they condemn us. We are all the same before Allah.”³⁰⁶

It is an old-dating “Gypsy strategy” to make a claim to a shared common bond as devoted believers of the dominant religion of the country where they settle. In Turkey, in order to alleviate their stigmatization by the state and the majority, the so called Gypsy subjects of the Empire usually declare themselves Muslims. In a very recent research on the “Swapping Identities in Sulukule”, Somersan argues that:

There might be groups in the world rejecting their ethnic belonging and identity seems anathema at this time in the early twenty-first century when everyone is either digging in or clinging to the last bits of their imagined collective roots. Yet right in the middle of the cosmopolitan metropolis of Istanbul, are a group of Roma living along the historical Byzantine walls of the city, in Edirnekapı, commonly known as Sulukule, who reject being “Roma”, (read “Gypsy”) to prove, through a cumbersome intellectual exercise that they are Moslem, (while drawing Chinese Walls between the two). They claim that they are not “Gypsies”, and have never been so. Interestingly living in a country where everyone is supposed, by hook or by crook, to be a “Turk”, they seem to be oblivious to the concept of “Turkishness”, concentrating instead on their deeply held belonging in the widespread Sunni Moslem sect of Islam in Turkey.”³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ “*Yabancı ülkelerde yok. Orada ırk ayrımı yok ama burda bizim Trakya’da ırk ayrımı var. Bizim dinimiz de İslam. Tamam din ayrılabilir. Alevisi de var, kızılbaşı da var, pomağı da var, gacalı da var. Ama yeri geldiğinde bırak bunlar Çingene..*” (Ş.I. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

³⁰⁶ “*Sürekli namazımda, niyazımdayım ben ama çok hor görülüyoruz. Allah katında hepimiz biriz ama.*” (T.Y. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 21 April 2007).

³⁰⁷ Semra Somersan, “Swapping Identities in Sulukele” paper from the Conference “INTER: A European Cultural Studies Conference in Sweden”, from Conference Proceedings published by Linköping University Electronic Press at [www.ep.liu.se/ecp/025/.](http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/025/), organised by the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (AC SIS) in Norrköping 11-13 June 2007, p.722.

In this context, claiming to be “proper Muslims” at the discursive level, the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe, like the residents of Sulukule seek ways for “being in”, “being part of the crowd”, being free of scapegoating and stigmatization.”³⁰⁸

Therefore, sheltering within the Islamic identity, the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe state to be hurled due to their identification by the majority as Gypsies, since they are well aware of how being a Gypsy is loaded with stereotypes and how the majority in the town keep the social contact with them at a minimum by imagining them as “irreligious, dirty” peoples: “They call us Roma, because we own a house. In fact, being a Gypsy and being a Roma refer to the same thing. When someone sees those in the tents within dirt, he/she calls them Gypsies. He/she does not eat on the same table with them. You have our tea. Thank you for that, some people do not.”³⁰⁹

In this context, the narratives of my interviewees which claim that they are “proper Muslims as most of the people in Turkey,” intersect with their justice claims as their following remarks indicate. In fact, they are quite reactive to being defined as a different ethnic group and being discriminated on this basis. As Turkish citizens, they argue, they should “share all the rights and responsibilities that their citizenship status entails”. The below narrative mostly shared by interviewees indicates the claim to be

³⁰⁸ Ibid.,p. 730.

³⁰⁹ “Bize evimiz var diye Roman diyorlar. Aslında çingene roman birdir. Görüyor bunu böyle bu pisliğin içinde çadırda, Çingene diyor. Onunla aynı sofrada yemek yemez. Mesela siz şimdi bizim çayımızı içtiniz. Helal olsun. Bazısı içmez.” (H.Y. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,24 April 2007).

Turkish with the metaphor of living under the same flag: “We are all under the same flag. When you are under the same flag, you are Turkish, not Gypsy.”³¹⁰

The justice claims of my interviewees based on their status as Turkish citizens are usually legitimized at the discursive level by referring to military conscription. Emphasizing that the state does not discriminate on an ethnic basis when conscription is considered, they legitimize their claims for integration and equality by asserting that they never hesitate to join the army. As one of my interviewee points out: “We join the army, we transport the ammunitions. They admit our sons as soldiers. If they condemn us, because we are Gypsy, then why they let our sons join the army. They have our sons for conscription.”³¹¹

One of my interviewees mentions the responsibilities that they are obliged to take on just like the Turkish citizens. Then, he argues, they should benefit from the very rights that their citizenship status offers: “I also have martyrs. My son joins the army, my son lives under this flag. I pay my taxes. European Roma got their rights by discussing those issues.”³¹². One of my interviewees also talks in the same manner: “We do not discriminate. We are all citizens. I wish a beneficent

³¹⁰“*Bir bayrak altındayız. Bir bayrak altında durduğunda Türksün yani. Çingene değilsin.*” (P.D. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 24 April 2007).

³¹¹“*Askere gidiyoruz, cephane taşıyoruz. Çocuklarımızı ne güzel kabul ediyorlar. Madem Çingeneyiz de kabul etmiyorlar bizi , hor görüyorlar, askerimizi nasıl kabul ediyorlar bizim. Alıp götürüyor. Gönderiyor. Asker olsun diyor.*” (A.B. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 15 April 2008).

³¹² “*Ben bir şehit vermiyorum mu? Benim çocuğum askerlik yapmıyor mu benim çocuğum bu bayrağın altında yaşamıyor mu? Ben vergi vermiyorum mu? Bunları konuşa konuşa ele almış Avrupalı Romanlar.*” (A.R. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 26 January 2008).

would give us somewhere to live; help us. He would be blessed then. To whom shall we tell our problems? We have nothing to do.”³¹³

Talking within the Discourse of Racism: Hatred towards Kurds and Turks from Bulgaria

Within the framework of their justice claims at the discursive level based on their demand of equal treatment just like the Turks, one of the most striking themes in the narratives of my interviewees is their dislike of the Kurdish immigrants as well as the Muslim-Turks who have recently migrated from Bulgaria. When they feel excluded, they generally reflect their disappointment in the form of resentment against the new residents of Lüleburgaz: the Kurds and the “Bulgarian Turks.” Therefore, most of them frequently blame these newcomers as the cause of their failure in securing new jobs. Defining the residents of his district as the poor, one of my interviewees asserts: “There are no employment opportunities. Macırs(Turks from Bulgaria) were employed everywhere. There is no work left for the poor.”³¹⁴

As the narrative goes on, it reflects a typical fear of the alleged power and potential of the Kurds: “Kurds are moving here. In a few years, they will be able to become mayor and even MPs.”³¹⁵

³¹³“*Bizde ayrıcalık yok. Hepimiz aynı bir vatandaşız. Bir hayırsever olacak ki bize bir yer versin, bir yardım etsin. Sevap kazansın. Kime anlatalım derdimizi,kime ne diyelim? Elimizden gelen birşey yok.*” (L. K. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,26 January 2008).

³¹⁴“*Macırlar her tarafa alındı. Fakirlere iş kalmadı*” (S. S. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008).

³¹⁵ “*Buraya Kürtler geliyor. Bir kaç yıl sonra onlar burada belediye başkanı da olacak, milletvekili de olacak*” (H.Ü. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey, 26 January 2008).

As the statement reveals, the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts feel discriminated as they sense that the Kurds in Lüleburgaz have integrated to the society while as long-time residents of the town, they are still being excluded from the distribution of resources. Finding it difficult to understand how the Bulgarian Turks have rapidly become enriched in a short time, one of my interviewees expresses his amazement: “Look, in all those settlements near my house, accommodate the ones who came from Bulgaria. When did those men come, how did they build those houses?”³¹⁶

I suggested that the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe constitute a racialized group in terms of the process of racialisation at the state and society level and in the labour market. However, when they are putting forward their justice claims at the discursive level, they may themselves, in some occasions, turn into the “racializing subjects.” Being stigmatized by the majority population as “lazy and lacking work discipline”, they might scapegoat the Kurds and Bulgarian Turks for their exclusions from the labour market. Denying/opposing the so called “sudden integration” of the Kurds and Bulgarian Turks to the larger society, they make similar discursive constructions to the discourse of racism that racializes them. In those moments, their justice claims take a reflective and thus a racist stance.

To conclude, by attributing their definition as Roma or Gypsies to their inferior class positions rather than their ethnic differences, the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe tend to normalize themselves as “proper Muslims like the majority of Turkey.” Clearly, this way of reasoning rejects being identified on the basis of ethnicity. Rather, they make

³¹⁶ “*Bak, benim oturduğum yerden aşağı doğru oturanlar hepsi Bulgaristan’dan gelme. Bu adamlar ne zaman geldi, ne zaman etti bu daireleri yaptılar?*” (A.B. Interview by the author, tape recording, Lüleburgaz, Turkey, 15 April 2008).

a claim to universal citizenship, demanding to be considered as “equal, Turkish citizens”. What is striking in this construction is the inherent tension between their identity demands and the discourse of state racism towards them. Despite the “dissimilation” attempts of the state by marginalizing and silencing them, the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe insistently make a claim for respect among the “equal Turkish citizens” or want to be assimilated like the other non-Muslim or non-Turkish groups. Rather than -as in the case of the Kurds in Turkey- posing claims for the recognition of their ethnic identity/difference and demanding cultural rights in a favorable national/international environment which would encourage the Gypsy/Roma to reveal and/or rediscover their ethnic and cultural origins, the so called Gypsy/Roma residents of Lüleburgaz make a claim to be counted among the hegemonic identity in Turkey, at least, at the discursive level.

At this point, it is a must to remember my above discussion regarding the theoretical position which essentializes identity groups and the struggles around their identity construction. The residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe do not make a claim for the “recognition of their distinct ethnic and/or cultural” identity. In brief terms, the following processes could be expected to encourage demands of recognition on the basis of ethnic differences by the Roma /Gypsies in Turkey: First, the visibility/existence of the so called Gypsy/Roma groups in Turkey has been fostered and marketed by the media through their “artistic performances.” Second, the Turkish state demonstrates an unexpected leniency for the establishment of Roma organizations aiming at preserving the Roma culture. Third, the number of academic research on the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey has been increasing intensely. Fourth, the EU has been

recurrently mentioning Roma rights in Turkey in the progress reports. Despite all the “convenient national and international conjuncture/context” laying the ground for the promotion of Roma ethnic consciousness, the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts in Lüleburgaz are making a claim to the “difference-blind content of the Turkish citizenship.” In the discursive construction/narration of their identity, there seems to be no place for the affirmation of the ethnic identity attributed to them. Rather, claiming to be “obliging citizens” of the state, they adhere to a somehow “obsolete” version of citizenship.

This is exactly the point that I have certain objections to, those considering identity construction solely within the framework of “recognition demands.”³¹⁷ At this point, I agree with Young who asserts that, “the marginalized groups do not only seek recognition for their distinct identities, but they also have rising demands for social, political and economic inclusion due to the various types of oppression they face.”³¹⁸ Therefore, those efforts by the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe, to construct /re-construct their identity, I contend, take the form of justice claims in order to get rid of their subaltern status.³¹⁹ The fluctuality, instability of their justice claims, however,

³¹⁷ Kymlicka, Honneth, Taylor may be referred as adherents of this argument.

³¹⁸ Young, pp.102-107.

³¹⁹ Making a claim to the established system of citizenship and being negligent of the ethnic affiliation of the term Roma and/or Gypsy, or completely denying Roma origins - for the sake of inclusion to the larger society- is not peculiar to the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts who are defined as Gypsies by the majority population of the town. The research titled “Romanies in the Metropolitan Municipality Area of İzmir(2007) has found out that when asked what they think on the existence of Roma communities in Turkey, 49,8% of the respondents answered that “there should be no such differences in a nation-state”, while only 18,2% responded that “These are the values which enrich the multicultural diversity of our country”. When the respondents of the research were asked how they identify themselves primarily, 71,9% responded as “Citizen of the Republic of Turkey”, while only 9,5 as Roma and 0,5 as Gypsy. On the other hand, Kolukırık’s analysis on the “Perception of Identity Amongst the Tarlabası Gypsies, İzmir” states the flexibility of identity perception of the group he works on. The statement of one of his

becomes explicit when their attempts to get organized under Roma associations are concerned. This is because of the clear fact that willingness to form such organizations is incited by an interest in the revival of Roma origins and the desire to develop projects to overcome “Roma marginality.”The next section will deal with the transformation of their justice claims at the action level and the dilemma between those two levels of justice claims.

Justice Claims at the Action Level: The Roma Mobilization in Lüleburgaz

Influenced by the flourishing Romani mobilization in Europe and containing all the debated and contested issues within themselves, the Gypsy/Roma people of Turkey have been increasingly organized since the 1990s. As Kolukırık and Toktaş state:

“İzmir Roma Association was established in 1996, the National Roma Confederation in 2000 and the Edirne Roma Association in 2004. Especially since 2005, there has been a proliferation in the number of associations founded by the Roma. The legislative reform packages passed to fulfill the EU requirements, in particular the constitutional amendments in 2002 and 2003 that expanded the freedoms of opinion, expression and association as well as the Law on Associations amended in 2004 in accordance with the EU demands that paved the ground for associations to be founded on cultural and ethnic grounds, have all contributed significantly to the rise in the number of Roma associations. Various Roma associations have also established national federations - one in Thrace, and another in the Aegean region.³²⁰

interviewees is striking in the sense that it has a very similar discursive construction with that of most of my interviewees: “We live under the same flag. We are facing discrimination ourselves. I am a Gypsy, yet I am a Turkish citizen. Gypsy or Romani, it does not matter. There is no difference. Gypsy sounds more offensive; Gypsy is used for the wanderers. I am indeed a Gypsy child and I have never hesitated saying it everywhere. Everybody is different. Romani sounds more acceptable to people. They later learned how to be Romani.” For more information see: Suat Kolukırık, “Perceptions of Identity Amongst the Tarlabasi Gypsies, İzmir” in *Contextual, Constructed and Contested: Gypsies and the Problem of Identities* edited by A.Marsh and E. Strand (İstanbul: Swedish Research Institute Publications, 2006), p.135.

³²⁰ Suat Kolukırık and Şule Toktaş, “Turkey's Roma: Political participation and organization”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 5 (September 2007), p.765.

Despite the proliferation of the number of Roma organizations in Turkey, they are not functioning as effectively as their counterparts in Europe due to the relatively short institutional past of Roma mobilization in Turkey. Many of them lack the expertise and know-how for developing projects specifically targeting Roma in their local settings. Only the EDROM (Edirne Roma Association) may be considered as the leading Roma organization in Turkey which is able to make use of the funds from the EU and other international NGOs³²¹. Moreover, as İncirlioğlu asserts, the Roma organizations in Turkey have loose links to the Romani movement in Europe. Turkey has not been represented in the International Romani Union and other international Roma institutions.³²²

Roma organizations in Turkey also suffer from the key problems that the Romani movement deals with in Europe. The organizations are mainly led by prosperous Roma and only represent several segments of the Roma population in their local districts and are unable to penetrate Roma from different occupational and residential statuses. Kolukırık and Toktaş's research on the Tarlabaşı district of İzmir gives an idea about the perceptions of the Gypsy/Roma regarding the Roma mobilization in their district. Kolukırık and Toktaş observe that:

Out of the total 90 respondents, 24 respondents who held negative opinions towards the organization of the Roma in an association believe, by and large, that the Roma would not be successful in getting organized in this

³²¹For some of the projects EDROM has engaged in see: <http://www.edrom.org.tr> .

³²² İncirlioğlu, p. 169.

way. The reasons given by the respondents such as that the association would not be helpful, it would not be respected, the Roma community cannot unite, the founding members would serve their own interests, the lack of trust towards the Roma community and the reluctance to act with the Roma community seem also to be the reasons for the failure of a possible Roma group.³²³

The presence of non-Roma activists within the Romani movement in Turkey also has its drawbacks like in European Romani movement. I observed a significant dilemma concerning the language employed in the conferences I attended which gathered Roma activists countrywide. The issues were mainly set out by the non-Roma activists who held also the initiative in directing all the meetings. Besides, the high level theoretical discussions of the participants from Turkey and abroad usually made no sense for the representatives of the Roma organizations coming from different parts of Turkey. Their confusion regarding their identity perception (whether they should define themselves as Roma or Turkish) and the reasons for the increasing support from abroad for Roma ethnic mobilization in Turkey, posed some serious hesitations for them to engage in the agenda put by non-Roma activists. The lack of Roma intellectuals in Turkey – well educated, middle class men and women who would actively engage in pushing the identity claims of the Roma and actively work within the Romani movement- has been crucial here. Although the role of Roma intellectuals has been debated within European Romani mobilization, the presence of Roma intellectuals in Turkey may at least constitute a bridge between representatives of Roma organizations and non-Roma activists in those gatherings and in the projects to be developed overall.

³²³ Kolukıncık and Toktaş, p.767.

In short, it can be argued that there is an emerging Romani mobilization in Turkey, but one carrying institutional and political drawbacks which are not possible to be resolved in the near future. However, the flourishing ethnic awareness on behalf of the Roma carries the prospects of pushing Roma ethnic identity-building further.

In Lüleburgaz, on the other hand, there are now four Roma organizations functioning: *Müzişyenler Derneđi*(Musicians Association), *Batı Trakya Romanları Kültür Dayanıřma ve Yardımlařma Derneđi*(Western Thrace Roma Culture and Solidarity Association), *Lüleburgaz algıcılar ve Roman Halk Dansları Kültür ve Yardımlařma Derneđi* (Lüleburgaz Musicians and Roma Folk Dances Culture and Solidarity Association) and *Lüleburgaz Romanlar Derneđi*(Lüleburgaz Roma Association). A few weeks ago another one named *Lüleburgaz Roman-Sev Kültür ve Müzik Derneđi*(Lüleburgaz Roma-Love Culture and Music Association) applied for official recognition. Those Roma organizations which were mainly founded by the Roma musicians seem to be more active in the Altıyol district. *Batı Trakya Romanları Kültür Dayanıřma ve Yardımlařma Derneđi* and *Lüleburgaz Romanlar Derneđi* are the members of the ROMDEF (*Roman Dernekleri Federasyonu*, The Federation of the Roma Associations) established in 2006.

When compared with the overall Roma mobilization in Europe, the Roma organizations in Lüleburgaz seem to have a very limited scope and agenda, just like their counterparts in Turkey. Established and led mostly by musician Roma in Lüleburgaz, their main activities are engaging in local, national and sometimes international festivals where the organizers demand Roma music. For the members of those organizations, it has been easier to engage in those festivals since they have now an institutionalized

identity. Apart from those employment possibilities, the Roma associations of the town engage in the organization of mass weddings and religious circumscription ceremonies (Toplu Nikah ve Sünnet Şölenleri) accompanied by the Lüleburgaz Municipality. These associations also undertake such charities as distributing food and other essentials to the poor and the needy, assuming the health costs of the sick and providing support for the school children etc.

In one of my visits to Altıyol, I had a conversation with the president and vice-president of *Lüleburgaz Batı Trakya Romanları Kültür Dayanışma ve Yardımlaşma Derneği* (Western Thrace Roma Culture and Solidarity Association). It was quite challenging to start the dialogue. Like everyone I met in the district, they were tired of being visited by journalists, academics, students and NGO activists, being questioned about their activities or about being a Roma in general. They were unwilling to talk with people who have any kind of interest in them for two basic reasons: first of all, they believe that those people have been making money through projects or academic works on the issues specific to the Roma. Therefore, the representatives of the organization feel uncomfortable about being instrumentalized by those outsiders. In their imagination, they are the people who gain some sort of benefit by engaging in Roma issues. Secondly, they claim that most of the people who had previously visited them made certain promises such as providing or finding funds for their projects. However, none of them have so far been realized.

My Romani friend (as he defines himself) who was also the ex-president of Musicians' Organization, helped me in persuading them to continue the dialogue by introducing me as a young woman who had grown up in Lüleburgaz and researching for

a term project for school. I was not, therefore, “one of those outsiders.” After those attempts, we had engaged in a two hours conversation. As the other Roma organizations of the town, *Lüleburgaz Batı Trakya Romanları Kültür Dayanışma ve Yardımlaşma Derneği* (Western Thrace Roma Culture and Solidarity Association), usually engages in music and dance organizations. They told me that they have a limited scope for membership. The membership was only limited to the musicians. As an organization of music and dance, they act as a closed community and do not offer membership to the Roma from other occupations. Their main task is to engage in music and dance organizations in Turkey or abroad. Due to their institutional identity, when such an event is to take place, they get informed and establish a group composed of musicians and dancing girls and boys.

The president and vice president of the organization are well aware of the visible Romani mobilization visible in Europe. They are also familiar with the activism that the Roma are carrying out in Europe for their rights and the EU interest in the Roma issue, including the increasing availability of EU funding for the projects on the Roma. Their anxiety emerges at that point. They seem to be unhappy since they are not able to benefit from those funds. The related efforts of the Musicians’ Organization in the last years have turned into a failure for them. The ex-president of Musicians’ Organization, the my friend enabling the conservation, explained the situation. A few years ago, the mayor of Lüleburgaz prepared a project specifically for the Roma musicians in Lüleburgaz that would be funded by the EU. An orchestra composed of Roma musicians would be ready for any organization in Turkey and abroad. However, there were articles in the formal document of the project that were found to be unjust for Roma who would

engage in the orchestra. Hence the organization insisted on the removal of these articles from the document. The project was a disaster; it did not come into existence. The anxiety of Roma musicians was due to their lack of negotiating power. For them, the municipalities hope to get benefits for Roma projects at their expense. They were felt the necessity for developing projects on their own and improving their experience and expertise to do so.

The organizations in Lüleburgaz are not working efficiently for their stated targets. Instead, the members are looking for possible job opportunities that the institutionalized status of the Roma organization will bring. Moreover, their scope of membership is usually limited and they lack an ability to penetrate the local problems that the non-members encounter in their daily lives. Nevertheless, the proliferation of the number of Roma organizations in Lüleburgaz, I believe, constitutes another realm in which the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe raise their justice claims to get rid of their subaltern (and racialized) status.

The increasing attempts by the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe to get organized under Roma associations pose the question of “Does the transformation of the justice claims of the residents at the discursive level (which are shaped by demanding access to the distribution of resources on the basis of being equal Turkish citizens) to a more democratic stance of getting organized under Roma associations (which are supposed to raise the justice claims of the residents towards their subaltern (racialized) status on the basis of Roma ethnic identity) offer prospects for enabling them to express their justice claims further in a democratic and participatory setting?”

Bayat claims that the increasing attempts by the subaltern, in third world countries to get organized under NGOs should not be regarded as effective strategies of resistance that challenge domination in contemporary societies. For him, governments tend to encourage self-help and local initiatives for the sake of preventing the radical upsurge of the lower classes. Besides that, by encouraging the establishment of the NGOs, the state is able to shift some of its burdens of social welfare provision.³²⁴ When examined in the light of the state's neoliberal structuring of the society in terms of abandoning its responsibilities of welfare, as the Turkish Gypsies/Roma's organizations may be considered not as autonomous, self-conscious attempts of "marginalized identity groups" to resist and challenge the injustices they face in a democratic setting, but rather as "obstructive and temporary" trends to diminish the state's burden by creating self-help mechanisms.

Besides that, the problems of Roma mobilization in Lüleburgaz such as limited scope of membership (musicians lead the associations and the membership is not all-encompassing, there is no chance for the marginalized to raise their voices in a participatory setting), and the lack of expertise and know-how of the members to develop projects and provide funding obscure the effectiveness of Roma associations. Furthermore, the tension between the justice claims of the residents at the discursive and action levels, which stem from their confusion regarding how to identify themselves with respect to ethnicity and Turkish citizenship, restrict the Roma associations from gaining a more participatory stance.

³²⁴ Bayat, p.545.

However, I suppose, there is still some room for optimism regarding the success of Roma mobilization in Lüleburgaz. Proliferation in the number of Roma associations in Lüleburgaz leads to formation of international, national and local networks to demand and promote rights on the basis of their subaltern (racialized) status as a Gypsy/Roma. Not only their establishment on the basis of Roma subalternity but also their encounters with Roma activists from abroad which lead them to rethink their perception of ethnic identity in the conferences they attend constitute “conflicting, competing” realms with respect to their discursive citizenship claims. The influence such associations have on the identity construction of their members is worth considering. Their contact with other Roma in different organizations, increasing awareness of the activities of their counterparts as well as the Roma mobility in Europe and the projects, and seminars targeting them all offer some prospects for their future identity claims.

In this regard, the following story is interesting. As the representatives of Musician’s Organization, the president and vice president had participated in the Conference organized by *Ulaşılabilir Yaşam Derneği* (Association for Sustainable Life) in 2005 titled International Roman Symposium. During the conference, the vice president engaged in a short dialogue with a Roma activist from Romania which he never forgets and recurrently talks about:

Our association was invited to Edirne for a meeting that gathered other Roma Associations. They (other Roma) came from Romania, France, Britain and even from the US. They are all Gypsies. We spent time together. There was a Gypsy woman who was a professor. But she was blonde and had blue eyes, she was white. She sat near me. She asked me where I was from. I told her that I was from Lüleburgaz. She asked me whether I was a Gypsy. I said “yes”. Then, she said: “Speak some Romani”. I told her that I did not know Romani. She suddenly started to talk in Romani. She said to me “I am

a Gypsy. You have nothing to do with Gypsiness. The Gypsy must speak his native language.³²⁵

This short story reveals how getting organized under Roma associations may transform the identity perception of the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe and may promote the adoption Roma identity on an ethnic basis. The surprise and confusion, my Roma friend experienced, when he encountered Roma from Europe talking in Romani, I suppose, constitutes a clear sign of it. Such a transformation in their justice claims directly or indirectly poses a challenge to the “difference blind” ideals of the official definition of Turkish citizenship, enabling the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe to make their voices heard in the public sphere more extensively and to increase their prospects of attaining justice more effectively through democratically organizing in civil society.

³²⁵ The Turkish version of this account can be found in Appendix K.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

My thesis was an attempt to uncover the current socioeconomic status of the residents of the Altiyol and Kuştepe districts of Lüleburgaz. Through the data collected by in-dept interviews and informal focus groups in tea houses and by participant observation, I attempted to analyze the mechanisms and processes that are re- producing their marginalized and disadvantaged position. I also focused on how the residents responded to their subaltern position (what kind of politics they entailed to overcome the hardships of life). In this sense, my main argument was that the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe districts are objects of the local manifestation of racism towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey and thus should be identified as “a racialized group” in terms of their political, economic and social marginalization. In this sense, my main claim was that the survival/coping strategies of the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe to deal with their subaltern position have been replaced with their claims to justice at the discursive and action level.

I asserted that at the discursive level, by perceiving being Gypsy/Roma as a subaltern position instead of ethnic affiliation and by sheltering strategically within the Islamic identity, they are posing their justice claims within the accepted parameters of Turkish citizenship. Opposing discrimination on the basis of Gypsiness, their justice claims, at the discursive level, entail having access to employment, education, better housing and welfare benefits as equal Turkish citizens.

On the other hand, however, that discursive strategy has been accompanied and somehow transformed at the action level by their getting organized under Roma associations which are supposed to take action against the injustices towards them on the basis of Roma ethnic identity. In this sense, though conflicting and competing in nature with regard to citizenship, those justice claims are the strategies which strikingly reflect their increasing demands for integration within the larger society.

Enumerating the factors that led to the increasing interest in the Turkish Roma such as the revival of interest in the Urban Regeneration projects that demolished the Roma settlements along with others in different parts of Turkey; the persistent references to the disadvantaged position of the Gypsy/Roma communities of Turkey in the EU progress reports and the increasing tendency of the Turkish Roma to get organized, I stated that the Gypsy/Roma communities in Turkey have lately attracted considerable media and academic attention which in turn has led to the increasing involvement of NGOs in the projects targeting the Gypsy/Roma communities in different parts of Turkey.

In the second chapter, attempting to uncover the recent increasing interest on the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey, I argued that two interrelated developments have prepared the ground for what I call the Europeanization of the Gypsy/Roma issue. The first of these is the further enlargement of the EU by the new membership of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia, the candidate status given to Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey, and the so called potential member states of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo. With this ongoing process of enlargement, Roma have become the largest ethnic minority within Europe. The newly

admitted member states, the candidate states and the potential member states have all begun to deal with their Roma minority-the largest yet the most marginalized ethnic minority in Europe-under the supervision of the EU. In particular, these states are being encouraged to develop anti-discrimination laws and specific projects targeting the improvement of Roma's socioeconomic status, accompanied by the initiative taken in 2004 called the "Decade of Roma Inclusion".

The second dynamic which led to the increasing involvement of the EU in the Roma issue has been the large influx of Roma immigrants from the East to the West with the hope of better socio-economic status. Therefore, the "EU- 15" (the old member states) have started to pay significant attention to accommodate Gypsy/Roma and all their problems within the very borders that they have long settled in due to the panic and suspicion resulting from the large influx of Roma immigrants into their territories. This is the underlying reason for their willingness to develop various reform and action programs to be implemented in these countries. Within this context, Europe has, "suddenly and somehow reluctantly", also rediscovered the long-settled Gypsy/Roma groups within its borders and the age of Roma has started in Europe.

In the light of the Europeanization of the Gypsy/Roma issue and the recent developments and increasing interest in the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey accompanying it, my thesis concentrated on the discourse of racism towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey and the local manifestations of that discourse in the understudied region of Lüleburgaz. Criticizing the existing academic works on the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey with respect to their lack of a theoretical framework and descriptive characteristics, I claimed that the Gypsy/Roma community in Turkey has been a racialized entity with respect to the

functioning of the discourse of racism through the process of racialisation at the state and society level and in the labour market as well. In this sense, the residents of Altiyol and Kuştepe- who are defined as the Gypsies by the larger population of the town- I contended, constitute the local manifestation of the discourse of racism towards the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey.

Theoretically, I stated the necessity to grasp “racism” as a discourse constructed through the process of racialisation which would enable one with its conceptual flexibility to compose all different and sometimes contradictory forms of social, economic, cultural and political practices, rules, institutions and policies as well as the everyday language and modes of conduct. These are all functioning to create the racialized entity by drawing the boundaries of the *habitus* for it in a given territory and allowing it as well to develop strategies for survival in this discursively determined life space.

Within this framework, in the second chapter of the thesis, I attempted to unravel the discourse of racism towards the Gypsy/Roma people in Turkey operating since the Ottomans until today at the state, societal level and in the labour market and analyzed the local manifestations of this discourse in the case of Lüleburgaz.

Exploring the process of the Gypsies’/Roma’s racialisation at the societal level, I argued that, starting with their representation in Ottoman society as “irreligious and sexually loose, elusive” peoples, the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey have been stigmatized in daily language as well. The proverbs and legends in the Turkish oral tradition mark Gypsiness as a “condemning signifier”. When exploring the local manifestations of the imagination about the Gypsy/Roma at the societal level in the case of Lüleburgaz, I

concluded that, the old stereotypes are still already alive in the memories of ethnic Turks in Lüleburgaz regarding the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe whom they define as the Gypsies. These reproduce a tendency for the majority of the town to interact with the Roma /Gypsy only within economic life and to keep social contacts with them at a minimum.

I argued that state racism in Turkey towards the Gypsy/Roma should be examined in a context-specific manner, since it significantly differs from such examples as the Nazi persecution of Gypsies, the policies in some post-communist countries towards their Gypsy population and very recent state policies in Italy towards the Gypsy/Roma. Rather than carrying direct discursive and physical violence towards the Gypsy/Roma, I believe, the related state policies in Turkey should be analyzed with regard to their racist outcomes for the Gypsy/Roma communities. While they were discriminated on an ethnic basis within the Ottoman *Millet* System and not accepted within the privileged community of Muslims, most of them were persistently claimed adherence to Islam. I claimed that the following state practices in Turkey- the legal documents, the settlement and naturalization policies regarding the Gypsy/Roma- had a “discontinuous” character - inclusion to a certain extent on the basis of being Muslim, but exclusion in the times of heightened nationalism. While they were sometimes considered among the Muslim elements that should be assimilated in the nation-building process, this optimism rapidly failed and the related policies faded away as well. They were formal citizens yet silenced to the extent of being invisible and were not counted among the true and respectable elements of the nation. The direct and indirect effects of the state practices and discourses are re-producing this silencing and their inferior social

and economic status. Therefore, these should be considered as racist discourse and practices despite the fact that the Gypsy/ Roma have never been made targets of ethnic cleansing as was the case during the Nazi rule in Germany.

In the context of the racist discourse of the state, the practices of the local state institutions in Lüleburgaz, when dealing with the Gypsy/Roma people, reveal their racialisation at the state level. Based on the statements of my interviewees, the practices of the local state institutions in Lüleburgaz – the Gypsies'/Roma's being condemned on the basis of culture, being perceived as “undeserving” state benefits, their “harassment” in local state institutions (as claimed by them)- demonstrate how these racist practices are “deeply rooted” in the state institutions .

Finally, with respect to the treatment of the Gypsy/Roma communities in the labour market, I contended that, while the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey, from the Ottomans up to now, have been, at some instances, employed in the most undesirable occupations, the main trend which reveals their relation to the local and national economy has been their occupational specialization. Being excluded from the key economic positions in the labour market and in public institutions, the Gypsy/Roma in Turkey have assumed “limited but necessary tasks” for the local economies. In this sense, the persistent trend of attributing them specific occupations within the economic niches constitutes the first phase of their racialization in the labour market. Furthermore, their recent marginalization/exclusion in the labour market due to their loss of those economic niches in light of the capitalist transformation of production has deepened their racialized status. I argued that the racialisation of the Turkish Gypsy/Roma in the labour market can be closely observed in the case of Lüleburgaz. Based on the statements of

my interviewees, I observed that the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts are excluded from the job opportunities that the booming capitalist economy of Lüleburgaz is offering. While being marginalized and disadvantaged in the labour market by conducting their occupations which were attributed to them overtime, those who are unable to position themselves within those economic niches are excluded from the labour market. Those instances, I argue, demonstrate how the discourse of racism towards the Gypsy/Roma in Lüleburgaz operates through racialisation of the Gypsy/Roma in the labour market by either making them disadvantaged in the occupations they conduct or completely eliminating the chances of being employed in the positions the local economy bears in itself.

In the final chapter, I attempted to uncover my interviewees' self-perceptions regarding their ethnic identity and their current socioeconomic status. Moreover, how my interviewees respond/react to their disadvantaged position at the discursive and action level were respectively analyzed. In short, the final chapter was devoted to analyzing how the various subject positions of my interviewees were at stake when entailing two competing realms of politics for opposing the injustices in the larger society towards them. Besides, my identification of the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe as "a racialized group", I argued that being a Gypsy/Roma does not connote an ethnic affiliation for the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts. While they define being a Gypsy/Roma as a social/cultural and class position stemming from poverty, I demonstrated that lack of education and inability to express themselves properly were among the main components of their identity construction. In this sense, I demonstrated

that being a Gypsy/Roma has been identified by my interviewees as being poor/subaltern.

Making a brief review of the literature on the survival/coping strategies of the subaltern/urban poor in contemporary societies, I concluded that what Asef Bayat calls as “quite encroachment” as the coping strategies of the subaltern has also been relevant to some degree when the survival/coping strategies of the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts are concerned. I asserted that garbage collection, waiting in long queues in the municipality every Friday to enjoy the food benefits, encroachment of the streets as vendors, living in the tents in the outskirts of Kuştepe by squatting the public territory, voting for a party in return for free fuel, not getting married formally, begging, depending on solidarity networks in their local district and even minor thefts are among those survival/coping strategies of the residents to deal with their disadvantaged position. However, I claimed that what is striking in the case of Lüleburgaz is how those coping/survival strategies of my interviewees(their quite encroachment) have been replaced by their justice claims at the discursive and action level.

As their narratives demonstrate, at the discursive level, sheltering within the Islamic identity, my interviewees state to be equal Turkish citizens. At some moments scapegoating other minority ethnic groups in Lüleburgaz for their subalternity, they pose their justice claims in terms of having equal access to the distribution of resources in the society. On the other hand, however, I uncovered that their justice claims are being transformed at the action level by getting organized under Roma associations. The proliferation of Roma associations in Lüleburgaz which are supposed to take action on the basis of Roma ethnic identity is the main reflection of this new transformation.

Posing the questions of “Does the transformation of the justice claims of the residents at the discursive level (which are shaped by demanding access to the distribution of resources on the basis of being equal Turkish citizens) to a more democratic stance of getting organized under Roma associations (which are supposed to raise the justice claims of the residents towards their subaltern (racialized) status on the basis of Roma ethnic identity) offer prospects for enabling them to express their justice claims further in a democratic and participatory setting?, I argued that the problems of Roma mobilization in Lüleburgaz such as limited scope of membership (musicians lead the associations and the membership is not all-encompassing giving chance for those more marginalized to raise their voices in a participatory setting), and the lack of expertise and know-how of the members to develop projects and provide funding obscure the effectiveness of Roma associations. The tension between the justice claims of the residents at the discursive and action level, which stem from their confusion regarding how to identify themselves with respect to ethnicity and Turkish citizenship prevent the Roma associations to gain a more participatory stance. Furthermore, I argued that Roma mobilization in Turkey has not been a movement pushed by Roma’s justice claims alone and shaped through their own activism targeting their own concerns , but rather one which has been pushed further in a favorable international setting(which I called “Europeanization of the Gypsy/Roma issue”) and one which has been mostly led by non-Roma. All those reasons, I argued, obstruct the effectiveness of Roma mobilization in Lüleburgaz.

However, I asserted, there is still some room for optimism regarding the success of Roma mobilization in Lüleburgaz. Proliferation in the number of Roma associations in

Lüleburgaz leads to the formation of international, national and local networks to demand and promote rights on the basis of their subaltern (racialized) status of being Gypsy/Roma. Not only their establishment on the basis of Roma subalternity but also their encounters with Roma activists from abroad in the conferences they attend which lead them to rethink their perception of ethnic identity constitute “conflicting, competing” realms with respect to their citizenship claims that they state discursively. The influence such associations have on the identity construction of their members is worth considering. Their contact with other Roma in different organizations, increasing awareness of the activities of their counterparts as well as the Roma mobility in Europe and the projects, and seminars targeting them all do offer some prospects for their future identity claims.

What is striking in my case is the repercussions of the politics the residents of Altıyol and Kuştepe districts develop in terms of identity and justice claims in contemporary societies. The identity construction of my interviewees (regarding being a Gypsy/Roma as a subaltern position on the one hand and becoming organized under Roma associations on the other hand) reflects the “fluid, unstable, unfixed” character of identity undermining the theoretical position that essentializes the identity claims of ethnic minorities as ever-constant ones based on the recognition of their distinct ethnic identities. Following Young, I argued that, the identity construction of my interviewees has been accompanied by their justice claims. Though competing in terms of their claim to citizenship, the residents demand justice at the discursive and action level to further integrate to the larger society. In this sense, rather than affirming of their ethnic identity based on recognition, my interviewees pose their justice claims around their

subaltern position to free themselves from their overall marginalization. Being enclaved within their limited life space and being unable to practice survival/coping strategies anymore, they pose their rising demands to benefit from the allocation of resources in society. In this sense, the advantages and limits of democracy in contemporary societies in terms of enabling the struggle of disadvantaged groups posing justice claims are to be pondered on in detailed.

APPENDICES

A – THE TURKISH PROVERBS REGARDING GYPSIES

Çingenenin Bismillahından kıl çıkar.

Bahçeye erik, kapıya Çingene bastırma.

Şopar gibi olmuşsun.

Çingene ve Çingene olmayanların arasındaki evliliğin uygun olmadığına dair söylencede is, bir Çingene ile evlenilmesi durumunda kırk gün bir tuğls parçası üzerinde gusül abdesti alınması ve üzerinde abdest alınan tuğlanın erimesi gerekmektedir.

Yetmiş iki milletin buçuğu

Çingeneleşme (cimri biri için)

Çingene çalar, Kürt oynar

Çingene ile mi uyudun?

Çingene düğünü: gürültülü toplantı

Çingeneleşmek: cimrice davranışlarda bulunmak

Çingene parası: bozuk para, ufaklık

Çingene kavgası: önemsiz bir sorun üzerine başlayıp gittikçe kızışan, yakası açılmadık küfürlere yol açan kavga

B –THE TURKISH VERSION OF O.B.’S ACCOUNT

Bizim evi taşıyacaktık. Bulduk iki Çingene. Anlaştık parda. Çıktılar yukarı.(ölen)
Eşimin fotoğrafı var duvarda. Abe dedi bu aga mı öldü? Abe dedi ben bu aganın
giyecekleri ile büyüdüm. Bak sakın bana para vermeyin, ben bu eşyayı taşırım dedi.
Neyse başladı bunlar. Bir tane Auer soba var. Bana çağır o yaşlı agayı dedi (babamı
kastediyor). Babam geldi, ne var be pis Çingene dedi? Aga, dedi ben katiyen bu sobayı
o paraya taşımam, bu merdiven çok dik. Soba sırtında.. Dedik hani, para almayacaktın.
Atıyorum sobayı sırtımdan dedi. Napalım biz de. Atar mı atar, elin serserisi. Sonra fazla
para verildi (O.B. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,15 April
2008)

C –THE TURKISH VERSION OF A.Ö.'S ACCOUNT

Onları Rabbimiz bile, 72, 5 milletten dışarısınız demiş. Bir peygamber kaçıyormuş. Değirmene saklanmış. Değirmene saklanınca Allah tarafından kocaman bir taş değirmenin kapısını kapatmış. Herkes uğraşüyor taş yerinden kalkmıyor. Bu taşın yerinden kalkması için iki kardeşin zina yapması gerek diyor. O zaman Çingene değil tabi bunlar. İki kardeş çıkıyor, tamam biz yaparız yeter ki bu taş buradan kalksın diyor. Bunlar zina yapınca, taş kalkıyor. Allahü Teala diyor ki, “Evsiz, yersiz, yurtsuz kalın” diyor. İki kardeş para için zina yaptığından, 72, 5 milletten de aşağısınız siz diyor. Onun için, bunlar lanetli olduğu için, sürünmeye mahkumlar. Bulduğunu bugün yiyor, yarına Allah kerim. Bu hikaye Kur’anda değil de hadis kitaplarında vardı, herhalde. Yaşanmışlar yazılıyor ya hadis kitaplarında.. (A.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,15 April 2008)

D –THE TURKISH VERSION OF KOLUKIRIK’S NARRATIVES

Babam Drama’dan gelmiş. (A.İ.), Cihan harbinde ayrılmışlar. (H.K.),
Baskı vardı Yunanistan’da. (N.O.), Babamın dediğine göre yer değiştirdik gavurlarla
(D.Ç.), Selanik’ten çıkmışız. (R.Ç.), Proşaçan köyünden. (R.Ç.), Drama doğumluyum.
(R.Ç.), Selanik’te Müslümanları, Türkleri kesecekleri söylendiği için biz kaçtık. (R.Ç.),
Adapazarı’na Drama’nın Sardıvan köyünden geldik. (N.O.) Selanik’te çiftliğimiz
varmış. (N.O.), Proşaçan’ın Rauka köyünden geldik. (N.O.), Biz Dramalıyız. (D.Ç.),
Nüfus cüzdanımda Drama yazar. (D.Ç.), Drama’dan Sinop’a gittik. (D.Ç.), Bize
Sinop’ta 40 dönüm arsa ve 3 katlı ev verdiler. (R.Ç.), Drama’dan gelmiş babamlar.
(Y.P.), Drama’dan gelmişiz. (E.Y.), Anavatanımıza, Türkiye’ye geldik. (N.O.), Türkiye
anayurdumuz. (N.O.), Biz macir [muhacir] olarak geldik. (H.K.). Atatürk getirdi bizi
buraya. (E.Y.), Atatürk getirmiş bizimkileri. (H.K.), Atatürk gel deyince bizimkiler
gelmişler. (A.İ.), Atatürk bizi çağırdı. (R.Ç.), Atatürk Adapazarı’nda iskan hakkı
vermiş ama bizimkiler buraya geldi. (N.O.), Atatürk bize 60 dönüm yer vermiş ama
bizimkiler değerlendirememiş. (N.O.), Atatürk iskan verdi ama bırakıp gelmiş
bizimkiler. (A.İ.).

E –THE TURKISH VERSION OF S.B.’S ACCOUNT

Belediye zabıtaları sen aldığıın zaman bir domates, bir biber, bir salata koyduđun zaman arşıya ıktığıın zaman senin başına 5 tane birden üşüşür. Belediye avuşu dikilip teraziyi alırdı. Hadi diyor Altıyol’a. Seni Altıyol’a gönderiyor. Ama trafiđi tehlikeye sokacak şekilde zengin ekmiş arabayı. Burdan gelen araba da geçemiyor. Burdan gelen de geçemiyor. Ne zabıta karışıyor, ne trafik karışıyor. Ama zavallı garibanın burdan 2 ekmek parası götürsün diye ocuklarına 5 zabıta arabasına el koyuyor. (S.B. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,26 January 2008

F –THE TURKISH VERSION OF M.Ö.'S ACCOUNT

M.Ö: mükafatın bu mu olacak senin?yine geldiği zaman aynını yapacak mısın?

K.S: hee yapacam. Sözüm sözdür yapacam. Çünkü bizi kurtaran Ecevit oldu. Ben yapmam kötülük. Allah yolunda olan bir kişi kötülük yapamaz. Naptım biliyon mu? Emin Hale kazandı. Ben parfüm satıyorum o zaman. Başladım bağırmaya. Bakanım kazandı. Aldım bütün parfümleri dağıttım mahalleye parasız. Bayrakları başladım oraya buraya yapıştırmaya..... Ben Emin Hale'den yardım bekliyorum. Hiç etmedi ama ben ona bir kere daha gidicem. Bana söz verdi. Sözünü yerine getirmeli. (P.Ö. and M.Ö., Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey, 21 April 2007)

G –THE TURKISH VERSION OF S.O.’S ACCOUNT

Kaymakamlıkta, gidiyoruz oraya, diyoruz ki, devlet tarafından bize bu imkanlar sunuluyor. Niye siz vermiyorsunuz? Abla bize öyle bir hakaret ediliyor ki..olmaz bir derece ya.....Aynen böyle diyor hocam. İçeri aldırırım şimdi seni diyor. Çağırırım ordan iki polis. Bu cesareti nereden alıyor hocam? Başbakan bize veriyor bu imkanı. Kaymakam olsun herhangi bir vekili olsun cesareti kimden alıyor..... Dilekçe yazdırdığımız halde bizi kaymakamın huzuruna çıkarmıyor abla. Böyle bir cümle olur mu ya. Ben madem bu Lüleburgaz’ın vatandaşıyım. Benim kaymakama gitmem gerekir. Derdimi arz etmem gerekir ama bana bu imkanı vermiyorlar. (S.O. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,26 January 2008)

H –THE TURKISH VERSION OF P.Ö.'S ACCOUNT

Yeşil kart var ama yine para gerekiyor, oradan oraya gitmeye. Ameliyata yine para. 10 milyarsa 5'e düşer ancak. Doktora gidiyorum ben, ilaç yazıyor. 6-7-8 milyon istiyor benden eczacı. Nerden bulayım. Benim gündelik topladığım 5-6-7 milyon zaten. Çocuklarımı doyuramıyorum ben. Büyük ameliyat olmam lazım benim. Şu devlet biraz yardım etse ne olur yani? Kendimize gelelim biraz. Çok bir şey de istemiyorum ondan. Bir oda bir mutfak yapsın(P.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,21 April 2007)

I –THE TURKISH VERSION OF S.A.’S ACCOUNT

Ben etek satıyorum. Şu anda hiç satamadım. Açım. Bu kadın da aç. İşyerlerine gidiyorum başvuru için. Hangi semtte oturuyorsun. Kuştepe. Tamam...Süleyman sokakta açılmış küçük bir konfeksiyon. Oraya gittim. Nerede oturuyorsunuz hanımefendi dedi. Kuştepe dedim. Yok orası buraya çok ters dedi. Yani ben şimdi Kuştepe’de oturuyorsam ters mahalle mi oluyor. Ben yaya gidiceğim. Servis yollaman gerekmiyor.. Kocam yok bekarım. Şimdi orospuluk mu yapmam lazım. Hırsızlık mı yapmam lazım ekmek yiyeyim. Ben para istemiyorum, iş istiyorum.bakkaldan borç da alsam o zaman adam bilecek ki maaşı alınca ödeyeceğim. Hükümetten ben yardım da istemiyorum. Ne yapmam lazım. Keyfi gelecek kadının gelecek benden etek alacak.
(S.A. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,28 January 2008)

J –THE TURKISH VERSION OF P.Ö.'S ACCOUNT

Bu Çingeneleşik nereden kaldı anlatayım mı ben size? Annem anlattı bunu bana ha. İki adam tarlada buğday biçiyor. Birinde pulluk var, diğesinde orak. Orakla buğday biçen diyor ki: bak tarladan karamuk çıktı.. Türk aldı pulluđu sürüyor. Çingeneler de orakla buğday biçiyor. Çingene diyor ki karamuk karamuk. Türk diyor ki yapış sen pulluđuna. Öbürü diyor ki baksana karamuklara. Boşver ya diyor karamukla benim işim yok, pullukla işim var. Çingene bırakıyor orađı, başlıyor karamuk yemeđe. Başlarında duran başka bir adam demiş ki hanginiz karamuđu seçersiniz, hanginiz pulluđu seçersiniz. Türk olan kapmış pulluđun birini. Tamam demiş, biz kazandık. Onlar Çin. Çingene de deđil ha, Çin. Oradan diye diye Çin Çin, gavurlar adımızı Çingene bırakmış. Ordan kalmadır Çingene. Adam pulluđu seçmiş, Çin gitmiş karamuk yemiş. Çingene bu yani. Neden şimdi Türklerde tarla var, tezek var herşey var , git köylerde herşey var. Bizde niye yok? Biz şimdi bir iş yaptık şu çocukla. Çöpe gittik, kazma çakıyoruz. Çingene yani, dediğın kadar var. Kazıyoruz, yılanlar böyle çıktı, 4 tane öldürdük. Ben bıraktım çöp kazmayı. Baktım çingene gergeri. Başladım yemeđe. Anne çöp çıkarıyorduk dedi ođlan, boşver dedim gel yiyelim. O da bıraktı, başladı o da yemeđe. İşimizi bıraktık(P.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,21 April 2007).

K –THE TURKISH VERSION OF P.Ö.’S ACCOUNT

Bizim derneđi Edirne’ye Roman Dernekleri toplantısına çağırdılar. Romanya’dan geldi, Fransa’dan geldi, Amerika’dan geldi, İngiltere’den geldi. Bunlar Çingene. Oturduk. Ama inan ki kadın profesör, Çingene. Ama kadının gözleri boncuk gibi sarışın bembeyaz. Benim yanıma oturdu. Sen dedi nerelisin? Lüleburgaz. Çingene misin. Evet. Bana dedi çingenece konuş. Bilmiyorum dedim. Sen nereden çingenesin dedi. Kadın bir başladı mı Çingenece konuşmaya. Çingene benim dedi. Senin Çingenelikle alakan yok. Çingene dedi dilini bilmesi lazım.” (M.Ö. Interview by the author,tape recording, Lüleburgaz,Turkey,14 May 2007)

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