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”It's not really about alcohol, you know“

Alcohol Consumption and the Definition of Turkishness

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Abstract

This paper is about the role that alcohol consumption plays in the (re)definition of Turkishness at a time where the secular foundations of the country are being challenged by the religious-conservative Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP). We see how alcohol consumption shed its marginal position in the middle of the 19th century, being elevated to the status of drink of the elites, how this in turn shaped the lifestyles of those growing up in the urban centers throughout the next century and a half, the native secularists, and how it is perhaps again on the way to a marginal position in the Turkish society. Taking a closer look on the interviews, we learn that the postulated dichotomy in reality takes on the appearance of a spectrum of attitudes toward alcohol consumption, and by inserting the ethnographical material in a historical context and analyzing it through literature on secularization and modernity, it becomes evident that alcohol consumption in Turkey assumes the position of an icon, or a counter-icon, used by some groups to claim ownership to the nation.

Keywords: alcohol consumption, Islam, secularism, Turkey, national identity

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1. Introduction

Occasionally, some behaviors unleash polemics that go way beyond the practice in itself. All of the sudden the compliance of a particular behavior can come to appear crucial to one's belonging to a group, or to the existence of the nation as we know it; it becomes an icon, or at times, a counter-icon. In the summer of 2013, a discussion concerning halal meat in public institutions such as hospitals and kindergartens morphed into a discussion regarding the serving of Danish pork meatballs (frikadeller) as crucial to the national identity, and the prime minister herself had to take a stand on what kind of meat the nation's preschoolers should eat for lunch. In a manner similar to the meatballs, alcohol is an element holding a substantial symbolic value in Turkey. These moral connotations of alcohol or drug use are present in most societies that anthropologists study, however in Turkey, restrictions and liberalization of alcohol have also been a part of the national narrative. Consuming alcohol, or eating pork, or abstaining from doing either, the state encouraging or discouraging this behavior all become highly value-laden, it comes to be about national identity, religion, morals, tolerance vs. intolerance, and fear of losing the world as (we think) we know it. It is this field of tension, which is the subject of this paper.

Let me introduce an informant, whose reaction when the venue of a festival decided that they would not use their alcohol license, illustrates that. Sebi is a lively woman in her mid 20s, working as a textile engineer for a major clothes company in Istanbul. She is passionate about music and sung at traditional *meyhane* restaurants¹ when she was in university. Upon hearing that there would not be sold any alcohol at the festival, she and her friends actually returned their tickets. This despite the fact that Sebi's favorite singer would perform at the festival, and that she had been looking forward to it for a long time. She admitted being torn for a moment, between going to the festival anyway to listen to this singer, and protesting. In the end, she and her friends decided on the latter.

At the time of these polemics, I was also in Istanbul, and this event in many ways pushed me towards choosing the topic of this paper. A friend of mine and I had decided on going to the festival, and I was quite excited by the prospects of being outside in the evening, instead of stuck indoors, where the humid air that fills Istanbul at summertime, never seems to cool down.

¹ Restaurants where meze, small traditional dishes, are served along with rakı, the aniseed-flavored liqueur some claim to be Turkey's national drink.

However, we never made it that far. When my friend heard about how the neighbors had managed to pressure the festival into not using their alcohol license, she was furious, just as Sebi was, and I didn't object when she suggested that we should stay home. I had long since perceived that alcohol held a symbolic significance to her and her friends that I did not fully understand, and this paper is a part of my quest to find out.

In this paper, I want to demonstrate how alcohol and the act of consuming it is both an extremely potent, but also malleable symbol in Turkey, In particular, I will show how alcohol is used as an icon by both secularists and Islamists in their struggle over which group is authentically Turkish. For one group, alcohol is a part of Turkey's cultural heritage, and one they hold very dear, and for the other, alcohol consumption is a foreign element that has no place in a true Turkish culture.

I want to show how the conditions for alcohol consumption have been grounded in historical developments dating back to the 19th century, consolidated during the attempt of defining an ethnically homogenous Turkish nation-state on the ruins of the multiethnic and multi-religious Ottoman Empire and how these events shape the binary rhetorics used in Turkey today, and in particular in the recent protests emanating from Gezi Park.

I intend to demonstrate this through the analysis of historical and sociological studies, supplemented by ethnographic data that I have collected through a total of eight weeks in Turkey, primarily Istanbul, between April and September 2013.

2. Methodology

2.1 Methodological approach

The field data for this study is based on seven semi-structured interviews and participant observation over a period of eight weeks in Turkey, primarily in Istanbul. I went twice, once between April 29 and May 7, and again between July 25 and September 3 2013. My motivation to approach the topic of drinking in Istanbul, is that I quickly sensed that it was something that really divides the Turkish society in two. When I first started to go to Turkey on a regular basis, I sensed the dual attitude towards alcohol and alcohol consumption in a country that, on one hand, is hosting a lot of European tourists, and one of the prerequisites for doing so, is accessible alcohol, and on the other hand, is trying to limit alcohol consumption, especially in public, allegedly, initially, at least, for "health reasons". Also, as I got more and more Turkish friends, all from the same secular, well educated segment, I noticed that drinking alcohol had something more to it than just the consumption in itself, and, perhaps, getting drunk. It seemed as if the alcohol consumption was what was separating "us" from "them", as if it was some kind of identity marker, along with rock music and tattoos, headscarves . It sparked my curiosity, who were these people they were trying to distance themselves from, and why was this so important? Thus, when I decided that the topic of this paper should be something related to Turkey, I embraced the chance to go further than this segment of drinkers, I had got to know so well for the past three years.

I decided to try and get in touch with some of the people, who I up until now had had no contact to whatsoever, from whom my friends seemed separated from by an invisible yet impenetrable barrier. I have done seven semi-structured interviews with young people aged 21 to 31. All of them consider themselves to live in Istanbul, although two of them I have interviewed in Copenhagen, while they were doing Erasmus. All of them are either currently enrolled in, or have graduated from university, in quite a wide range of areas. Two of them are married. Some of them appear by their real first name, mainly because I was unable to persuade them to let me use a pseudonym for them, while others appear by pseudonym. Three of the interviews were made in English, one halfway in English and halfway in Turkish, while the last one was made with one of the other informants in the role of interpreter. While I have attempted to do the interviews in English, I have sometimes been unaware of the English level of the informant, and in fact, the two other interviews have also given me important insights, especially because it dramatically changed the dynamics of the interview. I quickly learned that I needed to schedule almost the whole day for

the interviews in Turkey, as the informants would expect us to hang out after the interview. The language I spoke during the participant observation was mainly English, which most of the people in and around the group domineered well.

This proved very interesting, as the informal talks after the recorder was shut off gave extra depth to the topics discussed, and I learned from my experience and left the time after the interview open, when I came to Turkey again in July for the second round of interviews.

I got in touch with the informants through already existing networks in Turkey, where I have spent a lot of time since doing an internship in Ankara in 2010, and I either asked them personally or through a mutual friend or another informant if they were interested in participating in the project, and one approached me and asked me if he could participate. No one rejected to participate, I even had one extra informant who had agreed on being interviewed, but in the end the interview never happened for practical reasons. This leaves us with seven informants, Umut, Maya, Sebi, "Kantran", Ümran, Elif and Sevde, of which one, Umut, is male, while the remaining are female.

While I would wish I had found more male informants, I believe that the participant observation and subsequent informal interviews provide me with a relatively balanced view, since I had the chance to talk to many men about some of the same topics as were touched upon in the interviews, and they are quite consistent with what I have picked up from the drinking informants. It was quite difficult to 'cross over' and find non-drinking informants, since my network consisted solely of drinkers, so I chose not to spend energy on finding any non-drinking male informants, nor expanding the spectrum, and instead focus on the participant observation that was more readily available.

The participant observation took place at social events, primarily with the group of friends of which Maya and Umut consider themselves to be a part of, and I got access to it through my friendship with the girlfriend of one of the other core members.

2.2 Reflections

Over the past three years I have spent a considerable amount of time in Turkey, which has provided me both with the inspiration for this thesis, and the network that made it possible. This network consists solely of people who do consume alcohol, and it is possible that I have been somewhat influenced by this in my initial approach, but I have been aware of this tendency and tried to distance myself from it as far as possible. This is also one of the reasons why the Gezi resistance occupies a relatively small part of this paper; while I was inclined to jump on the first

plane when the demonstrations started, and do participant observation in Taksim, I decided not to do so, because I realized that I was too deeply invested in the struggle that went on there to be able to maintain any kind of objectivity.

The participant observation was facilitated by several factors; I entered the scene as a friend of a friend, I had some, albeit brief, contact to some of the members of the group prior to the fieldwork, I speak some Turkish and also, people seemed to find my research topic amusing, and not very intimidating. Another possible element to my integration in the group came to my knowledge at one of my last night in Turkey. "Erdal", an informant, with whom I had spend a considerable amount of time with, and one of the core members of the group, told my husband about an episode several months earlier, on the 1st of May, where I had been determined to join them at the protests despite that I had been caught in the riots near the house and 'taken' a (barely noticeable amount of) teargas while out shopping for breakfast. He said that from that on he knew I was alright, and that my husband should be proud of me.

The findings in this paper do not necessarily apply to all Turks, not even all Turks who drink, but nevertheless may be useful in understanding the current situation in Turkey.

2.3 Ethics

Carolyn Ellis delineates three different dimensions of ethics to be taken into consideration when doing fieldwork; procedural ethics, ethics in practice and relational ethics (Ellis 2007: 4). Procedural ethics deal with informed consent, anonymity, protecting subjects from harm etc., and ethics in practice are those, often subtle, ethical dilemmas, that occur while doing fieldwork. Relational ethics touch upon the dilemmas arising from the relations we form with the informants, when are we researchers, when are we friends, and is it possible to mend the two roles?

The ethical dilemmas of my fieldwork experience touch mainly upon the third type; relational ethics. This because what facilitated my entrance to the field was also what had the possibility of restraining my actions; I was there as a friend of a friend, thus, a possible friend, and it was at times hard to know if I was sufficiently clear about my role as a researcher. Not in the way that people around me were not aware that I was doing research, nor what the topic was; in fact it was the center of many jokes, but it made me unsure of whether I had the consent to write about something that had been said at the late hours of a party, for instance, or what happened at a family dinner. Since I was around people who constituted potential informants all the time, given that I lived with my friend and her boyfriend, and accompanied my friend on visits to her family, and it was near impossible not to observe anything of interest on these occasions, I have chosen to make

these observations part of the analysis, while being very careful to preserve their privacy in my writings.

In order to make the observations valid in a social sciences framework, in the next few pages, I will discuss some contexts relevant for their interpretation.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Secularism and modernity

Secularism, often mistaken to be a rejecting of religion as such, is taken to be one of the pre-requisites of modernity. However, as Umut Azak (2010) demonstrates in her book on Islam and secularism in Turkey, it is to a higher extent a question of privatizing religion and distancing it from politics, science, economy etc. As modernity is expected to lead to a diminishing of religious faith, there might be an implicit suggestion that religion should disappear altogether, but this has yet to happen anywhere on the planet. So far, in some contexts, institutionalized religion such as churches etc., are losing impact, but in some cases the religious sentiment is directed in a more spiritual direction instead.

Ernest Gellner, in an attempt to explain why secularization has, in all cases except Turkey, been absent in Muslim majority countries, points to the connection between modernity and what he refers to as 'Protestantism', as a generic concept. According to his attempt of an analysis of a context he acknowledges not being familiar with, a possible explanation for the general lack of secularization, are the 'Protestant' features of scholarly Islam; antimeditationism, strict unitarianism, rule orientation, stress on doctrine, the finality of doctrine, and a kind of completeness (Gellner in Bozdoğan 1997: 234). In times of underdevelopment, populations often have the choice of imitating the habits of those temporarily more successful and abandoning, with a sense of shame, one's own habits, or sticking to the old habits and acknowledging the material loss while maintaining a claim of moral superiority. However, according to Gellner, there was a solution already within Islam; the rejection of folk Islam with all its mediators, and turning to 'high' Islam. Here there was a native choice, so to speak, a tradition that was "*genuinely old and genuinely local*" (Gellner in Bozdoğan 1997: 236).

While I acknowledge that entering modernity does indeed present a series of common challenges, I find Gellner's approach somewhat mechanical, and as both Asad (2003) and Fenella Cannell (2010) point out, secularization is not an inevitable fact, nor is it a natural process, it is a theory about how things are, or how they could be, shaped by historical events and ideas, and secularization is an active process put in place by policy makers; while it might need certain prerequisites, it does not just simply happen on its own.

When examining the secularization process of Turkey, this becomes evident. It occurred in a time where, in order to establish a modern nation state from the leftovers of the empire, it was necessary to create a homogenous population, as was the case elsewhere. However, in the Turkish

case, as I will elaborate a bit on further on, an actual population exchange on ethno-religious background took place in 1923 between Turkey and Greece, involving around 2 million people, as well as other measures. A state ideology was implemented top-down around the six arrows of Kemalism², of which one is secularism, and was well received by members of the urban elite. Some authors suggest that the implementation was less successful in the general population, for instance Keyder (Keyder 1997:39ff, cited in Christoffersen 2003: 17), and that this is one of the reasons for the success of the Islamic parties in the last couple of decades. It would be, however, erroneous to suggest that the movement(s) taking place are solely a product of nostalgia, a desire to return to a traditional way of life, Christoffersen suggests, and calls the islamist wave a both modern and traditional phenomenon; the empowerment of this, formerly marginalized, part of the population, has enabled them to influence society with its beliefs and values, but society, modernity, has also left their mark on it. Their claims of recognition of individual as well as collective rights show how they perceive themselves and their surroundings in a modern framework (Christoffersen 2003:127), in my analysis this points more toward alternative modernities, locally varied reactions to the structural conditions of modernity (Otterbeck 2010: 36). In this manner, due to the variations in the implementation of secularism in different sections of society, Turkey contains different modernities, shaping the lives of the people I will introduce you to on the following pages.

3.2 A theoretical approach to alcohol consumption

As it is relatively easy to produce, alcohol is probably the most widespread intoxicant in the world. However, in the context of this paper, its intoxicating effects are, at most, of secondary interest; it is all the moral values associated with the practice of alcohol use that are to be the main scope of my investigation. How is it that one informant refuses to eat her meal in a restaurant where alcohol is served, while another, provoked by the existence of several cafes professing to be alcohol free, decides to have a beer instead of the coffee we had agreed to have when we left the bridal store.

In this perspective I have chosen to address alcohol consumption as an iconic practice in the sense of Michael Herzfeld's iconicity; an object (or in this case, practice) that signifies something else via a perceived similarity. (Herzfeld 2005: 28). Drinking encompasses the secular lifestyle; nights out, dancing, female empowerment. In this sense, it becomes both an icon and a counter-icon, it becomes "what we are" to some, and "what we are not" to others. This is why it is,

² State ideology based on the ideas of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic.

and is not, really about alcohol. It is about how people perceive their society to be, and wish for it to develop. In both discourses, some people find the essence of their Turkishness, "*seemingly conflictual narratives of an underlying nationalist structure.*" (Navaro-Yashin 2002:21) This is of course not to say that these are the only two options, as I hope to demonstrate in chapter 6, but they are two major tendencies, as Navaro-Yashin as well as many others have noted.

In this sense, alcohol consumption becomes a window to modernity, and how identity is negotiated and renegotiated in a modern society. I will show how alcohol is an icon in Turkey. In the following chapters, we will focus on the intersection of secularism, alcohol and identity in modern Turkey. In particular, we will describe the construction of a national character in the context of alcohol consumption vs. abstaining from consuming alcohol.

4. The case of Turkey

4.1 The emergence of a secular republic

The Turkish Republic as we know it today, was constructed on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire in the period immediately following World War I and the Independence War. It was subjected to the audacious project of nation-building initiated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the 1920s. This is significant because Atatürk attempted an approximation to the West and insisted on a secular model of society for the newly established Turkish republic with his six arrows (*altı ok*) of Kemalism: republicanism, populism, secularism, reformism, nationalism and statism. Populism conveys an aspiration for democracy, while republicanism, secularism and nationalism all indicate the modern Western style nation-state, where religion is supposed to be separated from the state and practiced in the private domain only, and all citizens are equal before the law. Statism points to the wish that the state should participate actively in managing the economy of the nation, while revolutionism expresses firstly, the need to implement the reforms necessary to the realization of the aforementioned goals, and secondly to revise them when necessary, ensuring that they correspond to the Western ideal. (Christensen 2003: 12).

In Turkey, the secularization process included separating the reactionary Islam (*irtica*), often perceived to be of Arab origin, from a benign domestic version of Islam, appropriate to a secular, modernizing society. In fact, Azak argues that this fear of radical Islam is "*the underlying characteristic of secularism in Turkey*" (Azak 2010: xiii). During the first decades of the republic, a series of steps were taken to adapt Islam to the modern Turkish Republic, including the short-lived reformation of the language used during the Friday sermons at the mosque, and of the call to prayer (*ezan*), to make "*the 'rational' sense of Islam*" (Azak 2010: 49) available to the citizens by providing religious services in their mother tongue instead of Arabic. Many indicators point to the Kemalist approach to Islam as an instrumental one, and the supposed separation of state and religion that the arrow of secularism indicates, in its Turkish version seems to be a religion reified and partially controlled by the state, a domesticated Islam, appropriate for a new, modern nation. Yael Navaro-Yashin describes the fear that many secular Turks had when the religious Refai Partisi (Welfare Party) started winning municipal elections in 1994. Through morbid jokes, like "*I will visit you with my four wives next time!*" (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 24) her informants painted a nightmarish image of *şeriat*, sharia rule, where, in particular, women's freedom would be severely restricted, and where most things considered fun, drinking, music, etc., would be forbidden; a Turkey where "*...everyone goes to bed at twelve*" (ibid.). In a manner similar to their European contemporaries,

the secular Turks believed that they had in some way transcended culture, and their view of Islam was similar to that that Edward Said made the object of his criticism when he wrote *Orientalism* in 1978.

This struggle between moderate and conservative interpretations of (Sunni) Islam has gone back and forth throughout the existence of the Turkish Republic, with some of the core topics being the headscarf ban and alcohol consumption, along with other topics related to morality, and not only public morality, as also co-ed student housing in privately owned apartments is being addressed by Erdoğan these days. In order to provide the reader with a broader understanding of the background of this process, a brief overview of alcohol consumption's transformation from marginal behavior to status behavior follows.

4.2 Aspirations for modernity at the last century of the Ottoman Empire

Istanbul was the heart of the old Ottoman Empire, that, despite being led by Muslims, contained a number of different ethnicities and religions, including both Judaism and Christianity. It was only during World War I and the following years that for instance the Greek and Armenian Christian minorities were severely diminished, after the Armenian genocide during World War I and as a result of the population exchange stipulated in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

Georgeon describes Muslim Ottomans' alcohol consumption before 1800 as conditioned by mainly two variables; their proximity to areas where grapes were grown, and their proximity with alcohol producing and consuming minorities such as Christians and Jews. Much secrecy surrounded the practice, as it was both prohibited by Islam and took place in the company of non-Muslims, thus leading to mixing with other ethnic groups, both forbidden (Georgeon 2002: 14).

On the verge of the nineteenth century, a change in the official attitude towards drinking was initiated by Sultan Mahmud II. In many ways, he started modeling his behavior on that of European sovereigns, this including abstaining from hiding his alcohol consumption from the public. He was joined by the great reformers of the Tanzimat period, most of whom were avid drinkers, and from 1860 onwards, the process that had begun in the palaces slowly spread to the rest of society, and drinking became a sign of modernity, to the extent that some officials complained that they had to drink in order to be accepted (Georgeon 2002: 16).

Crucial to understanding the complexity of alcohol consumption in Turkey as an icon, is that alcohol consumption has been a component of the Western oriented elites for more than two hundred years, from sultanate to secular republic, while more conservative forces have shunned the

behavior. Thus, the conditions for alcohol consumers have changed according to who was in charge, and for the past decade, the conservative Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi³ (AKP) has been the ruling party. This has led to a series of restrictions concerning alcohol consumption, along with other moral prohibitions, such as banning Turkish Airlines' stewardesses from wearing red lipstick, banning kissing in the metro of Istanbul and Ankara, and speaking against female and male students cohabiting. These restrictions are by some perceived as foreign to the secular foundation of the Turkish Republic and threatening to their lifestyle by what Navaro-Yashin refers to as the 'native secularists' (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 25), who fear that the country is on the road to becoming a second Iran, or being Arabified.

On a more general level, both historical evidence and the statements of my informants suggest that alcohol consumption has a fairly long history in Turkey, and that it is a steady part of some Turks' lives and identities, and one they do not necessarily perceive as contradictory to their relationship with Islam, while it is perceived as being in contradiction with being conservative or Islamist.

4.3 Islam, privatized

Some days prior to Şeker Bayramı (Eid al-Fitr), marking the end of the month of Ramadan, a picture appeared in my newsfeed on Instagram. It belongs to an acquaintance of mine, who often drinks, but identifies as Muslim. The text says "I don't know what day of the Ramadan it is. It's my 21th day without alcohol... #resisthakan⁴". It represents, with a twist of irony, one of the possible ways of honoring the holy month of Ramadan without resorting to fast; abstaining from drinking alcohol. The very existence of such a practice, should tell us that it is possible to be Muslim and consume alcohol - otherwise there would be no incentive to pause the consumption for a month. Unlike some places in the Middle East, alcohol is readily available in the supermarkets and neighborhood shops, along with those of the bars and pubs that remain open throughout the month.

Another episode occurred during Şeker Bayramı. While I was visiting Ayvalık near the Aegean Sea, I joined a group of locals in the bar of the marina. They invited me to their table after I had given up on studying any more in the heat. The two couples were drinking beer and eating

³ The Justice and Development Party

⁴ This is a reference to the Gezi protests, during which the hashtag #direngezi (trad. resist, Gezi) and others (#direnankara, #direnaksim etc.) was used to share information and express support to the protesters.

calamari, and after a while, the waiter put down a beer in front of me as well. We were chatting in a mixture of Turkish and English, the atmosphere was pleasant, and the most talkative of the women made a point of assuring me that they didn't normally drink during the day. "No no", said the guy next to her, switching to English. "We drink because it's Bayram."

So despite the fact that Şeker Bayramı is an important holiday in a religion where alcohol consumption is explicitly forbidden (or at least postponed to the afterlife, where Cennet/Jannah, Paradise, is supposed to have rivers flowing with wine sweet to those who drink it, (Qur'an, 47:15), to some people, it is perfectly acceptable to go drinking immediately after the Ramadan.

Not everyone sees the necessity to interrupt their alcohol consumption because of the Ramadan. In general, this was the case for the group I was working with, but neither of them expressed any particular religious sentiments. Maya referred to an incident, where her mother woke up for sahur (the meal eaten before dawn during the Ramadan) and scolded her for drinking beer, while Maya told her mother to do what she believed to be true, and let Maya do what she believed to be true. However, to show the variation of attitudes possible within one single family, Maya's maternal aunt with whom she lives, readily shared a bottle of wine with the rest of us at her niece's birthday halfway through the Ramadan.

These are all examples of secularist attitudes to religion and show how, while the secularization process was not as complete as some imagine it to be, it did indeed produce 'native secularists'. In the next chapter, I will exemplify how the struggle on values between the 'native secularists' and the Islamic-conservative authorities can take place.

5. Discourses about alcohol and the interpretations of the nation

5.1 The gas mask in the living room - alcohol and the Gezi protests

Biberine gazına, cobuna sopasına

Tekmelerin hasına, eyvallah eyvallah

Şamarı yüzümüze, garezi dilimize

Şerefe hepinize, eyvallah eyvallah

To your pepper, to your gas, to your batons, to your sticks

To your harsh kicks, bring it on, bring it on

To your slap in our faces, to your grudge against our voice

Cheers to you all, bring it on, bring it on

Duman - Eyvallah

The timing of my field visit meant that the Gezi protests were prominent in the informants' narratives. The tales from the protests were carried as battle scars, and in a lot of conversations, the mood wavered between hopelessness and pride. A symbol of the change, that had happened between my first and my second visit, was the gas mask of greenish rubber in the living room of the friend, I lived with. The gas mask is only one of several common symbols for the protesters, another one was the penguin, symbolizing at once the police force and how the national media tried to ignore the protests in its initial stage. Several of the informants were very active in what they call 'the resistance' (*direniş*), their lives revolving around the park in those weeks. In this section I will discuss how this, at times physical, struggle relates to the greater themes of this paper, such as secularism and conflicting interpretations of Turkish nationhood, and how the (counter)icon of alcohol consumption is used as a vehicle in doing so.

In my analysis, among the various topics addressed during the protests, after it moved beyond just saving the trees in Gezi Park, some core ones were a) the fight for green, non-commercial public spaces, b) the right to privacy and bodily autonomy, and c) the right to protest peacefully without being met with police violence.

For this paper, b) is more interesting, as I would argue that most of my informants perceive that restrictions on the sale of alcohol falls into this category. Of course, in a very restricted number of places in the city, it can be seen as a means to restrict drinking on the streets or in the park, as I will address in chapter 6, but as places where this behavior is tolerated are already scarce, the actual effects of the ban will mainly be within people's homes. This is also the case with the more recent polemics regarding co-ed student housing mentioned above, and the call for Turkish women to each have three children, a quote often tossed around when, particularly women, are mocking the prime minister. As one informant put it when criticizing the prime minister Erdoğan; *"I'm serious, Mette, he thinks more about our vaginas than we do!"*

Deeper in their narratives of hiding from the police and jumping over canisters of teargas, alcohol was a recurrent theme, as was it in the prime minister's rhetoric concerning the protesters.

Alcohol snuck itself into the polemics surrounding the riots. The ironic toast to the authorities, proposed by the rock band Duman, is one example, where language related to alcohol consumption is turned against the (supposedly) non-drinking authorities, thus assuming the shape of an insult. Likewise, some informants who had been very active in 'the resistance' mentioned how the crowd at several occasions had chanted "Şerefine Tayyip" - cheers to you Tayyip [Erdoğan].

On the other side, allegations of drunkenness were thrown upon the protesters seeking shelter from police violence in the makeshift lazaret set up inside the Dolmabahçe Mosque by the prime minister in a speech given on June 9th⁵. Supposedly, the protesters had not only entered the mosque without taking off their shoes, they had entered with beer bottles in their hands, and continued the drinking inside. However, video footage from within the mosque showed no such activities, and the imam of the mosque likewise denied having seen any protesters exhibiting such behaviors.

In these examples, the invitation to, and the accusation of alcohol consumption both become part of the discourse between secularists and Islamists. On part of the authorities, Erdoğan launched several such attacks on the protesters, seemingly trying to take away any legitimacy to their claims. Another example that turned emblematic, was the dismissal of the thousands and thousands of protesters as "three or five looters" - *"üç beş çapulçu"*⁶. The protesters did not take long reappropriating the word, and soon the word took on the meaning of "someone demanding to

⁵ Hürriyet Daily News 27/6-2013

⁶ Radikal 9/6-2013

be treated like a human being" or "someone willing to fight for their rights", becoming the word many protesters used to describe themselves.

A reference to the various bans can also be found in the song "Tencere tava havası" ("an air of pots and pans") by the musical collective Kardeş Türküler. The melody of the song is played on the kitchen utensils referred to in the title, as a reaction to Erdoğan's fall out towards people around the park supporting the protesters by making noise with kitchen utensils. In this way, the interaction between the authorities and the protesters almost formed an argument, albeit one interrupted by scenes of violence.

In several ways, the protesters affirmed their interpretation of the nation. The song that introduced this chapter, by the famous Turkish rock band Duman, became a very influential protest song at the time of the protests; it even appeared on the playlist at a wedding where the bride, at least, had been active in 'the resistance'. In it, there is a line that goes: "Meydanlar bizim, unutmayın, bu vatan bizim" - "The squares are ours, don't forget, this country is ours". Perhaps indicating the lack of consensus on this part, at the wedding, the song was only allowed to play for around ten seconds before someone changed to the next, to the great disappointment of the bride's friends.

An informant also alerted me to one of the catch phrases passed around between the protesters; "*Sinirlenince çok güzel oluyorsun Türkiye'm*", or, as it featured on the cover of Penguen, a satirical weekly magazine openly siding with the protesters, "*Direnince çok güzel oluyorsun, Türkiye*" ("You become so beautiful when you get mad, my Turkey"/"You become so beautiful when you resist, Turkey"). In his account, it was something you would say to your girlfriend or wife when she is really angry, usually in an attempt to calm her down, while this was clearly not the intention of neither this informant, nor the editing staff at Penguen, as the magazine remained very critical to the authorities throughout the protests, and in August published a Gezi special issue. This expression not only works through a language of intimacy (Herzfeld 2005: 4), granting the nation the role of a passionate lover, as does it pass the image that the "true" Turkey is upset, excluding everyone opposing the protesters from their interpretation of the imagined community (Anderson 1983).

In this section I have addressed how during the Gezi protests, my informants distanced themselves from the authorities by the invitation to alcohol consumption, how the accusation of untimely alcohol consumption was used to discredit the protesters, and how some protesters claimed ownership over the nation through songs and metaphors.

6. The time and place for alcohol consumption

6.1 Spectrum - who drinks what, and how

In order to be able to approach my ethnographic data in a more systematic manner, I have decided to establish a kind of spectrum of alcohol consumption and attitudes towards it.

Consistent drinkers

People in whose lives alcohol consumption, in groups or alone, plays a significant role.

Occasional drinkers

People who choose to drink alcohol in some demarcated social contexts.

Non-drinking participants

People who accompany or share the social setting in which alcohol is consumed.

Alcohol avoiders

People who not only do not drink but also actively avoid being around people who are drinking.

A fifth possible category consisting of people who actively avoid people who drink, even when they're not drinking is feasible, but as I have no informants fitting this category, I will leave this open for another occasion.

As far as I am concerned, we can divide the people who do drink alcohol into two groups; those in whose lives alcohol consumption plays a significant role and is present in most social gatherings, and those who drink only occasionally.

The majority of my participant observation took place with a group of friends, largely consisting of consistent drinkers, along with some occasional drinkers. This group consisted of a tightly knit nucleus, nearly always present when we met, plus a range of looser connections who sometimes took part in the gatherings. This nucleus had known each other since their teens, all of them had university degrees, and some had attended one of Istanbul's prestigious foreign lycées. While some worked in more creative areas such as cinema, a lot held positions in banks or larger companies. For most, the desired life path included marriage and, at some point, children. Spouses and partners were readily accepted into the group, and each one's other friends and connections

likewise. My entrance point to the group was that I was a friend of the girlfriend of one of the core members.

While occasionally resorting to local Efes with an alcohol percentage of 5%, my informants also drank Tuborg Gold (5,8%) and Tuborg Red (7,5%) often occurred - usually in 50 cl cans. Wine drinking was less frequent, but this might be due to the fact that a cheap bottle of wine easily amounts to 30 lira, while generally the beer are less than 5 lira for half a liter Tuborg, Bomonti or Efes, and a bit more for 33 cl of for instance Corona or Miller's. Rakı (aniseed-flavored liqueur), containing 40% of alcohol was also a popular choice, and cost around 40 lira for half a liter. Rakı is usually consumed with food, at least snacks of some sort, like for instance watermelon and white cheese, and furthermore it is usually watered down.

Of the members of the group, I interviewed two; Umut and Maya. They have been friends since they were 15, which is also around the time they started drinking. The reason that include Maya in the consistent drinkers' group has less to do with the actual amount of alcohol she consumes, than with her identification with people who drink. During my interview with her, she was very outspoken about not feeling comfortable outside what she described as "our own circles", which we together narrowed down to this group of friends and a, slightly overlapping, close-knit group of colleagues from work, with whom I have also spent a good deal of time, both during this year's fieldwork and on prior occasions. She described how the people she socialized with, usually kept to certain areas of the city and certain kinds of venues, and she exemplified it by the impossibility of having a beer at the seaside in Üsküdar, which is why they usually met in Kadıköy, or in someone's home.

Umut, on the other hand was unequivocally a consistent drinker. When I first met him, at a small celebration of Maya's birthday party, he laughingly questioned my reasons for interviewing Maya, because she wasn't a real drinker, he said. "She doesn't even drink alone. You should interview me instead." In our interview around three or four weeks later, he described alcohol as the sibling he never had, and described how he, in high school, would take a drink or two before school to take the edge off his nerves and be able to impress a girl he had his eyes on. Now he estimates that he drinks more than 30 drinks (beers, glasses, shots) per week, and he gave me an elaborate description on how he ponders over difficult issues on his own, in the company of loud music and strong alcohol. Of course, there is the chance that he was exaggerating some facts in order to impress me, but what I saw on other occasions makes his story quite credible. Also, at the

end of the interview, his wife arrived, and, not knowing what he had told me, pretty much confirmed everything he had said.

Sebi more clearly belongs to the category of occasional drinkers, even though she defends her right to drink alcohol. It appears that for her, alcohol is a joyful component of a fulfilling leisure time, along with activities related to music. This is why she was torn, when she had bought tickets to hear her favorite artist perform at the Efes One Love Festival and on the eve of the festival found out that the arrangers of the festival - sponsored by the country's largest brewery - declined to make use of the alcohol licenses due to popular pressure in the neighborhood. Eventually, she and her friends decided to protest by returning their tickets. Umut, Maya and Sebi all had a very clearly defined discourse linking alcohol consumption to their rights and values. During the interview with Sebi, while we were talking about the festival and related issues, she interrupted herself, saying "It's not really about alcohol, you know." and proceeding directly to issues relating to women's and children's rights. This seemingly illogical change of topic goes to underline how alcohol becomes the separating line between "us" and "them".

Sebi was also the one to introduce me to Kantran, the informant who provided me with the inspiration for the category of non-drinking companions, because she joins Sebi and other friends in activities usually associated with drinking, while not drinking herself. At the end of my interview with Sebi, I had asked her if she knew anyone from the "other" side, because it seemed that no one else I knew did. "Yes, I have one 'covered' (veiled) friend", was her answer, adding that she was nothing like the other 'covered' women, she was 'totally cool', and that they had gone to a few concerts together. This is significant because a lot of the informants stated that this is something 'covered' women usually do not do, including Kantran herself.

During the interview with her, we discussed both how the loosened restrictions as to where it is allowed to wear hijab had eased her life, because she was now able to visit as many museums and conservatories as she wanted, and how she sometimes felt that people thought that she was out of place. That this was a likely scenario became evident during the interview. Since Sebi had arranged the interview, she had also chosen the location, and was present during the interview and served as a sort of interpreter. Her place of choice was an Irish pub. Kantran herself seemed visibly awkward when she entered the small, dark room smelling of smoke and yesterday's beer. Several times throughout the interview, we all noted how people on the other table stared at Kantran and whispered. Kantran also told how people on the bus would accuse her of being a bigot, assumedly because of her hijab. Another informant in this category, Elif, reported none of this awkwardness, even though she also engaged in some of the same activities as Kantran, but the

interview I made with her was short and, I believe, a bit influenced by the presence of her more conservative sister in law. All in all, these two interviews where a previous informant was present were a bit complicated, because it was harder to obtain the confidentiality necessary to ask some of the more complicated questions. I have reflected upon the issue after the fieldwork was finished, and I think that in many ways, maybe due to the fact that we were close in age, the informants regarded the interviews as some sort of social calls, and therefore wanted to join in on the next one as well.

The third informant in this category, Ümran, differs from all of the others in the sense that she only moved to Istanbul when she entered university. Coming from a village in the Black Sea region, she spent the first 18 years of her life in an extended family household of 17, with her parents, siblings and paternal relatives. She was the first woman from her village to attend university, and I got the impression that her different background gives her a valuable outsider's view of Istanbul. Her primary network in Istanbul consists of the other young women from her dorm.

"I have both conservative and not conservative friends. Especially in my university, we don't have such kind of problems, such kind of quarrels, because everyone is respectful to the opinions of the other. For example, I have friends who drink alcohol, so that's not problem. Because he or she wants to drink alcohol, I can not interrupt to him or her. Also, I have friends who are conservative, and they are really conservative and they don't like, they don't want to be friends with people with drinking alcohol, so... I'm trying to be respectful to everyone. "

This attitude, she shares with "Kantran", they both assume a kind of a mediator position, whereas most of the other informants have a bit of a harder approach. Ümran does not mention engaging in the activities associated with drinking, but apparently neither do her university friends. I am aware that this could make her eligible for the alcohol avoider category, but I choose to stress the active component of avoiding, which she shows no indication toward. She is a student of one of the most prestigious public universities in Turkey, and a dedicated one, so most of her social activities take place on campus. She did, however, express curiosity about the taste of alcohol, and how she wanted to hold her boyfriend's hand, but did not act upon it due to her religious beliefs.

Due to my limited network within the passive drinkers and non-drinkers, I only managed to interview one person who actively chooses not to be around active drinkers - at least as long as they are consuming alcohol. Coming from the fairly conservative neighborhood of Üsküdar,

Sevde explains how she grew up in a relatively homogenous environment and did not have much contact with people outside it up until entering university. Still, her university, from what I gathered from other informants, is regarded to be a quite conservative one, regarding the composition of the student body. Now she has a wider network, but she still avoids places where alcohol is served, unless she is abroad and there is no other option available. In her opinion, Turkish people don't know how to handle alcohol, it's not in their culture, she says, and she is generally in favor of the more restrictive alcohol laws put in place by the AKP government. It seems for her that the drunkenness is the real peril of alcohol consumption according to her. When, at the end of the interview, I suggested that the drinkers felt pressured due to the alcohol restrictions, she fell silent for a while, and then said; "It's interesting you say it... I've never thought about that."

This continuum, I am sure, could be extended more to both sides, and the analysis be deepened and more detailed, had I been able to carry out more interviews. The spectrum proves that the dichotomy present in both public discourse and in the minds of some of the informants, is a quite simplistic representation of reality, and that many parameters influence on which group one eventually chooses to belong to. Among these are ideology, religion, preferred activities and upbringing, but I am sure many other could apply as well.

In the piece above, alcohol appears both as an icon, when Maya talks about "our own circles" and a counter-icon, when Sevde affirms that drinking "is not in our culture". An almost caricature-like illustration is the discussion regarding Turkey's national drink in the spring of 2013.. As a part of the nationalist do-it-yourself-kit (Löfgren 1989), the national drink was established to be rakı back in 1914 (*Revenue Commerciale du Levant* cited in Georgeon 2002: 30), but in 2013, prime minister Erdoğan included the nation in his extended family by saying that how grandfather taught him that the national drink is the non-alcoholic yoghurt drink ayran. As grandparents, or uncles, or the likes, are usually not valid authorities in a political discussion, we must assume he was appealing to the citizens' emotion through a language of intimacy (Herzfeld 2005: 4). Illustrating the dialogal relation between the public discourse and private practice is a gift that my friend received from her paternal aunt on Bayram. It was a personalized rakı glass with her name inscribed, along with the text "diren rakı", "resist, rakı" (in the sense that rakı should resist, not that she should resist rakı).

How, then, did the continuum established above become expressed as a dichotomy in the public discourse, and in the discourse of the majority of the informants? My hypothesis is that since those of the informants resorting to these rhetorics are those who sincerely feel that their lifestyles are, or have recently been, under threat, it is partially a product of that fear, and that

politicians and the likes adapt it, is both because they may share this concern, but also because it is an efficient tool of communication. Ironically, this might be self-reinforcing, creating further polarization, as it turns in to a sort of "If you're not with us, you're against us."

From an etic perspective, it is an issue of marginal versus elite behavior. For a long period of time, after losing marginalized position it held until the 19th century, alcohol consumption has been associated with the elite, first through the last years of the Ottoman Empire, and later on with the secular Kemalist elite. As a result of the secularization process, open displays of religion etc. were marginalized, for instance the headscarf. Now that the religious AKP is at power, with a substantial amount of votes from people who felt alienated by the secularist regime, they are trying to remove the stigma attached to public displays of religiosity and marginalize the behaviors attributed to secularism, such as alcohol consumption. In this battle on symbols, the simplification becomes a tool, and reflects the mechanism that we find in every cultural system; reducing complexity to simplicity.

A note regarding the discursal divide between seculars and islamists, is that Ümran did not seem to operate with it, instead she identified with her village origin, as both something she was proud of, but also as a lifestyle she did not want; and she appeared to regard the animosity as something particular to Istanbul, or to big cities.

Central to both Ümran's and "Kantran"'s stories are a clear sense of agency, while they perhaps have not strived to be non-drinking companions, life choices and preferences have enabled them to assume this, according to most of the informants, quite unusual position. In Ümran's case, she had to fight to be allowed to enter university, opening up the possibility to other young women from her village, whereas it for the remaining informants, with roots in the urban middle class of Istanbul, appears to be the expected path. Sebi, for instance, explained how her and her siblings' education was the major reason that they left her hometown in the Eastern part of Turkey in the middle of the 1990, and the majority, if not all of her siblings, have a university degree⁷; Sebi, in fact, has two.

"Kantran" continuously chooses activities that are not common to veiled women, even though it is sometimes questioned by her surroundings, and she reveals a profound love for, and knowledge about classical (European) culture; she chose her pseudonym as a homage to Immanuel Kant, and music, classical and modern alike. It appears to me that her position as non-drinking companion is more a result of having interests usually more common to people who drink alcohol,

⁷ Three of her sisters are currently housewives, but this does not necessarily mean that they didn't attend university.

than revolving around some secret fascination of the drinkers. In my interpretation, "Kantran" and Ümran made choices that set them slightly apart from the way they were brought up, and this renegotiation put them in a situation where the position as non-drinking companion became a viable option.

6.2 Invisible lines

Maya: Well, I guess after a while, what people like us do is that we just keep within our inner circle, and we usually frequent places that we feel comfortable. Within.

Mette: What would that be, though? What kind of places would that be?

Maya: Well, for instance this place⁸. For instance Caddebostan... You don't have the luxury to drink some beer nearby the beach in Üsküdar, you could get arrested for it.

Istanbul is about as diverse as cities come in Turkey, and holds everything from bar streets coming alive at night, over churches and synagogues, to conservative neighborhoods where most women wear some kind of Islamic covering. To reduce the city's geography to a mere dichotomy between Europe and Asia or Islam and secularism would be unproductive, so I will attempt a different approach.

I in no way pretend to produce an exhaustive social map of Istanbul in this chapter, but I find my material sufficient to give some guidelines as to describe socially accepted behavior regarding alcohol consumption, in some of the more central neighborhoods of the city.

Let us start in Caddebostan, mentioned by Maya in the quote above. Situated in the fairly liberal municipality of Kadıköy, it constitutes a safe haven for the group of friends I accompanied throughout most of my 8 weeks of fieldwork in Istanbul.

On the 1st of May 2013, a day marked by turmoil in Istanbul, we reached there in the late afternoon, slowed down considerably by the semi curfew produced by the shut down of all public transports to and on the European side, along with road blocks and the closure of one of the main bridges to impede people from the Asian side to attend the prohibited protests in Taksim. In the supermarket, we picked up some beer and snacks, and in a remote corner of the shop, products

⁸ A café in Kadıköy, where draft beer is consumed alongside tea and coffee, no women are wearing hijabs, a few are wearing shorts, probably due to the warm weather this afternoon in May. In the courtyard where we are seated, people are smoking incessantly.

containing pork, such as bacon and dried ham, were sold. Generally, people were wearing shorts and dresses, and the atmosphere was light and holiday-like. There were people everywhere, and we walked some 10-15 minutes just in order to find a free spot in the grass for us to sit. One by one the beers were opened, and topics ranging from everyday experiences to politics were discussed, jokes were told, laughs shared. When the beer finished, Maya called the local *tekel* market⁹ and ordered some more, which was delivered to us by a young guy on a scooter.

Also elsewhere along the seaside of Kadıköy, it is possible to bring your beer and consume it in public, however without the possibility of ordering more on the phone. One destination is Moda Sahili. On the night of Maya's birthday, a Monday, we even went there at night and stayed until around two or three in the morning, and we were not the only ones there. Furthermore, in this neighborhood, there is the Bar Sokağı - bar street - and around it, various places where people sit on the street and drink, just as in for instance Bairro Alto in Lisbon.

For both Umut and Maya, Beyoğlu was where they had their debut with alcohol, and it is the home of the bar that the group currently regards as its headquarters. This was even more enforced during the Gezi protests, where it served as a kind of infirmary, where volunteers would tend to the wounded.

Back in 2010, when I first came to Istanbul, the area around İstiklal Caddesi was filled with chairs and tables on the walking streets, which gave a very lively environment, especially in the warm summer evenings, where people would gather outside in hope of catching even the slightest breeze. When I came back again, in November of 2011, the tables were gone. They had been forbidden since the month of Ramadan that year, officially because the tables obstructed traffic, but allegedly it was a way of making alcohol consumption invisible during the holy month (Gürsel 2013). Of course, as another friend showed me while we were walking in the area, the owners of the cafes had found a way to solve the problem. In one of the back alleys, outside a small bar, rows and rows of folding chairs had been put up, to be easily removed in case someone would catch wind of the police.

On the other end of the spectrum, the areas of Eyüp, Fatih and Üsküdar. Eyüp contains İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, where Sevede studies and where Umut graduated. The campus sometimes doubles as a concert venue (Santralİstanbul), and this was where the (Efes) One Love Festival was held in 2012, and where the nearby neighbors managed to prevent the bars on campus from using their alcohol license. Umut, for one, was very disappointed by this, and adds "*This*

⁹ Small neighborhood stores selling snacks, tobacco, soft drinks and alcohol

would have never happened at ÖDTÜ (Middle Eastern Technical University, in Ankara) or Mimar Sinan.¹⁰" The consequence, it seems, is that people going to concerts at Santralİstanbul drink in advance, on the grass outside the entrance, creating business opportunities for street vendors to sell lukewarm beer at twice the normal price. Sevde, on the other side, thought it to be appropriate, adding that Turkish people do not know how to control their alcohol intake.

Another municipality that I, as many foreigners visiting the city, was quickly acquainted with, was Fatih. In Fatih, you find many of Istanbul's famous tourist attractions such as Sultanahmet Mosque, Hagia Sophia, the Grand Bazar and the Topkapi Palace. However, I quickly found out that in the minds of the people I knew, one thing was the touristy Sultanahmet area where the turquoise t-shirts of the young people employed by the municipality urged visitors to "*ask me*", another thing was *Fatih*. My first clue to this dates some two years back, when I was visiting some friends in Ankara. The two youngest sisters of the family, close to my age, had recently returned from a weekend in Istanbul, and they asked me to name the places I had visited. When I, somewhere on my relatively long list, mentioned Fatih, the conversation froze. "What on earth did you do in Fatih? one of the sisters asked me. I started mentioning the monuments listed above, and a collective sense of relief seemed to go through my friends. "Haha, yes", the brother in law said. "If you had *really* gone to Fatih, they would have driven you out with sticks."

This was my first acquaintance with the imaginary of Fatih, which this section will be centered upon, since I only actually went to Fatih once. The image of the inhabitants of Fatih as hostile, especially to western-clad women, and perhaps even more so to those of foreign descent, displays very well the discourse concerning the Islamists prominent among people belonging to the secular segments of Istanbul and, as mentioned above, Ankara. Another example is the silent disbelief that spread in the classroom, when a fellow student in my Turkish class mentioned that she lived in Fatih. After a few moments, the teacher intervened; "Oh... How is living there?" With the body language of someone answering the same question for the 100th time, the woman replied that it was actually alright. When prompted about the feminine dress code there, she said "I wouldn't go dressed like her (indicating another student in the class, who this day was wearing a sleeveless over knee dress), but other than that..."

While not directly related to the question of alcohol consumption, these two episodes are indicative of the range of women's liberties, another cardinal point in the construction of the nation, and thus often interwoven in secularist discourse. Women continue to face many difficulties

¹⁰ Two universities well known for their defiance to authorities.

due to their gender, and even more so outside the urban centers, but "[p]roclamation of universal rights for men as well as women was both the goal of the modernist project and the means by which to actualize it" (Arat in Bozdoğan 1997:109). However, a part of the fear of the Islamists is expressed as the more secular Turks' grim predictions of a future where women are required to 'cover', not allowed to work, and are relegated to a existence as housewives. (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 24.)

In many ways, the difference between Fatih and many other neighborhoods, was not very visible. However, an episode that occurred in a small *büfe* selling *döner* indicates an actual difference between Fatih and, for instance Kadıköy.

A boy working in the *büfe*, approached a foreign woman in her forties or fifties, sitting in the corner of the terrace. "*Bunu içme! İçme!*", he said, pointing to the neck of a liqueur bottle coming out of her bag; "Don't drink that!" She replied something that I didn't catch and that the boy, around the age of 10, didn't seem to understand either. As far as I could see, the customs seal on the bottle's cap was unsealed, and the woman seemed sober, however, the boy was insistent in insulting her. In the end, she paid for her food and drink, argued a bit with the waiter and left.

Of course there are several possible interpretations of this situation. One is that the boy was objecting to the woman's attempt to consume something she didn't buy in the *büfe*, even though that would be the first time I have witnessed that in Turkey. Another is that she attempted to consume alcohol; a third that the boy objected to the presence of the bottle and the woman's potential alcohol consumption *per se*. However, since the seal was unbroken, I am most inclined to the third explanation. A possible objection here is that I am reading too much into a child's behavior, but since he was working in the *büfe*, I believe that his employers would have interfered had they disagreed, since he actually managed to chase off a paying customer.

This small sample of episodes indicate the diversity present in Istanbul, both when it comes to attitudes towards alcohol, but from a broader perspective how the city is to some degree divided into 'moral sections', and people navigate through them, or choose to avoid them, with that in mind.

7. Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that alcohol consumption is an extremely malleable symbol in Turkey, despite the unapologetic stance Islam, the religion that most Turks consider to be theirs, takes on the matter.

I hope to have demonstrated how a range of historical and religious factors have created a very particular environment for alcohol consumption in Turkey, and one far from what people would generally imagine in a Muslim country. When I started my research, more than a few people suggested that people in Turkey were drinking as some sort of teenage rebellion and/or as a maneuver to escape the tight bonds of Islam. The ones suggesting this were, while usually acquainted with the religious dogmas of Islam, unfamiliar with the the diversity of Turkey, and that of urban Turkey in particular.

The images that at least the younger generations of drinkers have of the non-drinkers and vice versa, turned out to be quite simplistic, and, my starting point being a group of drinkers, the trouble I had finding anyone who could introduce me to a non-drinking friend, indicates very little interaction between the two groups. The spectrum I established after the interviews, ranging between drinkers preferring drinkers as company and non-drinkers preferring non-drinkers as company, sheds additional light on this apparent dichotomy. When we view it along with the data obtained through participant observation in an environment primarily consisting of drinkers, it is possible to see a multitude of emic interpretations of alcohol and the act of drinking. In some cases, it can be controversial, as when the prime minister accuses the people who sought shelter in a mosque while fleeing from police brutality, of drinking inside the mosque, or when the protesters show their contempt for him by chanting "Cheers to you, Tayyip!". In other contexts, a religious holiday can be an excuse for drinking in the afternoon. While it is widely known that Atatürk was an avid drinker, it is bordering sacrilege to show this in a movie.

As mentioned above, I identify some crucial elements in this development. One is the presence of non-Muslim - and alcohol producing - minorities in Turkey, back when it was still the heartland of the Ottoman Empire. This made alcoholic beverages accessible for the Muslim population, even though its consumption was forbidden to them. Another is the process initiated in the beginning of the nineteenth century, where the elite began to regard alcohol consumption as one of the gateways to a modern Western-style society, a process that largely de-stigmatized moderate alcohol consumption for the population in general.

As the ideological foundation for Turkey as a nation-state was laid, the inclusion of secularism as one of the six arrows of Kemalism underscores this orientation towards the West. The subsequent favoring of a moderate, "Turkish" version of Islam thought to be appropriate to such a nation, further encouraged an environment where alcohol consumption was less restricted. The striving for modernity that people expected to find in contemporary Turks' drinking habits mimics the actual process that took place during the 19th century, where alcohol consumption went out of hiding and became not only de-criminalized, but generally accepted and looked upon with favor, as a sign of modernity.

In virtually every ethnographic context, we learn that alcohol is more than a beverage in itself. What is interesting is how, in this particular context, the values attached to the act of drinking, can be used in a personal and political discourse, as an icon with the powers to define who 'we' are, but at the same time, we also find a spectrum of attitudes and opinions, on Turkishness, on drinking and on sociability, all intertwined. The transformation of the spectrum we can verify on an etic level to the dichotomy existent on the emic level, is connected with the icon. In order for the icon to mean anything, it needs to exclude someone, otherwise it would be redundant, and the ones excluded come to belong in another category, and with these two categories, the dichotomy is born.

In many ways, it is possible to view alcohol with the multiple connotations mentioned above as an element of a current political struggle in Turkey, culminating in this summer's mass protests. More than a decade of religious-conservative rule has meant that some of the secular icons, including alcohol consumption, are under pressure, since the AKP is trying to redefine the Turkish national character in their favor, marginalizing secular lifestyle. This should be seen as a reaction to the marginalization of (de-privatized) religious lifestyle during the secularization process, and the protests can be seen, among many other things, as an attempt to again define a more secular national character.

Up until now, I have focused on an urban environment, but since Turkey is a huge country, still with many rural areas, some quite remote, it would be interesting to see to what extent, if any, these findings apply in a rural setting. From Ümran's attitude, I would be inclined to think the perspective would be dramatically different. Furthermore, the findings of this paper suggest that iconicity can be used as a tool to explore national identity elsewhere, not only in Turkey.

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