VISIBILITY THROUGH RITUAL:
CAFERI/SHIITE COMMUNITY IN TURKEY

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Ayşen Baylak

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This thesis has been approved accepted on 1 September 2009 by:

Assistant Prof. Berna Yazıcı _____

(Thesis advisor)

Associated Prof. Duygu Köksal _____

Assistant Prof. Cengiz Kırlı _____

Thesis Abstract

Ayşen Baylak, “Visibility through Ritual: The Caferi/Shiite Community in Turkey”

This thesis focuses on the mourning rituals of the Caferi community in Turkey which are held in the month of Muharram in general and on the day of *Aşura* in particular. Caferis are Twelver Shii people majority of Azeri origin who have become visible in the public space with their Muharram commemoration rituals especially in the post 1980s era. After an analysis of Caferi identity and of Muharram processions in the history of Turkey, this thesis concentrates on the texts and narratives about Muharram and Aşura and the public mourning rituals presented in the public sphere especially in the last two decades. Subjected to a critical comparative analysis, the basic argument is how Muharram commemorations represent the collective religious identity of community and their public piety.The analysis also shows how Muharram commemorations are reinterpreted and reformulated with the rearticulated “authentic” discourse on the Caferis’ beliefs and practices.

Tez Özeti

Ayşen Baylak, "Ritüel Üzerinden Görünürlük: Türkiye'de Caferi/Şi'i Cemaati"

Bu tez, Türkiye'deki Caferi cemaatinin genelde Muharrem ayında ve özelde de Aşura gününde gerçekleştirdikleri yas merasimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Caferiler Türkiye'de büyük çoğunluğu Azeri kökenli olan On iki İmam Şiileridir ve kamusal alanda özellikle 1980 sonrasındaki dönemde Muharrem ayı anma merasimleriyle görünür hale gelmektedirler. Caferi kimliğinin ve Muharrem merasimlerinin Türkiye tarihindeki analizinden sonra, bu tez Muharrem ve Aşura hakkındaki metinlere ve anlatılara ve bilhassa son yirmi yıldır kamusal alanda sunulan halka açık yas törenleri üzerine eğilmektedir. Bunların karşılaştırmalı bir eleştirel çözümlemesinden sonra temel sav, Muharrem anma törenlerinin cemaatin kolektif dini kimliğini ve kamusal dindarlığını nasıl temsil ettiği olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Çözümleme, Muharrem anma törenlerinin Caferilerin inanç ve pratiklerine yeniden eklemlenen "otantik" söylemle nasıl yeniden yorumlanıp biçimlendirildiğini de ortaya koymaktadır.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Transliteration is a difficult problem in the field of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies. A further difficulty of this manuscript is that the specific terms widely used in this subject etymologically originate from several languages including Arabic, Persian and Turkish. In some cases the words have roots in Arabic or Persian, but their pronunciation in Turkish and especially in the Azeri dialect may pose differences. Therefore, in the main text, Turkish pronunciation and transliteration is used. Nevertheless, transliteration of the secondary resources has been preserved in its original forms. Widely used terms such as Hussein and Muharram have been used in the form as offered by the standard English usage instead of converting to Turkish transcription.

PREFACE

The roots of this topic as the subject matter of my graduate study go back to further curiosity, concern and experience in the past. When I visited Iran to learn Persian and do other academic studies six years ago, I was inclined to think that I knew a lot about Iran and its people thanks to my previous readings. However, my firsthand experience there proved the opposite. My sometimes thrilling sometimes distressed and troubled adventure of about two years transformed itself to an unplanned ethnographic experience which frequently undermined the previous information. It is possible to say that, since then, I have noticed the exception and uniqueness of personal participatory observation and the state of being in the "field". Actually at that time I did not have the verbal capacity to name or define my experience in a professional manner.

As mentioned above, before spending time in Iran, I knew little about the religious creeds of Iranian society. However, I witnessed the practical differences from the religious understanding and practice with which I was familiar in Turkey, through observing how it was performed or enacted within the life. The most visible differences, such as performing the religious prayers in a different manner (keeping the arms free during the prayer, putting a piece of stone/soil on the place of prostration, the addition of words that glorify Ali to the Muslim prayer call *(ezan),* and carrying out over-sensational mourning rituals during a definite period of the year (the lunar month of Muharram), were in addition to the differences in the formulation of Islamic ontology and epistemology.

While more or less I had something in my mind with regard to the religious sect and doctrine that are prevalent in Iran, but I did not have any expectations about the people who come from Turkey and adhere to the same religious creeds. That is

to say, I was totally ignorant about the Caferi community in Turkey until my visit to Iran and my encounter with them.

Even though I never felt the need to identify myself as a Sunni, living in a Shiite majority and having an automatic non-Shiite positioning in the minds of the people I encountered as a "foreigner" or "other" offered me an exceptional experience. The issues of belief and religious practices are usually some of the hardest topics of interactive deliberation. Therefore, most of my background information took shape through observation and voluntary explanations from the perspective of Shi'i believers. One of the significant divergences between Shiites and Sunnis was related to the status of Imams, who are all respected personalities, but not given a certain ontological status such as infallibility as is the case in Sunni Islam, contrary to Shiism. This also influenced the development of certain practices within the Shiite school of thought. Also, the contribution of Iranian culture to Shiism in the form of the wide use of visuality, the strong tradition of poetry and the ever alive collective memory were the most noteworthy features of the religion practiced in the Iranian Shiite society. Actually the relationship among these elements throughout history has not been one-dimensional and it had an interactive character.

Out of this tradition and context, doubtlessly one of the most important paradigms and practices which emerged as embodying all these elements was seen around Kerbela and Muharram which constitute a strong paradigm for the construction and affirmation of the Shiite ontology, epistemology, history and identity. At the level of politics, the contemporary reinterpretation of the Kerbela discourse was crystallized with the Islamic Revolution in Iran and has been given further attention by scholars. However, in the days this manuscript was being completed, Iran was witnessing a re-articulation of the concept of Kerbela and the

related discourse three decades after the revolution, in the slogans and discourses of the Green opposition movement against the corruption and the oppression of the regime in Iran.

Despite the similarities between the practices, the Shiite people of Turkey have their own particular traditions, authentic interpretation of their beliefs, practices and cultural and political demands or activities that have evolved in the context of Turkey and the global world we live all together. This study seeks to contribute to the illustration of the significance of Muharram commemoration in the construction and representation of Shiite/Caferi collective identity in Turkey as a group sharing a common sectarian belief and practices.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Presentation of the Research Topic

In the last two decades, the rising publicity and visibility of different ethnic and cultural groups in a post-national world and the related transformation in the topography of the social locus have brought the conceptualization of this trend in two ways. This phenomenon has been understood either with respect to the revival or representation of certain culture, religion or beliefs (i.e., revival or resurgence of Islam) or in the form of the revival, emergence or emphasis of certain facets of identity (i.e., Alevi revival, visibility of Sufi women). In fact it is not easy to distinguish between these two approaches as the relationship between culture and identity is complex.

Referring to Ernest Gellner, Elizabeth Özdalga argues that identity in modern/contemporary times is determined and defined by the culture and with/in culture as an all-encompassing field and that people begin to conceptualize their social identities in cultural terms rather than by the traditional values constructed by family and kinship. Therefore, in such an era, religion's gaining an increasing or evolving significance is natural.[1] In this manner, while it is not easy to determine the direction of the correlation or influence, the resurgence of religious discourses and practices are in interaction with the reformulation, reconstruction and representation of identity. In Mendieta's words, this is because,

[1] Elisabeth Özdalga, "Türkiye'de İslami Uyanış ve Radikalizm Üzerine" in *İslamcılığın Türkiye Seyri Sosyolojik Bir Perspektif* (Islammism's Course in Turkey: A Sociological Perspective) (İstanbul: İletişim Yayinlari, 2006), pp.57-61.

> …identity has been not just an abstract, albeit constant, object of reflection of the human and social sciences…, but also…, identity has been a practical, material, and especially existential, concern of thinkers who have tried to understand the relationship between social agents, their worlds, and the world of their ideas, and how their interactions crystallize in identity formations. [2]

In the case of Turkey, the making of the Turkish nation under Kemalist modernization discourse presupposed a cultural homogeneity based on secular values such as the belief in shared history and shared ethnic identity.[3] In this regard, traditional values and affinities in general and religious conservatism in particular were regarded as major threats to the secular formation of the new Turkish national identity as it was considered to constitute an impediment in front of modernist project of emancipation.

According to Berkes, this relies on a form of secularism which means "a policy of irreligion aimed at the systemic liquidation of Islam."[4] However, regarding state-religion relations, the Turkish case reveals strict supervision and control of religion by the state apparatuses. In fact, while the Kemalist state repressed the social and political dimension of religion, it "offered a modern, nationalized version of pristine Islam combined with 'noble' and 'sublime' Turkish national culture"[5] and a significant effort was put forward in order not only to cleanse the impact of religion from the state apparatuses, but also to limit the influence and visibility of it as a

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[2] Eduardo Mendieta, "Identities: Postcolonial and Global" in *Identities: Race, Class, Gender and Nationality*, edited by Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 415.

[3] Özdalga, p.54.

[4] Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst & Company, 1998), p.479.

[5] Taha Parla and Andrew Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey: Progress or Order?* (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 274

system of belief in the public sphere.[6] However, contrary to the expectations of the modernist elite, who looked forward to the vanishing of religion by virtue of rationalism and enlightenment thought, and despite the repression of religion from the public space, religious ideas and claims continued to exist and they have become much more visible in diverse forms, formulations and contexts within the last decades.

While Michael Meeker writes that, "the resurgence of Islam in Turkey is better understood as a transformation, rather than revival, of religiosity,"[7] Hakan Yavuz proposes that, "the current Islamic identity movement is not a revival of old religious loyalties but is rather a modern creation, constructed in relation to neo-liberal economic politics."[8] He adds that this new form of religious identity is rooted in the urban market "by the new discursive spaces that have been created as a result of urbanization, capitalist development, and the revolution in mass media and publishing."[9]

Catharina Raudvere, who conducted an ethnographic research among a group of Sufi woman in Istanbul, asserts that the above-mentioned transformation in Turkish society accelerated after the Özal era during which "transformations and

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[6] Özdalga, p.55; Also see, Richard Tapper, "Introduction" in *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion Politics and Literature in a Secular State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p. 2, 6. For further information also see Şerif Mardin *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu "Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in the Republican Turkey" *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 28 (1996*).*

[7] Michael Meeker, "Oral Culture, Media Culture, and the Islamic Resurgence in Turkey," in *Exploring the Written*: *Anthropology and Multiplicity of Writing,* edited by, E. P. Archetti (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995), p.31

[8] M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.81.

[9] Ibid., p.82

openings made way for attitudes towards diversity and complexity which also brought the newly visible groups from periphery to center". [10]

The rising visibility of religious cultures and identities is related to the encounter of religion with modernity as they develop in the context of the modern capitalist, industrial and globalizing world. The following statement by Raudvere is important in this respect: "Faith is not the only way to explain the activities of pious people. Religion is sometimes so sharply focused that other dimensions of human life tend to fade away."[11] Therefore, in order to understand or explain a certain form of religiosity of a certain group of people, it is crucial to take the social, political, economic and cultural contexts and frameworks in which they have rooted and grown into consideration.

In addition to the mainstream Sunni communities, Sufi brotherhoods or circles; radical, modernist, reformist or fundamentalist Islamic/Islamist groupings; groups considered to be heterodox; or sectarian religious minorities such as *Alevi*s, *Nusayri*s, *Yezidi*s and *Caferi Şii*s have also found public representation in the post-1980s Turkey and gained wider visibility and scholarly attention. The Caferi community, which is the focus of this study, has also begun to be seen in the public sphere through their *Muharrem* or *Aşura* ceremonies held collectively in urban neighborhoods where the adherents of this sect live in relatively large numbers. The visually enriched materials (public plays, costumes, unaccustomed practices or rituals) are the basic signifiers or markers coming to the minds in the first instance

[10] Catharina Raudvere, "Urban Visions and Religious Communities: Access and Visibility" in T. Olsson, E. Özdalga, C. Raudvere , *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives* (Istanbul: Sweedish Institute; 1996), pp. 187-188.

[11] Ibid., p.185.

when the community is mentioned. [12] Since the public appearance of *Muharrem* ceremonies in the late 1990s, images and reports have been featured on national TV channels and in newspapers every year. Also the expansion of the virtual media and the Internet has made the audio visual materials regarding their religious thoughts, creeds, practices, celebrations, rituals and sermons public and accessible. [13]

When one thinks about how the early Republican reforms banned the practices of these kinds of rituals and abolished all sect lodges and religious brotherhoods, one better appreciates the significance of these developments. Similar to the role of the rising visibility of *semah*s in the last two decades for the Alevi identity in Turkey,[14] *Aşura* processions (mourning ceremonies held on the tenth day of lunar month Muharrem) of *Caferi* community also serve to the representation of "Who is *Caferi*" to the non-*Caferi* in society on the one hand, and empower the sense of belonging of the *Caferi*s participating to this collective ritual on the other.

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[12] The representation of the *Caferi* in the Turkish media is mostly due to their *Aşura* ceremonies. The people dressed in black from head to toe, mourning rituals and especially the self-flagellation with chains constitute the primary perception of ordinary Turkish people with respect to the community. The news about the community in 2004 was about the application to the Guinness Records under the enactment of a public exhibition with the number of people joining the play. (See. "Caferiler Guinness'e Girmeye Hazırlanıyor" *Akşam*, 8 February 2005). In 2007, the community was in the news when they walked to a national broadcasting TV channel to protest a program in which the name of Hüseyin had been given to a dog. They protested this as an insult to their beliefs (See "Caferiler Kanalı Bastı" 18 August 2007 Retrieved from www.habervitrini.com). During this study, when I talked about my thesis, the most frequent question or reaction I faced with was "Who are they? Are they the ones who beat themselves with chains?" In the following chapters I will discuss how the *Caferi*s dislike the creation of this image in the popular media about themselves.

[13] A Google search on 'Caferilik' yields 24,400 sites devoted to all manner of the community's religious or cultural sacra. When this is transferred to the global scope, a Google entry on Shi'ite and Shi'a refers to almost three and ten million sites, respectively. In addition to specific video sharing sites launched to publish the community specific processions (*sinezen, azadari*, etc). There are 8450 videos related to Aşura and more than a thousand videos of different public mourning rituals on Youtube.

[14] Fahriye Dinçer, "Formulation of *Semah*s in Relation to the Question of Alevi Identity in Turkey" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Boğaziçi University, 2004), p.2.

The aim of this study is to problematize the significance of the Muharrem and Aşura rituals for the Caferis living in Turkey and to understand how these public processions serve the visibility of their collective identity. In other words, I endeavor to understand and to explain the meanings attached to Aşura rites both by the group which is performing them and by the participants who attend these larger public events, the transformation or changes these practices have undergone within the national and global context of the last two decades and the functions of this practice for the representation and affirmation of the Caferi identity.

As I will address who the Caferis are and what the historical background which produced the processions that are the basic concern of this study is in a detailed manner in the next chapter, first I want to introduce the theoretical framework within which this study is conceptualized.

As Clifford Geertz writes, "The anthropological study of religion is a two stage operation: first, an analysis of the system of meaning embodied in the symbols which make the religion proper, and second, the relating of these systems to socio-structural and psychological processes."[15] Therefore, the following section tries to establish the basis of the second stage of the current study.

Analytical/Conceptual Framework

The Expression of Religiosity and Public Piety

The need or the aim to express religious sensibility, identity and belonging has brought the creation of countless material modes which carries religion or religious

[15] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretations of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1973), p.125.

experience to the 'scene' or into the field of physics from the field of metaphysics or "theological ether" in which it floats. As Arweck and Keenan note, "Religious faith manifests itself in an infinite variety of material forms," and "materializing 'their religion' is what the different faith communities –sects, cults, new religious movements, denominations, world faiths- *do* to put their cultural 'distinction' on the religious map. By their material expressions they shall be known."[16]

Myriad physical forms in which religious beliefs are embedded may proclaim and affirm the adherence to a certain credo or to several of them. Nevertheless, decoding the symbols, meanings attached to a group of actions or interpreting them in comprehensive "webs of significance" requires broader elaboration. As Arweck puts it, it is true that "such material means as religious art, literature, music, architecture, film, pilgrimage, festival, ceremonial, drama, dance and dress, … are able to reveal what religious ideas 'look like'."[17] However, looking at these expressions or seeing, watching, giving meaning to them and decoding the meanings, symbols, culture attached to them and the transformation of these meanings and symbols or deciphering the articulations and re-articulations are much more complex processes. The direction of the relationship between "belief" or "discourse" and "action" or "practice" is not exclusive. As well as the determination of action by the belief, the vice versa is also true and this is a dynamic and ongoing dialectical process. In this manner, the concept of visibility particularly with respect to the publicity of "piety" gains broader importance.

[16] Elizabeth Arweck and William J.F. Keenan, "Introduction: Material Varieties of Religious Expression," in *Materializing Religion: Expression, Performance and Ritual*, edited by E. Arweck & W. Keenan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.1.

[17] Ibid., p.2.

As Lara Deeb writes, "Visibility is a term that provides a sense of tangibility, conveying the concreteness of piety, while also highlighting the often overlooked dependence of the anthropologist on what is visible or made visible to her."[18] She briefly defines the concept of "public piety" as "the public practice of a faith based upon an interpretation of Islam that I term 'authenticated Islam'"[19] It is true that this public practice of faith crystallizes, or becomes more concrete or "visible" through ritual acts or practices. But, on the other hand, this notion of visibility with regard to "piety" has two layers or dimensions. The layers that should be seen on the Shi'i pious modern subsumes both the "visibility of new forms of ritual commemoration" and "the visibility of Shi'is as a collectivity" both in national and international contexts. The authenticated belief or understanding, which is an internal and invisible state, becomes visible through public piety. And this "piety that is made visible, brought form personal realm to the public, establishes a person's morality and membership in the Shi'i pious modern through both its active performance and its existence as evidence".[20]

Ritual and Performance

The very term "ritual" is one of the most controversial but fertile and illuminating categories of almost all social sciences and it continuously has been subjected to

[18] Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern, Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p.34.

[19] Ibid., p.8. Authentication means the constant questioning of the system of belief and the efforts to grasp "correct" belief and knowledge which are purified from superstitious traditions. Also, instead of the blind acceptance of belief and practices, it consists of uploading coherent and reasonable meanings and conscious adaptation and performance of practices. In the fourth chapter, the concept is explained and discussed in more detail. For more information, see Lara Deeb, pp.20-23.

[20] Ibid., pp.35–36.

theorization for more than a century, since Emile Durkheim discussed it. Despite the abundance of the debates or theories about ritual, it seems possible to put them into two basic categories: hermeneutic or interpretive theories and performative ones. The first category is best manifested in the approach of Clifford Geertz while the major figure of the second approach is Victor Turner.

Geertz considers religion to be a cultural system and ritual as the embodiment of this set of systems or experience of it. There is a system of values which is immanent in the symbolic activities of religious ritual and acts as a model of "real" things and for the "ideal"; in other words, of "is" and for "ought to". While conveying Geertz's approach on the ritual, Catherine Bell notes that,

> For Geertz, the symbolic system that constitutes culture is neither a mere reflection of the social structure nor totally independent of it. It always exists in response to the problems of meaning that arise in real human experiences, such as the problems of evil and suffering. When lived out in a ritual, such a symbolic system provides an embracing worldview (a coherent framework of general ideas) and induces an ethos (a set of moods and motivations). It is in ritual, he suggests, that images and attitudes about the nature of existence are fused with one's actual experiences of the realities of existence: "in ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world.[21]

On the other hand, performative theorists consider ritual to be an active process and suggest active roles to ritual participants. According to Turner, the dynamism comes from the nature of the performance itself. It encompasses both states of being and becoming, thinking and acting, and this is because "To *perform* is

[21] Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.66.

thus to complete a more or less involved process rather than to do a single deed or act". [22]

Therefore, performance is very immanent to the life and living itself as "every type of cultural performance , including ritual, ceremony, carnival, theatre, and poetry is explanation and explication of life itself" and "through the performance process itself, what is normally sealed up, inaccessible to everyday observation and reasoning in the depth of socio-cultural life, is drawn forth" to an experience and "an experience is itself a process which "presses out" to an "expression" which completes it. Then he concludes that "a performance then, is the proper finale of an experience."[23] However, this process of living is not independent of reflexivity and it makes the change and transformation possible. That is to say, experience is both "living through" and "thinking back". It is also "willing and wishing forward," i.e., establishing goals and models for future experience in which, hopefully, the errors and perils of past experience will be avoided or eliminated.[24]

Another point is that, performance does not necessarily imply being a subjective experience, indeed; it is also a way of looking and experiencing the other and the objective within the subjective. "We can know our own subjective depths as much by scrutinizing the meaningful objectifications 'expressed' by other minds, as by introspection"[25] and "We can learn from experience –from the enactment and

[22] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre, Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Paj Publications, 1982), p.91.

[23] Ibid., p.13.

[24] Ibid., p.18.

[25] Ibid., p.14.

performance of the culturally transmitted experiences of others- peoples of the Heath as well as of the Book."[26]

Turner claims many forms of ritual serve as "social dramas" and this leads him to envision social structure as a dynamic process rather than a static structure. Hence, for Turner, as Bell writes "ritual did not simply restore social equilibrium; they were part of the ongoing process by which the community was continually redefining and renewing itself". [27]

In this study, during the analysis a combination of these two approaches, efforts have been made to attain i.e. interpretive "thick description" and performative "depiction of a changing dramatic entity," a stronger emphasis and use of performance theory. This emphasis on the efficacy of performance is because to illustrate that "ritual does what it does by virtue of its dynamic, diachronic, and physical characteristics, in contrast to those interpretations that cast ritual performances as the secondary realization of acting out of synchronic structures, traditions or cognitive maps". [28] Nevertheless, on the issue of piety, it has to be underlined that it is a wider concept which can not be limited or hammered only into the performance. As Geertz notes, "…to be pious is not to be performing something we would call an act of piety, but to be liable to perform such acts". [29]

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[26] Ibid., p.19.

[27] Bell, p.39.

[28] Ibid., p.74.

[29] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretations of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973), p.95.

Visibility and Identity

There is proximity between the approaches to the issues of identity and those of performance. Theories elaborating identity as a fluid, dynamic, multi-faceted and processional phenomena lacking any stable or essential substance, [30] seem to be parallel with the evaluations mentioned above with regard to performance and ritual. This approach has often been criticized for implying the absolute dissolution of identity and for undermining the possibility of freedom.

To by-pass this problem, similar to the materialization or expression of religion through visible marks, practices and rituals, Linda Alcoff suggests the visualization of identities in a perceptible manner:

> The reality of identities often comes from the fact that they are visibly marked on the body itself, guiding if not determining the way we perceive and judge others and are perceived and judged by them. The road to freedom from the capriciousness of arbitrary identity designations lies not … in the attempt at a speedy dissolution of identity,…but through a careful exploration of identity, which can reveal its influence on what we can see and know, as well as its context dependence and its complex and fluid nature.[31]

Even though she confirms that "visibility is both the means of segregating and oppressing human groups and the means of manifesting unity and resistance,"[32] she also argues that "social, cultural and political affiliations, from orthodoxy to

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[30] Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'? in,*Questions of Cultural Identity,*edited by S. Hall and P. Du Gay (London: Verso, 1994), pp.1-17; Ernesto Laclau and Lilian Zac, "Minding the Gap: The Subject of Politics," in *The Making of Political Identities,* edited by E. Laclau (London: Verso, 1994),pp.11-39; Linda M. Alcoff, "Introduction: Identities: Modern and Postmodern," in *Identities: Race, Class, Gender and Nationality*, edited by Linda M. Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp.1-8.

[31] Linda Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.5.

[32] Ibid., p.7.

anarchism must be marked some form of visible dress code: a veil, a cross, payos, a tattoo, a particular hairstyle or hair treatment, or a strategically placed body piercing".[33]

Logically visibility is related to sight and the gaze perceiving the visible. Therefore the notions of public visibility automatically imply the public gaze looking at the object of the "visible." Hence, we can claim that the naming and categorization of bodies are realized under the vision of public gaze. It is an existential gaze which is effective during the formation of the self. Quoting Lacan, Peter de Bolla states that, "what determined me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside. It is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects."[34] Thus it enables us to "imagine ourselves not the actors but the spectators of our own character and conduct" and the subject turns into the object of gaze: "we locate ourselves, or come to self-description, through the agency of a sympathetic fantasy projection in which we image to ourselves what we would look like were we the spectator looking upon us as we are looked upon."[35]

Alev Çınar brilliantly summarizes how this process works in the social plane as follows:

> The marking of bodies and places as the particular and the different involves the construction of identities by inscribing various meanings to certain bodily features, the color of one's skin, the shape of one's body, articles of clothing, accessories, body movements and gestures. Therefore, bodies come to bear various marks of public recognition, thereby becoming gendered, racialized, classed, nationalized, and made profane or sacred. Furthermore, a body comes to be vested with such marks of identity not only through how

[33] Ibid., p.6.

[34] Peter De Bolla, "The Visibility of Visuality," in *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*, edited by. Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay (New York & London: Routledge, 1996), p.68.

[35] Ibid., p.75.

> it appears in public, but also through where it appears and what it does there. [36]

Indeed, it can be argued that any type of display or spectacle -this can be our bodies our selves or persona as such, by virtue of presenting itself to an audience, evokes an observing subject, regardless of whether there is an actual audience present or not. In sum, the visual display of bodies, gestures, gazes, and space can be seen as an interpellative act whereby a particular observing subject is constituted. The gaze is interpellative because through recognition it calls into being a subject in the position of the observer, thereby constituting it with a particular identity. The spectacle in the public sphere interpellates the public subject with a particular identity."[37]

However, there stands a frailty within the concept of visibility. Quoting from Foucault, Alcoff signifies the double-edged character of visibility: "What is wholly visible is never seen its entirety." That is to say, "The visible is a sign moreover and thus invites interpretation to discern what is behind it, beyond it, or what it signifies. The 'truth' of what we are is sometimes 'as plain as the nose on my face,' but sometimes it is hidden and must be brought into the light". [38]

When the Caferis perform a certain ritual in accordance with their religious identity they are recognized and classified by the public gaze. In accordance with this proposition, their particular identity is noticed when they perform their identity publicly, the Muharram rituals serve both the affirmation and the public visibility of their identity as a collectivity and to the expression of their understanding of Caferi belief in the form of public piety in a post-national, urban context.

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[36] Alev Çınar, *Modernity, Islam and Secularism in Turkey, Bodies, Places and Time* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 41.

[37] Ibid., p.45.

[38] Alcoff, p.7.

The Significance of the Research Topic

The present study arose from questions related to the relationship between the visibility of the Caferi collective/religious identity and the Aşura commemorations and the rituals that surround it. It is also related with the appearance of these rituals with respect to the emergence of distinct cultural and ethnic identities in the social and political realms. Unlike similar religious communities such as the Alevis, Bektaşis, Nusayris and Yezidis, the Caferis in Turkey have been subject to very little scientific concern. In the post 1980s era, the scholarly, semi-scholarly and popular studies, research and publications on the beliefs and social and political problems of Alevis and the literature on Alevi rituals has become abundant. Without doubt, the Alevi community in Turkey is larger than that of the Caferis. However, demographically smaller groups such as the Yezidis and Nusayris have been studied more than the Caferis.

The scholarly studies conducted about Caferis mostly focus on their religious creeds and the social implications of their beliefs.[39] The present study examines the Muharram or Aşura processions and problematizes their relationship with regard to the representation and performance of the Caferi identity beside the reinterpretations and reformulations taking place regarding those rituals. Therefore, the significance of the current study lies under the formulation and the organization of this subject

[39] The first dissertation about Caferis in Turkey exploring the community in the spectrum of the whole country is the work of İlyas Üzüm. He uses a set of methods (both qualitative and quantitative) on the adaptation of principles by the community both discursively and practically. See İlyas Üzüm, "Türkiye'de İnanç Esasları Açısından Caferilik" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Marmara University, 1993). For more recent works, see Ali Albayrak, "Caferilerde Dini ve Sosyal Hayat, Ankara Keçiören Örneği", (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara University, 2006); Abdulkadir Yeler, "Türk Toplumunda Ceferiler, İstanbul Halkalı Örneği" (Master Thesis, Marmara University, 2006); and Filiz Demirci, "Caferilerin Dini Örf ve Adetleri, Iğdır Örneği" (Master Thesis, Erciyes Üniversitesi, 2006).

among the studies concerning the community. Also the data collected through ethnographic methods contribute to the originality of this work.

The literature with respect to Muharram and Aşura rituals among the diverse Shiite communities or societies from all around the world is relatively rich. However the Muharram rituals of contemporary Shiites in Turkey have never been subject to such an investigation. In this regard, the present study can be considered as a contribution to the missing part of an expansive literature on Shi'i public ritual performances.

The Muharram processions of Shiite communities are widely elaborated within the context of the studies on Shi'ism. The earliest records in modern times (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) on Shi'i communities are provided by geographers, travelers, missionaries, orientalists and diplomats who visited basically Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Altough scholarly works were conducted in early twentieth century on other heterodox groups in Turkey such as the Alevis and Bektashis they mostly reflect the aim and inclination of their writers and need serious critical reading.

Parallel to the rising academic interest in the form of "field study" to the diverse cultures and religious traditions of the non-Western societies in the post-second world war era, the Muharram rituals of Shiite Muslims have also attracted ethnographic concern and attention. However, it is mostly the performative character of these rituals and the theatre genre of *taziye* (dramatic representation of the battle of Kerbela) processions that have been widely elaborated, beside sociologists and anthropologists, primarily by the historians of art and theatre.

In this regard, let me briefly summarize the studies on this subject. Peter Chelkowski is one of the scholars who brought the *taziye* under scholarly discussion

as the Islamic form of passion play.[40] However, Mahmoud Ayoub's *The Redemptive Suffering in Islam* must be considered a classical work for the interpretation of the Muharram tradition of the Shi'is and its political, social and psychological implications.[41] Also the recent works of Mary Elaine Hegland based on her ethnographic study and observations earlier in Iran and then in the different regions of Pakistan with respect to women's *taziye* sessions are valuable.[42] Yitzak Nakash's studies both on the history of Shiites in Iraq and the history of Aşura rituals can be counted as important contributions as well.[43] David Pinault offers a comprehensive record of Aşura in the Shiite communities of Southern India.[44] Aghaie's work *Martyrs of Karbala* is a recent significant study offering a comprehensive evaluation of the use of Shi'i symbols and rituals in the political economy of Iran in the last two centuries. In addition, his *The Women of Karbala* offers a rich collection of works on

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[40] Peter J. Chelkowski has several articles on *taziye* and an edition titled *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran* (New York: New York University Press,1979). His articles are listed in the bibliography, and hence, will not be mentioned here.

[41] Mahmoud Ayoob, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspect of 'Ashura' in Twelver Shi'ism* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1978).

[42] See Mary Elaine Hegland, "Flagellation and Fundamentalism: (Trans)Forming Meaning, Identity, and Gender Through Pakistani Women's Rituals of Mourning", *American Ethnologist* 25 no. 2. (May, 1998), pp. 240–266; "The Power Paradox in Muslim Women's Mejales: North-West Pakistani Rituals as Sites of Contestation over Religious Politics, Ethnicity and Gender," *Signs,* 23, no.2 (1998), pp. 391-428. "Two Images of Husain: Accommodation and Revolution in an Iranian Village," in *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution* ed. Nikkie R. Keddie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

[43] See Yitzak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003). **"**An Attempt to Trace the Origin of the Rituals of Ashura," *Die Welt des Islams* 33, no.2 (1993), pp. 161–181; "The Visitation of the Shrines of the Imams and the Shi'i Mujtahids in the Early Twentieth Century," *Studia Islamica* 81 (1995), pp. 153-164.

[44] See David Pinault, *The Shiites: Ritual and Popular Piety in a Muslim Community* (London: I.B Tauris, 1992); and Horse *of Karbala: Muslim Devotional Life in India* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); and his article "Shia Lamentation Rituals and Reinterpretations of the Doctrines of Intercession: Two Cases from Modern India." *History of Religions* 38, no.3 (1999), pp. 285-305.

women's experiences of Muharram from different regions of the Shiite world.[45] Richard Norton and Lara Deeb's studies cover the Shi'is of Lebanon and the significance of Aşura in that country.[46] Especially Lara Deeb's conceptualization of "public piety" and authenticated Islam and formulation of "pious modern" are valuable and inspiring. She puts the shared narratives, practices and meanings associated with the Aşura commemoration as the focal point of the authentication process and as the construction of the shi'i pious modern. I should also add Janet Afary, Rebecca Ansary-Petty and Hamid Dabashi's valuable contributions on the discourse of *Kerbela* (the event of the martyrdom of Hussein referring briefly to the name of the desert) and their interpretations of *taziye* in the context of revolution and its performance in the form of protest.[47]

Doubtlessly another significant moment influencing the studies of Shiite history and doctrines in general and practices in particular has been the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. The religious discourse behind the revolution and the impact of the Kerbela paradigm shaping both the discourse and the actions of Shiite

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[45] Kamran Scot Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shii Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); and Kamran Scot Aghaie (ed.) *The Women of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (*Seattle*: University of Washington Press, 2004).

[46] See Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and "From Mourning to Activism: Sayyedeh Zaynab, Lebanese Shi'i Women**,** and the Transformation of Ashura,"in *The Women of Karbala: Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi'i Islam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005). And also Richard Augustus Norton, "Ritual, Blood and Shiite Identity: Ashura in Nabatiyya Lebanon." *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (2005), pp.140-155

[47] See Janet Afary, "Shi'i Narratives of Karbala and Christian Rites of Penance: Michel Foucault and the Culture of the Iranian Revolution, 1978-1979,"in *Radical History Review* 86 (2003): 7-35; Rebecca Ansary Pettys, **"**The Ta'zieh: Ritual Enactment of Persian Renewal", *Theatre Journal* 33, no. 3 (Oct. 1981), pp. 341–354; Hamid Dabashi, "Ta'ziyeh as Theatre of Protest." *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (2005), pp. 91-99.

Muslims and the transformation of conception and interpretation in the Shiite imaginary have largely been investigated, elaborated and discussed. The works enlisted above, except one of Mahmoud Ayoub and Chelkowski's earlier works, might be evaluated within this context as well.

The only work in Turkish which documents the *taziye* literature in Turkey and the tradition of Muharrem procession is the work of Metin And, *Ritüelden Drama Kerbela-Muharrem-Taziye*. It evaluates *taziye* as a genre of performative art and gives a documentation of liturgical poetry and *taziye* texts in Turkey.[48] Finally, the special volume of *The Drama Review* journal on *taziye* offered a valuable collection for my study. [49]

Methodological Approaches

Collecting Information and the Classification of Resources

Secondary Resources

For this study, books, articles on Shi'ism, shi'i identity and Shi'i rituals were analyzed along with ethnographic texts on the cultures of Shiite societies and groups, and as well as those on other heterodox religious communities in Turkey. With respect to the Caferis in Turkey, newspaper articles and magazines were explored. The web sites established by the adherents of the community and periodical publications such as *Caferi Yol* (Caferi Path), and *Kıble* (direction of worshipping for Muslims) have been investigated.

[48] Metin And, *Ritüelden Drama, Kerbela- Muharrem-Taziye* (From Ritual to Drama: Karbala, Muharram, Ta'ziyeh) (İstanbul: YKY Yayınları, 2002).

[49] See *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (2005).

One of the aims of this study is to determine the sub-groups within the Caferi community. Hence, written texts as well as audio-visual materials on the web sites and publications have been classified and categorized with regard to the identity of their producers.

All these texts were subjected to critical reading and were analyzed not only via themselves, but also vis-a-vis each other, and mainly in terms of their definition and classification of Muharram rituals, the historical origins of the development and evolution of these processions, and the symbolic meanings and socio-cultural and political functions of these rituals with regard to the construction, representation and visibility of the Shiite identity.

Ethnographic Data: Fieldwork and In-Depth Interviews

The fieldwork of the present study was carried out in 2008 and 2009. It consists of participatory observation of Shi'i rituals and public and private sessions held during Muharram; in-depth interviews with community members, performers and onlookers of the Aşura processions; short, spontaneous or informal interviews conducted on various occasions; several online interviews; and critical observations of audio-visual records.

In relation to the density of the Caferi population in Istanbul, the residents of the Halkalı region provided the "field" for this study. It is estimated that the Caferi population in Istanbul is not less than the Caferi population in throughout Turkey and most of the Caferis in Istanbul live in Halkalı. As was mentioned before, the texts about Muharram or Aşura are published mostly by the Caferis themselves. These are popular publications and they include significant biases related to the positioning and ideological approaches of the writers. Very little of the fieldwork conducted until

now related to the community covers the beliefs and their practical implications or reflections in social life. In this manner, Muharram rituals have attracted less interest and constitute quite a small part of the studies. In addition, these studies mostly prefer quantitative methods compared to qualitative ethnographic research methods. Parallel to the rising visibility of the community, it is possible to assert that the present study is the first and hence carries both the advantages and disadvantages of being first. Personal narratives play a significant role in the current study in exploring the meaning of Muharram and Aşura rituals and the performative experiences for the different members of the Caferi community in relation to their collective visibility in the public space.

Indeed, the current study covers an urban Muharram ceremony held in Halkalı Istanbul and the data analyzed in Chapters Three and Four neither include data concerning the rural or urban gatherings especially in the main lands of the Caferi community in Turkey, that is to say, Iğdır, Kars and Ağrı or other urban centers such as Ankara and Manisa which host a significant groupings of Caferis nor about the people participating in those processions. Therefore, this survey is limited to the "urban visibility" of Muharrem processions of the Caferis in Istanbul. Nevertheless, taking into account the predominant trend among Caferis from other cities of Turkey to participate in the processions in Istanbul, it can be claimed that this survey carries a representational significance.

Before the conduction of in-depth interviews a thematic framework for questions to be asked was prepared and during the interviews usually open-ended questions were asked. In relation to the identity of the interviewee (being in a certain position in the community) some technical questions were also raised to obtain general information especially on such themes as the demographic profile of the

community, mosques, and the organization of Muharram processions. In addition to the short and informal interviews, the in-depth interviews were "semi-structured interviews" in line with Russell Bernard's definition.[50]

In accessing the informants, the technique of 'snowball'[51] was used. In entering the field no kind of problem was noticed. The members of the community seemed quite eager to share their knowledge and feelings about themselves. To get the information about the mosques hosting the Muharram sessions, 'a gatekeeper'[52] who had acquaintance and relations with the community provided the necessary support and guidance. He provided the necessary sponsorship for conducting in-depth interviews with converted Caferis who, as opposed to the Caferis in Halkalı, were more hesitant to speak. For the in-depth interviews conducted with Azeri Caferis I had another sponsor who had an official position in one of the associations of the community.

The accounts gathered from oral interviews were subjected to discourse analysis and evaluated as narratives of the self-reflections of the informants. The analysis of the interviews and fieldwork is presented in the third and fourth chapters. While the first part of the analysis covers the field work accounts and public performances of Muharram rituals, the second part focuses on the personal narratives of the informants based on in-depth interviews. Finally it needs to be mentioned that

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[50] Russell Bernard, *Social Research Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), p. 191.

[51] In snowball technique usually the initial informants provide access of the researcher to other informants.

[52] A gate-keeper or a sponsor is the person who provides or facilitates the access to the research field. For more information, see Martin Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London, New York: Routledge, 2007), p.63.

all the names used throughout current manuscript to refer the interviewees are pseudonyms.

Building Rapport and the Relations in the Field

As mentioned above, during my research I conducted semi structured, in-depth interviews with eleven people among the Caferis most of who were living in Halkalı. When I introduced myself to my informants or asked to conduct interviews with them, their responses were much more welcoming than I had expected. Although some of them asked about the reasons for my interest in the Caferis and Caferi rituals, generally speaking, they were quite pleased because with being the subjects of a scientific study. Before entering the field, I had not expected such a reaction. Interestingly, they were quite familiar with and enthusiastic about giving information about themselves and their beliefs and practices. In fact, their enthusiasm was mostly due to their presumption that an academic or scientific work such as mine would contribute to better recognition of the Caferis. Almost all of my informants were self-confident in expressing their thoughts and feelings and they seemed eager to inform me. They did not ask for any condition of anonymity. On the contrary, they emphasized that the display of their names would not constitute any problems for themselves.

Some of them attached also a sacred mission to my study; they shared their empathy and good wishes with me and confidentially tried to persuade me that I would gain a spiritual reward due to my work on the issue thanks to the auspices of Imams and *Ehli Beyt* (the holy people coming from the lineage of the Prophet).[53]

[53] Kerim A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

This was related to how they positioned me, and only my interest in the community for conducting research was perceived as a sign of good will automatically.

Doubtlessly, in such situations, it was impossible not to remember Lila Abu-Lughod's striking question which displays the fundamental dilemma of ethnographic and anthropological method of study: "Does using my knowledge of individuals for purposes beyond friendship and shared memories by fixing their words and lives for disclosure to a world beyond the one they live in constitute some sort of betrayal?"[54] Unfortunately, the question must remain unanswered.

One of the most instructive dimensions of doing fieldwork was to counterbalance the different facets of my identity. As a researcher, I had to put my personal views, beliefs and approaches aside while listening to my interviewees. I became able to listen to them with patience while abstaining from any kind of debates or displaying my personal attitudes or comments. As Raudvere brilliantly states, "Fieldwork is as much a provoked situation as a provocative one. Power and power differences work reciprocally."[55] My dependence on my interviewees probably for further interactions in the field was one of the factors that kept me from entering into theoretical and theological debates. On the other hand, my personal background provided me with a valuable asset in this research. The language they sometimes used to describe their feelings and the historical and theological references they made displayed a native one, requiring a certain degree of command of it.

On the other hand, my silence during their self-narrations and sometimes their challenging questions was interpreted as approval of their approaches. The

[54] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p.41.

[55] Catharina Raudvere, *The Bookt and the Roses: Sufi Women, Visibility and Zikir in Contemporary Istanbul* (Istanbul: Sweedish Institute in Istanbul, 2002), p.63.

relationship of the informant with the interviewer and his/her positioning the researcher is important for the study. This might have a significant effect on the information shared by the researcher as a foreigner or outsider from the community, which was valid for my case. In Halkalı, Kasım Naz, the secretary general of *Caferi-Der* (Caferi Association), has acted as a gatekeeper and sponsor for me to find new candidates to interview. After a while, or after the second meeting the relations sometimes gained a level of intimacy that had the potential to change the researcher's position vis-à-vis the community. The sponsorship of a trustworthy figure from the community led later informants to build an intimacy easily and this resulted in invitation for further research, sharing the results or end-product of my research and participation in their other social and cultural activities.

The narratives of the informants with respect to their experiencing Muharram and Aşura might be questioned on the basis of the credibility of the method. However, the narration promotes the creation of new meanings by memory and reveals the narrators' imagination, conceptualization and expression with respect to the event. Through oral communication it is possible to grasp the thoughts and feelings derived from the body language and momentary expressions as well.

Before conducting the interviews a thematic framework was prepared and open-ended questions were preferred. Depending on the position of the informant within the community (for example, especially to acquire information about the historical development of the Aşura ceremonies in Halkalı, depended on the age and how long the informant had been living in the neighborhood and his or her role in the organization of ceremonies) some technical, historical and sometimes theological questions also were addressed. In some cases, they began to talk about private matters. This showed me that it is important to know how to listen. More than their

personal feelings and emotions at the time of the Aşura, they were inclined to tell about the meaning of Aşura in their system of belief or thought and the messages or meanings uploaded to the Aşura paradigm within the religious discourse in the socio-political context. In this regard, the content of the interviews largely was composed of the learned discourses and the narratives of a common history and memory which was remembered, recalled and revealed by the interviewees.

During my field study, which was dispersed over a year, I conducted in-depth interviews with twenty people in total, and short, informal interviews with more than a dozen people. Out of the first group six of them were converted Caferis, all male and from different age and occupations, and four of whom had bachelor degrees. Three of them were non-Caferis who had attended *Aşura* ceremonies just "to see" and out of curiosity. One of them also preferred to take photographs as a spare time activity and I preferred to conduct in-depth interviews with them to understand the approaches of outsiders to the Aşura rituals. Out of the remaining eleven individuals, two of them were living in Bağcılar, but one working in Halkalı. Nine of them were inhabitants of Halkalı, while six of them were female, five were males. Among the males one of them had a university degree while four of the females had associate and bachelor degrees. Two of the females had five year primary education; three of the males had high school degrees, while one of them was a secondary school graduate. The age interval of the interviewees was between twenty-one and fifty-three. In total, the recorded in-depth interviews amounted approximately fourteen hours while two unrecorded interviews lasted about four hours.

The people with whom I talked on different occasions and mostly during and after the Aşura processions were generally either onlookers or photographers who had joined that activity or the Caferis who were in charge of the success of the

organization. I tried to learn their perceptions and immediate feelings regarding the spectacle they witnessed.

In the next chapter I will elaborate who the Caferis are, their ethnic and historical background in the Republic of Turkey, urban and rural areas with dense *Caferi* population and the figure illustrating demographic profile. In addition, basic divisions within the community based on the interpretation of religious discourse and the differences between in-born and converted Caferis will be highlighted and evaluated. In the third chapter I will cover the Muharram processions of Caferis living in Turkey and the historical background of the emergence of those rituals in the Shiite world and in Turkey touching upon the Ottoman past as the evidence and resources permit. In the following chapter, I investigate how Muharram and Aşura are experienced and understood in my field of study, that is to say, in Halkalı, Istanbul and the narratives of the informants related to the conceptualization of Aşura and Muharram are presented. In the final chapter, the outcomes derived from ethnography in comparison with the related literature are elaborated and analyzed.

CHAPTER 2

CAFERIS IN TURKEY

Locating Caferis in the Islamic World and in the Context of Turkey

Shi'ism one of the two basic denominations within Islam and it has different subgroups within itself such as Twelver Shiis. Caferis are the adherents of the Twelver Shiism and is the most widespread and orthodox branch of Shiism. It was mentioned above that the Caferi people in Turkey are brought to the attention of other people through mostly the news and representations of the annual Aşura ceremonies. Another prevalent opinion about the Shiites in Turkey is to see them identical with the Alevis or one of their subgroups, even though their basic religious tenets and practices differ from each other to a great degree.

This approach has led to the classification of the Caferis as an Alevi group even among the scholars studying Alevis in Turkey. Some authors classify them under the label of Shi's and some prefer to categorize them among Alevis. As an example of the latter, Martin van Bruinessen distinguishes four groups of Alevis in Turkey based on the languages they speak.

> The name of Alevi is a blanket term for a large number of different heteredox communities, whose actual beliefs and ritual practices differ much. Linguistically four groups may be distinguished. In the eastern province of Kars there are communities speaking Azarbaijani Turkish and whose Alevism differ little from the 'orthodox' Twelver Shiism of modern Iran. The Arabic speaking Alevi communities of southern Turkey (especially Hatay and Adana) are the extension of Syria's 'Alawi (Nusayri) community and have no historical ties with the other Alevi groups. Like the first group their number is small and their role in Turkey has been negligible. The important Alevi groups are the Turkish and Kurdish speaker (the latter still to be divided into speakers of Kurdish proper and of related Zaza); both appear to be

> the descendants of rebellious tribal groups that were religiously affiliated with the Safavids.[56]

On the other hand, Moojen Momen, the author of a voluminous work on the history and doctrines of Shi'ism, classifies all these different groups under the label of Shi'is in Turkey. He lists the four groups of Shi'is in Turkey in a manner similar to that of Bruinessen: The Arabic speaking Alawi community; the Turkish speaking Turcomans, who are mainly *Bektaşi* and some who use the name of *Kızılbaş*; the Kurds who are mainly *Ehl-i Hak*; [57]and finally the Azeri Turkish refugees from Soviet Azerbaijan.[58] He considers the first two groups as heterodox Shi'is, the third as heterodox extremists, and concludes that "only the fourth group (who are not in any case native to Anatolia) can be considered as an integral part of the orthodox Twelver community". [59]

His positioning of the Alevi Kurds as *Ehl-i Hak* is open to discussion and it exceeds the scope of this study. He also claims that there could be small numbers who call themselves Caferi within the Turkish Alevis. A more reasonable stand can be seen in David Shankland's argument with respect to the positioning of Alevis vis-à-vis the Shiites in general and the Twelvers in particular.

> It is often asked whether the Alevis are Shi'ite. The Alevis themselves do not use the appellation *Şi'i*. Indeed, they associate the

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[56] Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurds, Turks and the Alevi Revival in Turkey," *Middle East Report* 200 (1996), pp.7-10.

[57] For further information and discussion related to the beliefs and the problems of *Ehli Hak* people in Iran, see Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Inner Truth and Outer History: The Two Worlds of Ahl-i Haqq of Kurdistan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no.2 (1994), pp. 267-285; and "Redefining the Truth: Ahl-i Haqq and the Islamic Republic of Iran," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 21, no.2 (1994), pp.211-228.

[58] Moojen Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p.269.

[59] Ibid., p.270.

> use of the word with 'those fanatics of Iran'. The Alevis have no social or spiritual links with Iran… (*But*)… their doctrines do give enormous weight to the importance of the Prophet's nephew, and they are clearly influenced by a Shi'ite perception of the development of Islam in history. …Indeed …it appears to be that they would be classified theologically within the Shi'ite tradition as a 'ghulat' sect: a group so 'extreme' … in their worship to Ali that it is doubtful that they would be recognized by mainstream Shi'ite peoples. (*Linking word and emphasis belongs to the author of thesis*)[60]

The diverse and paradoxical approaches on the categorization of these communities basically make claims about the population of these religious groups less reliable. In fact, official censuses in Turkey do not differentiate between religious sects or ethnicities. Therefore all estimates with respect to Alevis, Şiis, Caferis or other ethnic or religious minority groups in Turkey are approximate figures claimed by the members of the communities in order to aggrandize their population. Therefore, the speculations about the number of Shi'a population living in Turkey still constitute a problematic. There are rumors from the community members, differing from three hundred thousand to three million. Discussions and assumptions with regard to the demography of Caferis in Turkey will be touched on below.

Nevertheless, to a larger extent with respect to the community that is the subject of the current study, it has been accepted that their religious creeds are identical to those of Twelver Shi'ism and from now on during this study, the words of Caferi and Shi'i or Shi'a will be used interchangeably for some definitions, explanations or categorizations.

Despite the fact that Sunnism and Shiism are considered to be the two basic denominations of Islam, many schools of thoughts in philosophy, jurisprudence and

[60] David Shankland, *Islam and Society in Turkey* (Cambridgeshire: The Eothen Press, 1999), p.139.

mysticism of Islam throughout the centuries emerged within the history of Islam, and the similarities and differences of these schools cross-cut each other. In addition, both of these two main sects are heterogeneous and each consists of several branches and sub-branches.

Shiites adhere to the teachings of the last prophet of Islam, Muhammad, but unlike Sunnis, they follow the religious guidance of his family (*Ehl-i Beyt*) or his descendants, known as Shiite Imams, whom they consider the keepers and instructors of the *Kur'an* (the scripture) and *Sünnet* (the way, custom and example of the Prophet). The mainstream tradition of Shi'ism is known and called by different names such as "*On iki İmam Şiası* (Twelver Shi'ism), *Caferilik* (Jafarism), *Caferiyye* (Arabic word for Jafarism), *İmamiyye* (Imamism) and *İsna Aşeriyye* (Arabic word for Twelverism). It takes its name from the number of Imams to be followed after the Prophet and from the name of the sixth Imam (Cafer-i Sadık) in the lineage of Imamate whose teachings have established the basic creeds and jurisprudence attained by the adherents of the sect. It is referred to mostly as *İmamiye* with regard to credential issues and as *Caferiyye/Caferilik* when it is handled with respect to its legal/juridical approaches.[61]

The main difference between the two sects is crystallized on matters of believing in the imamate, attributing infallibility to them, and the issue of occultation. As Kamran Scot Aghaie writes,

> The specific details of the early development of the Sunni-Shi'i schism, along with the complex evolution of Twelver Shiism out of the diverse heterodox strains of early shi'ism, have been the subject of intense debate both today and in the past. Without being drawn into these debates, "it can be said that the roots of this schism lie in the crisis of succession that occurred upon the death of the Prophet

[61] *T.D.V İslam Ansiklopedisi*, s.v."Caferilik"

> Muhammad in 632 CE. However this sectarian division took two or three centuries to develop fully. [62]

The issue of schism or dispute which led to the emergence of this sect within Islam is related to the issue of succession (who and to what capacity the successor of Prophet to lead Muslim society) and it took its more or less final shape or completed its formulation in the tenth century following the political and philosophical developments that occurred in the Islamic community beginning from the Caliphate of Ali bin Ebu Talib. Shii theology claims that after the death of Prophet Ali had to be his successor. However, historically Ebu Bekir, Ömer and Osman rule Islamic community.

The Kerbela Event as a Threshold in the Making of Shiism

In the political arena, the conflicts that had greatest impact on sectarian divisions were challenges to the authority of Ali- the fourth caliph- between 656 and 661. The battles of Cemel in 656 and Sıffin in 657 are included in these conflicts and after the assassination of Ali by a radical opposition group called *Harici*, Muaviye (who came from the Umayyad family) took power and declared himself Caliph. He designated his son as a successor to himself after his death. This was the beginning of the hereditary monarchy and this brought opposition within the Islamic community.

Yezid's coming to power has attracted unrest and opposition within the community. The supposedly most important and symbolic figure was Hussein, the son of Ali. During Muaviye's rule the elder son of Ali, Hasan reached a consensus with him to not to declare any claim for the caliphate. However Muaviye's death invalidated this deal. In this period Yezid tried to get the obeisance of opponents

[62] Kamran Scott Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala, Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), p.3.

through the use of violence. The people of Kûfe, who were uneasy about the caliph in Damascus, wrote a letter to Hussein and promised him their support in case of a rebellion against Yezid. Upon their call, Hussein moved to Kûfe with his family and 72 followers. When he reached Kerbela (close to Kûfe in today's Iraq), they were faced with an army of Yezid's soldiers. They were surrounded by a large army and remained without water for ten days in the desert of Kerbela. The siege lasted for ten days and on the tenth day (*Aşura* literally means the tenth), Hussein and "the adult male children of the family and his companions were cut to bits by the arrows and swords of Yezid's army; his women and remaining children were taken as captives to Yezid in Damascus."[63]

Hussein's battle and martyrdom in Kerbela became the defining moment of the Shi'i identity and in the following decades and centuries this tragic event was remembered by several ceremonies developed around the paradigm of Kerbela or the cult of Muharram.

As Chelkowski writes, "The tragic defeat at Kerbala has come to be considered by Shiite Islam as the example of supreme self-sacrifice, the acme of human suffering and the greatest redemptive act in history. The massacre became a martyrdom to be mourned throughout the ages."[64]

To commemorate this event and sympathize with the suffering of Hussein, several forms of mourning rituals, demonstrations, diverse genres of art and literature and performances have been developed by the Shi'i people throughout fourteen

[63] Peter Chelkowski; "Ta'ziyeh: Indigenous Avant-Garde Theatre of Iran," *Performing Arts Journal* 2, no.1 (Spring, 1977), p.32.

[64] Peter Chelkowski; "Shia Muslim Processional Performances," *The Drama Review* 29, no.3, (Autumn 1985), p.20.

centuries. In accordance with the diversity and plurality of the members of Shiism, the forms and the contents of the mourning rituals display a rich profile.

Demography and Settlement

Mapping Caferis in Turkey

The demographic figures with regard to Shiites around the world and Turkey are based on approximate estimations rather than complete statistics. Political and ideological biases leading to overestimate or underestimate the population of certain ethnic or religious groups and minorities are prevalent in these estimations. In the Islamic world the Shiite population is assumed to correspond to 15 or 20 percent of the almost 1.15 billion total Muslim populations. However this number contains some other heterodox/*batını* (esoteric) sects or groups (such as Alevis, Bektaşis, Nusayris, İsmailis, Zeydis, Bahais, and Yezidis) beside orthodox Twelver Shiites. And sometimes a cross-labeling is at work, such as the case in Turkey. Some put *Caferi*s under the category of *Alevi*s while some others put *Alevi*s under the category of Shiites. This contradiction has been mentioned above. Therefore, the groups of people who are mentioned or come into mind related to the Shiite identity are outside of the scope of current study. Anatolian Alevism which has been called different things in our tradition such as Bektaşilik (Bektashism), Kızılbaşlık (Qizilbash), Tahtacılık, Rafizilik, seem to be quite far from the Imamiyye/Caferiyye sect of Shiism despite the fact that it has roots in the history of Shiism. [65] Today, leading figures or authors from both the Alevi and the Caferi communities declare that despite some commonalities such as praise and love for the family of the Prophet (*Ehli Beyt sevgisi*), they acknowledge that the two traditions are totally different from

[65] İlyas Üzüm, p.19.

each other and do not compromise especially on the matter of religious creeds and practices.

Despite the small size of the Caferi community compared to the multi-ethnic and multi lingual Alevi community, it is difficult to come with a proposition that it constitutes a homogenous group. To give concrete distinctions within the community based on gender, ideology, class and ethnicity seems impossible. However, people studied over the community makes some classifications or categorizations based on their observations.

In his voluminous work, İlyas Üzüm refers to *Müteşeyyi*s but conceiving them as an insignificant group due to their small number and the lack of clarity on their religious/sectarian affiliation, he focuses on what he calls Azeri *Caferi*s. Then he classifies them based on three different categories: The place of inhabitation, the density of sectarian locale, and the *mücte*hid followed by. [66] On the other hand, in a more recent study, Ali Albayrak classifies Caferis in three groups as those who were born from Caferi parents, those who adapted Caferi jurisprudence while they were previously Alevi, and finally those who adapted Shi'ism after Sunnidom.[67] Actually, it is possible to put the last two groups under the category of Müteşeyyi or converted Caferi either from Alevi or Sunni origins.

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[66] Üzüm also distinguishes the first category into two as those living in the mainland and those living in the areas after migration. Current study also adopted this distinction. With respect to the second category, Üzüm uses the definition of those living in the same cultural group and those in a different cultural group. In this manner, the word locale seems more beneficial. Those living in a sectarian locale and non-sectarian locale may offer a better naming for this classification. For example while some Caferis live in the neighborhoods mostly populated by Caferis such as Halkalı, İkitelli, some might prefer to live in a neighborhood or region where does not consist of any Caferi household. This might also refer to the effect of Caferilik or religious beliefs in the construction or affirmation of their identity. On the third category, Üzüm also refers to two groups as those following Khomeini line and his ideas and call them as "radical Caferis" and those who follow Şeriatmedari line and call them "traditional Caferis". See, Üzüm, p. 20-25.

[67] Ali Albayrak, *Caferilerde Dini ve Sosyal Hayat, Ankara Keçiören Örneği*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara University, 2006) p.81.

In the light of above discussions, in current study it is preferred to classify the Caferi people in Turkey within two basic sub groups even though these groups might be divided within themselves based on ideology, class, gender and ethnicity. The first group can be called "ethnically" or "culturally" Shiite, and constitutes a significant portion of the community and consists of Azeri population who are condensed in cities like Ağrı, Iğdır and Kars as the mainland and Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Bursa, Manisa, İzmit and Yalova as the urban centers migrated for socio-economic reasons.. The second group can be called as "ideologically" Shiite and constitutes a small number within the community and mostly consists of converted Sunnis and *Alevi*s those who had become Caferi mostly after the Iranian revolution due to their ideological affinity with radical Islam.

Fıgures on the Caferi Population

It is estimated that there are 58-60 million Shiites in Iran, 30 million in Pakistan, 20-30 million in India, 15-17 million in Iraq, 6-7 million in Azerbaijan, 4-5 million in Afghanistan, 4 million in Saudi Arabia, 1-1.5 million in Lebanon, 1-1.5 million in Turkey, 500-600,000 in Kuwait, 500,000 in Bahrain, 300-500,000 in Saudi Arabia, 150,000 in the UAE, 150-200,000 in Syria, 50-140,000 in Qatar, 30,000 in Oman, and also small groups in Europe, the Americas, Central Asia and Africa.[68]

According to a tentative estimation by Moojen Momen on the distribution of Shiis throughout the world, the percentage of Twelver Shiites to the total Muslim population in the world corresponds to 10 percent. Regarding the Twelver Shiites in

[68] Faik Bulut, "Şii Ali Aşkı," *Atlas magazine*, 139 (October 2004), p.78.

Turkey, he gives a percentage of 3.3 percent and 1.5 million out of 45 million total population by the year 1980. [69]

Similarly, the estimate given by Martin Kramer is 3.5 percent of the total population of Turkey for the Twelver Shii population.[70] According to these ratios, the population of Caferis living in Turkey should have been between 2-2.5 million out of the official census data establishing the total population as 71,517,100 in 2008.[71]

Based on the information given in İlyas Üzüm's work with respect to the locations of Caferis and the updated census data of Turkey it is likely to make a more elaborate estimation regarding the population of Caferis in Turkey.

Caferis of Azeri origin

When speaking of the Caferis in Turkey, those who come to the mind in the first instance are the Azeri speaking people from the north eastern Anatolia. Almost 99 percent of the Shiite/Caferi population in Turkey is ethnically of Azeri origin. Peter Alford Andrews, who gives an account of ethnic groups in Turkey, presents Azeri Turks in two groups, as Shiites and Karapapaks.[72] The latter are known to be Sunni. These two groups are two Azeri-Turkic tribes migrated to Turkey from the Caucasus region, Soviet Azerbaijan and the southern region, which is known as Iranian

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[69] Moojen Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, *the History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p.282.

[70] Martin Kramer, "Introduction," in *Shi'ism, Resistance and Revolution*, edited by Martin Kramer (London: Westview Press, 1987), p.10.

[71] Official web site of Turkish Institution for Statistics and reports on 2008 Census http://report.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwservlet?adnksdb2=&report=turkiye_il_koy_sehir.RDF&p_kod=1&p_yil=2008&desformat=html&ENVID=adnksdb2Env access date, 7.7.2009

[72] Peter Alford Andrews, *Türkiye'de Etnik Gruplar* (Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey) (Istanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1992), pp.96-103.

Azerbaijan. These people have settled in the provinces close to the borders of Russia and Iran. However, especially after the 1970s parallel to the rising migration in Turkey from rural to urban areas, these people also migrated to the industrialized city centers in the western part of Turkey. Therefore, it is possible to classify them based on where they live as Caferis living in the historical regions and Caferis living in the areas after migration.

Caferis in the Traditional Homeland

The main area of the Shiite/Caferi population in Turkey is north eastern Anatolia. The main territories in which Shiite population are in the majority are the provinces of Iğdır, Kars and Ağrı and the sub provincial regions of Aralık and Tuzluca of Iğdır, Arpaçay and Akyaka from Kars and Taşlıçay of Ağrı.

The majority of those people who are living in Kars and Iğdır settled to the region after the population exchanges made in 1918-1925 and mostly migrated from Armenia. [73] However, there are also groups of people who have been living in that region since the time of the Ottoman Empire, especially in the region of Iğdır, Tuzluca and Taşlıçay. There is also a small number of Azeri who migrated from the Caucasus. In addition to small-scale migrations from northern Azerbaijan, the most significant ones occurred following the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the occupation of northern Azerbaijan by Russia in 1920, and during the Second World War. Those people who migrated at those times settled mostly in Kars and Arpaçay and partly in Iğdır and Tuzluca. [74] Peter Andrews

[73] Ibid., p.98.

[74] Üzüm, p.24.

reports that 5000 Azeri Turks who migrated from Iran also settled in Van, Başkale and Muradiye in the same period. [75]

The total population of Iğdır according to the records in 2008 given by the Turkish Statistical Institute is 75,054 for the city center while the total figure is 184,025. [76] The populations of Aralık and Tuzluca are 22,165 and 25,739, respectively. In Kars, the population of the province center with its towns and villages is 110,283, while the demographic figures for Arpaçay and Akyaka are 20,962 and 12,473. The total population of Taşlıçay from Ağrı province is 23,421. [77] Nonetheless, while the rate of Shiite population in these regions constitutes the majority, the range varies and never approaches 100 percent. Therefore, it might be possible to guess an approximate figure with respect to the Shiite population in the region.

Another denominator of the population density might be the mosques belonging to the community. However, while the number of people around a mosque might be small in villages, the mosques in the urban centers might serve thousands.

According to Üzüm, there are nine Shiite mosques in the center of Iğdir and three in Aralık and one in Tuzluca. He reports 31 village and towns belonging to the central county of Iğdır and in which the majority of the population is Caferi. Also five villages of Aralık out of 23 and 34 villages of Tuzluca out of 83 are densely *Caferi* populated areas. In the central region of Kars there are two Caferi mosques and nine out of 47 villages are mostly Caferi populated areas while this number is nine out of 25 villages of Akyaka and eight villages in Arpaçay. There are two Shiite

[75] Andrews, p.97.

[76] Official web site of Turkish Institution for Statistics report on 2008 Cencus http://tuikapp.tuik.gov.tr/adnksdagitapp/adnks.zul Access date: 21.05.09

[77] Ibid.

mosques in Kars, and one in Akyaka. In Taşlıçay, which belongs to the province of Ağrı, there is one mosque belonging to Shiites and there are two villages with dense Shiite population out of 36.[78] The total number of mosques in the provincial and sub provincial regions corresponds to seventeen. The number of villages with Caferi populations constituting the majority numbers 87.

Üzüm writes that the Shiite majority corresponds to two-thirds of the population in the central region of Iğdır, which holds the biggest Shiite population among three other provinces. In other words, the Caferi population in the central region of Kars is less than the half of the population. Under these circumstances, given the number of villages in these provincial and subprovincal areas, it is possible to say that the total Shiite population in the historical region can not exceed 200,000.

Caferis in the Areas after Migration

The above-mentioned provinces and their inhabitants have also witnessed the migration to the industrialized urban regions of Turkey particularly after the 1960s and 1970s because of socio economic reasons.

The major destination of these internal migrations was undoubtedly Istanbul. Beside Istanbul, the Azeri Shiite population also migrated to cities in the western part of Turkey, such as Izmir, Tire, Bursa, Manisa (Turgutlu), Aydın (Söke), Çorum, Kocaeli (Çayırova) Ankara (Keçiören) and a small group in Kırıkkale.[79]

It is also possible to categorize these people who live in mostly Caferi populated areas as ghetto-like neighborhoods located near a mosque belonging to the

[78] Üzüm, pp. 84-92.

[79] Albayrak, p.82.

community and those living in a way mixed with people from different ethnic or religious origins.

Unfortunately, there is no tangible data documenting the strict or concrete rates of the migration of Azeri population to the urban centers in the west of the country. However, it is possible to give a general sketch of the regions which are inhabited by the Azeri population. There is no data giving the number of Caferi in Istanbul or other urban centers. The numbers mentioned by the community members are mostly exaggerated figures and far from any objective concern. The figure from the community claims that the total Caferi population in Turkey is almost three millions.

In Istanbul, the majority of the community has settled in Halkalı, which was established after 1978. The neighborhood is mostly known due to the Aşura processions that are held in a square open to the public and that attracts thousands of visitors to view them, both from other districts of Istanbul and from different cities as well. In addition to the adherents of the community, people with Sunni or Alevi origins attend these processions. The members of print and visual media, that is to say, journalists, photographers, and reporters also watch this spectacle and make the event more visible for a larger audience.

Compared to other Shiite groups in Turkey the Caferis in Halkalı seem more organized. The center of all community activities is the Zeynebiye mosque which is located in the Aytaşı neighborhood. The people with whom I talked from the community told me that the estimated population of Shiites in the neighborhood is about 10-15,000 people. On the other hand, there are also other Shiite mosques in Altınşehir, Esenyurt neighborhoods close to Halkalı and within the borders of

Küçükçekmece. Besides Küçükçekmece, Bağcılar, Zeytinburnu, Güngören and Kayışdağı appear as the regions inhabited by Caferis living in Istanbul.

Caferis living in Ankara are mostly settled in the Yayla and Kamil Ocak neighborhoods of Keçiören. Albayrak gives an estimated number of 4,500 with regard to the population there.

In the light of above figures provided, to make an estimation regarding the total population of *Caferis* in Turkey an interval between 500,000 and 1 million seems to be more realistic compared to the exaggerated figures claimed by the Caferis themselves.

The second group that constitutes the minority within the Caferis is those who choose Shiism as the system of belief. They are called *müteşeyyi* (Arabic word for the person became Shiite) or *müstebsir* (the awakened one) by the members of the community and they constitute almost one percent of the Caferi population and number in the ten thousands.

Müteşeyyis or Those Who Converted to *Caferilik*

Converted *Caferi*s of Sunni Origins

The word *Müteşeyyi*, originally Arabic, refers to a person who had become Shiite, or displays sympathy and affinity to Shiism. It is also possible to say it means those who have become Caferi. Another word to define such people is Müstebsir. It is also an Arabic word and means “whose foresight has opened or who became prudent”. Studies concerning the existence and the scope of intra-faith conversions (I mean within the Muslims) in Turkey do not exist. Therefore it is not possible to give a

precise figure or number with respect to those people who change their beliefs or sects. However, it is known that some small groups within the radical Islamist groups which became visible mostly after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, partly because of the "*tebliğ*" (religious propaganda) activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to export its revolution, have sympathized with the Islamic Revolution and its leading figures.

Ruşen Çakır, who has condusted an extensive inventory of Islamic formations and groupings in Turkey between the years of 1980–1990, in his *Ayet ve Slogan* (The Verse and the Slogan), mentions the radical groups that had been influenced from the Islamic Revolution in Iran. He identifies them as a non-contestable model for the Islamists who could not find a proper answer to the question of the way of establishment of an Islamic social or political entity in the context of their inability to develop an all-encompassing or inclusive discourse in Turkey which would attract other Islamist people.[80] Interestingly, he argues that "these *Hizbullahi* Muslims who themselves have not given up Sunnism and converted to Shiism, can only invite the Muslims of Turkey not to Shiism itself but to the political language of Shiism. And for this to be happen, the historical sectarian hostilities should be removed." [81]

Similarly, İlyas Üzüm evaluates these groups under the title of Becoming Shiite with Sunni roots/origins and states that they did not adapt shiidom as a way of belief, but supported the political aspect of Shiism. These groups who define themselves with names such as Hizbullahi Muslims, Islamic Resistance, and Line of Imam, published different magazines called *Davet* (Invitation), *Tevhid* (Unity),

[80] Ruşen Çakır, *Ayet ve Slogan*: *Türkiye'de İslami Oluşumlar* (The Verse and the Slogan: Islamic Formations in Turkey) (Istanbul: Metis yayınları, 1990), p.155.

[81] "Kendileri de Sünniliği bırakıp Şiiliğe geçmemiş olan Hizbullahi müslümanlar, Türkiye'deki müslümanları Şiiliğe değil Şiiliğin politik diline davet edebilir ancak. Bunun için ise, tarihi düşmanlıkların bertaraf edilebilmesi gerekiyor." Ibid., p.158.

İslami Düşünce (Islamic Thought), founded publishing houses to translate and publish the works of the leading figures of the Islamic revolution such as Ayatollah Khomeini, Ali Sheriati, Murtaza Mutahhari and Ali Khamanei in the early 1990s. Some of these publishing houses were *Akademi* (Academy), *Endişe* (Reflection) and *Objektif* (Objective). [82] Üzüm also emphasizes that despite the fact that these groups do not openly declare that they have adopted Shiism; they seem to accept the most determining tenet of Shiism, which is *imamet*.[83]

However, during my interviews with a group consisting people who had adopted Shiism mostly in the late 90s, they expressed that this sympathy in the late 1980s or early 1990s had led to the experience of a sort of intra-faith conversion and adaptation of Shiidom both as a religious faith, a field of practice and a basic dimension of their very political and religious identity. This phenomenon seems to override the above-mentioned assessments of both Ruşen Çakır and İlyas Üzüm.

It seems that the changing conjuncture has also changed or transformed the tendencies in religious affiliations. Based on the findings of this study, it can be claimed that the political affiliation has influenced the way of believing for those people and they achieved to scratch the inner incoherences or controversies with the non-settled creeds of enthusiastic acceptance or embraces into a more coherent inclusive set of belief which is claimed to be more harmonious with those political views and affiliations. At least the meaning or the signification of the conversion to Shiism from an eclectic Islamic fundamentalism that my informants experienced can be evaluated in this regard.

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[82] Üzüm, p.21. In fact, some of these publishing houses still continue their activities and some new ones joined among them.

[83] Ibid, p.22.

One of the common experiences of these people was experiencing a first stage Islamization in their early twenties in accordance with the general trend in Turkish society during the late 1980s and after adopting such a political version of radical/ fundamentalist anti-traditionalist view of Islam, then chosing the tenets of Shiite version of Islam to be in much more harmony with their political sympathies and ideological or political place and as an answer to their internal conflicts and controversies in their world of meaning.

Converted Caferis of Alevi Origin

As a subgroup of converted Shiites it is possible to count the people who are of Alevi origins, but have adopted Shiism as the true form of Alevism. Üzüm asserts that the groups close to the official milieu of the Islamic republic of Iran have also tried to build affinity with Alevi circles. The Turkish broadcasting services of Iranian state radio made programs to advertise Shiidom and some young students have been taken to Iran and educated there to learn the origins of their beliefs to lead the Alevi population in Anatolia to the right path. [84] Üzüm also discusses how a group from these students published a magazine in 1989 called Aşura in Çorum and the Shiidom have been presented in a form mixed with Alevi culture. However a great majority of the Alevis opposed to the revolution in Iran and declared that there was no common point except the love of Ehl-i Beyt between the two communities.

One of the people among those who converted to Shi'ism and with whom I had an interview, owns a media production company which mostly publishes movies and documentaries with religious content that mostly brings up the lives of the

[84] Üzüm, p.22. In fact in a personal conversation with an Iranian cleric in Qum, (the director of Library of History Resul Jafarian) he said that there are Alevi students in the medreses in Iran while talking about the profiles of students coming from Turkey to study there.

Imams and some historical events in the history of Shi'ism. My informants stated that the advertisements of these audio-visual products were published on the satellite TV or radio stations belonging to the Alevi community and this created a group of audience within the Alevis. In fact, the company considers this as an awareness-raising campaign beside business goals and claims that they have received positive feedbacks from some Alevis in this respect.

Most of the people with whom I interviewed said that there were not so many differences between Alevis and Caferis in terms of their origins but they emphasized that Alevis had been misdirected and misinformed about the formation of their beliefs. One of the converted Shiites said that the Directorate of Religious Affairs was aware of the trend among Alevis towards Şiileşme (conversion to Shi'ism) and because of that the government was advocating a policy to tell them that Alevism was a sort of *tarikat* (Sufi path) diverged from its origins rather than being an autonomous sectarian entity. He also emphasized the increase in the published materials and access to the knowledge among people in general and some Alevis in particular to search, discuss and reformulate the roots of their system of belief.[85] Also one of my converted Shiite interviewees told that he felt responsible for supporting Alevis as they had always been under pressure and violence due to their beliefs and perceived themselves to be closer to them and believes that they need to gain a sort of true consciousness.[86]

On the other hand, when I asked about their relationship with Alevis the leading people in Halkalı responded that they always sent invitations to the leading figures of Alevi communities for Muharram processions and they sometimes

[85] Ersin Y., interview by the author, not recorded, Istanbul, Turkey, 17 May 2008.

[86] Mustafa K., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 31.05.2008.

participated in the processions in Halkalı and sometimes not. However, it seems that the Caferi community in Halkalı does not seem to be interested in such a propagandist activity for Alevis or Sunnis.

The Mosque as the Center of the Caferi 'Field'[87]

In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that one of the factors behind the rising visibility of religion in general and ethnic and religious identities should be sought in the wave of migration and urbanization that emerged as a social, economic and political phenomenon in the post 1950 context of Turkey. The economic policies of the 1960s and 1970s encouraged the mass migrations to the cities. As Yavuz writes, "The newcomers were not integrated to formal economy but instead came to form an informal sector at the margins of the economy."[88] Also their settlement in the urban space emerged in the margins of the city through building low-cost houses called *gecekondu*. Yavuz writes that "By 1975 one quarter of the urban population lived in such squatter housing" and these people "gravitate toward networks based on places of origin, ethnicity, or religious beliefs partly to maintain their ties with their villages but more importantly as a means of integration into the city". [89]

While these networks provided a means of social solidarity they also assisted in the reinterpretation of traditional cultural and religious values and norms in the

[87] For the concept of field see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); and Ali Murat Yel, "Bourdieu ve Din Alanı: Sermaye, İktidar, Modernlik," in *Ocak ve Zanaat: Pierre Bourdieu Derlemesi*, Güney Çeğin, Emrah Göker, Alim Arlı, Ümit Tatlıcan (der.) (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), 559-580.

[88] Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.83.

[89] Ibid., p.84.

urban setting and formation of a new worldview and ethos. Yavuz successfully summarizes the evolution of these neighborhoods around traditional loyalties and religious codes. As he states, the mosque built in these neighborhoods emerges as the means of integration to the urban setting and as a frame of reference for the community.

> …family and village kinship networks tended to reconstitute themselves within their own quarters (*mahalle*) in large urban centers. …Those family based migration patterns created a new ring of conservative clusters around the cities… Neighborhoods (*mahalle*) evolved around hometown loyalties and an Islamic code of ethics. The local mosque often became the center for integrating and assisting newcomers. …Before people build schools, roads, and a sewage system, they come together to build a mosque in the new neighborhood. The mosque-building, which includes the establishment of a religious association, collection of money, and voluntary work, helps newcomers to get to know each other through their shared language of Islam and to create a web of interactions that can be used in other spheres of social life. Building mosque, for many pious Sunni Turks, means creating a moral frame of reference and a sacred reference center of the new community. [90]

Actually, it is possible to claim that the same is true for pious Caferi Turks as well. The widely known environment or the plane of *C*aferis living in Istanbul developed around the Zeynebiye Camii (Zeynebiye Mosque) which was first built in 1978. Instead of the official name of the neighborhood, that quarter is called and widely known as Zeynebiye referring to the mosque. My informants told me that the people who migrated after the 1980s also preferred the environment of the first comers. But, with the rise of population new mosques emerged depending on the density of population.

Different from the Sunni mosques, not only the land and the construction of the mosques provided by the residents of these neighborhoods, but also the further needs of the mosque such as the nomination of the prayer leader, payment of his

[90] Ibid., p.85.

salary, and the organization of many other community affairs are among the responsibility of this communal structure. Mosques even built by the efforts of local residents are consigned to the control of the Directorate of Religious Affairs as a legal requirement.

Unlike the traditional use of mosques in Turkey as places of worship, mosques attended by the Shi'is serve as the cultural and social center of the community or the neighborhood beside its use for religious practices. It can be used as a place for public gatherings, religious celebrations, rehearsals of the Muharram celebrations (both *taziye* and *deste*), preparations and education of new participants to public processions and all activities alike. Again, Caferi women also attend the mosque for all of such activities, even the Friday prayers as opposed to the overall tradition in Turkey. As my informants said, during the Friday prayer two *hutbe* (religious sermon given before Friday prayers) are lectured. In the first a topic related to religious issues is covered while in the second daily social, economic and political issues in the national or global context are presented, evaluated and a general view or if necessary, a common discourse and action are developed. The mosque also serves as a platform of consultation and social and political mobilization.

Irrespective of age and sex, all segments of community may attend these activities. Among them commemoration of martyrdom of the Imams, anniversaries of their birthdays, another religious celebration called *Gadir-i Hum*, and sessions held during the first ten days of Muharram and on the third, seventh and fortieth day of the martyrdom of Hussein following Aşura can be counted. Except festivals, Gadir-i Hum, Nevruz and the birthday celebrations, in the processions related to mourning and martyrdom and even in the ordinary funeral gatherings beside sermons

or speeches, *mersiye*s are recited and chests are beaten. In such a way, the practices of Muharram almost dispersed into the whole year or to different times and places.

In addition to the multiple functions of mosques for the members of the community, the mosques emerge as the focus of the debate between the government and the representatives and adherents of the Caferi community. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, in the modern Turkish Republic all religious sects, lodges and brotherhoods and their symbols or other publicly activities were banned in 1925. Religious services and activities were given under the control of the Directorate of Religious Affairs since its establishment in 1924. In the secular republic, the prayer leaders of the mosques were government employers owning the necessary requirements demanded by this government body. However, parallel with the demographic, social and economic changes in Turkey, (rise of population, migration and the emergence of new urban or sub-urban settlements) the demands of the people regarding religious services (for example, the construction of new mosques) can not be met by the government in full-scale. In this case, mostly people living in those new areas of settlement or neighborhoods are organized among themselves through various communal associations or charity organizations and mobilized to build a mosque for their neighborhood.

All the mosques built by the Caferis are built in this way and the community rule these mosques in small associational structures mostly established for the construction of these mosques. Yavuz gives statistics regarding the sharp increase in the number of mosques in Turkey. He states that "between 1973 and 1999," the number climbed up "from 45,152 to 75,000 and punctuated Turkey's urban landscape."[91]

[91] Ibid.

Those newly constructed mosques were taken under the control of the DRA after the legislation in 1998. [92] While this regulation was considered a positive development for most Sunni Muslims, as it led the state to share the economic burden, it triggered a conflict between Caferis and the state. [93] This is an unresolved issue and the community seems to be hopeful due to the new legal regulations regarding the rights of ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey in the process of Turkey's bid for the European Union. In Turkey it is estimated that there are about three hundred mosques built and controlled by the Caferis.[94]

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[92] This legislation implies the regulation with no 4379/1 in the 35th article of the law on the foundation and mission of the DRA related to the opening mosques to religous service and administrations of mosques dated 31.07.1998. See official web site of Ministry of Justice http://www.mevzuat.adalet.gov.tr/html/1085.html

[93] The autonomy of the Caferi mosques has been a continuing debate since that time and even the policies of the current government on related issues within the context of membership to the European Union and attempts such as "Alevi Açılımı" (Alevi Opening) brings this matter onto the agenda and it has not been resolved. The DRA authorities claim that in accordance with the laws and regulations of the Turkish Republic, all the mosques within the country should be under the control of government and the prayer leader should be employed by the government. However, the Caferis claim that, as opposed to the Sunni tradition, a prayer leader can not be a government employee. Their jurisprudence does not let believers worship behind such a leader as it comprimises his independence. All the regulations of the DRA are for educating or assigning Sunni prayer leaders. Caferis do not accept Sunni prayer leaders. And the DRA does not have the necessary human resources to assign a Caferi prayer leader as these people do not have any tools or institutions for religious education in Turkey which has a different jurisprudence and interpretation than of Sunni Imam Hatip schools or theology faculties in Turkey. Even if the DRA accepted the assignment of imams from within the community, the Caferis do not feel themselves secure as it carries the possibility of assimilation of the community in the long term. On the other hand the Caferis assert that they are not opposed to the control and surveillance of their mosques by official authorities and their religious activities do not constitute any threat to the secular Turkish Republic.

[94] Out of some 300 mosques only two of them are under the official control of the DRA, one in Iğdır and one in Istanbul. However, the members of the community do not welcome the decision of the leader of these mosques. The reaction of one of my informants was as follows: "I see those people as disposed for a few pennies. One should have some values that cannot be exchanged for anyhing and belief is one of them even let it be *batıl* (void)." (*O insanları satılmış olarak görüyorum. Üç kuruş için…Bazı değerler var. Batıl da olsa sonuna kadar sarılmanız gerekiyor inancınıza*). See Ali M., interview by the author, not recorded, Istanbul, Turkey, 27 March 2009.

In addition to the demand for the independence or autonomy of their mosques, Caferis demand representation on the state channel; re-regulation of the curricula and the textbooks of compulsory religious education for primary schools in a way to cover the religious beliefs of Shi'is, and a fair share from the budget used by the DRA for only financing Sunni religious education and institutions to establish their religious schools and to educate their religious leaders. Finally, they want Aşura as an official holiday at least half of the day similar to the decisions regarding 21 March for *Nevruz* (Spring Festival) and 1 May for Labor Day in the recent years. [95]

To deliver their demands regarding their religious, social and cultural rights the community acts in an organized and collective way and tries to open spaces or to form a lebensraum (life space) in the public space in accordance with their cultural identity. Both to form a public opinion and to make this heard, and to gain visibility within the public space, Caferis are inclined to establish civil society organizations in the form of associations. Another means for socialization, raising political consciousness, promoting political participation and organizing group solidarity for Caferi, are civil society organizations and publication activities.

Besides the Cami Dayanışma Dernekleri (Mosque Solidarity Associations) which counts 30 for Istanbul, there are umbrella organizations promoting the political representation of the community such as *Caferi-Der*(Caferi Association) in

[95] One of the informants told me that in recent years the inhabitants in Halkalı display tolerance for *Aşura* even in this manner. He said, "This year we reached a consensus to close our shops during the first half of the day. Our non-Caferi neighbors in the market also joined us." See interview with Ali M., not recorded, Istanbul, Turkey, 27 March 2009. My informant was a jeweler and it seems at the local level the processions shape the inter-community relations and common action. I also met with the textile workers who came to watch the procession whose employer had let them to go even though neither the employer nor the workers were Caferis. But it is more likely that most of the workers of the enterprise might be Caferis from the close neighborhood. On the other hand, this expectation for Aşura to become an official holiday has been uttered by Kerim A., Sevgi C. and Melike A. during their interviews with the author.

Halkalı, Caferi women's social solidarity network, *Zehra Ana Derneği* (Mother Zehra Association), also formations in Iğdır such as *Ehli Beyt Mektebi Din Adamları Derneği* (Assocaiation for the Clergy of Ehli Beyt School) and such. The community living in Halkalı also have a local sports club called İFA sports club for the young people to join athletic activities.

Actually this process of forming a social collective body and representing the community in social and political arena also leads to the emergence a sort of leadership within the community. Azeri Caferis in Istanbul mostly acknowledge Selahattin Özgündüz as the leader of Turkey's Caferi population. However, some claims that he can not represent all of the Caferis in Turkey. Actually the divergence among different political attitudes marks the adaptation of the claims of leadership within the community and the relations with the state.

Ideological Diversities

As is mentioned by Albayrak, it is possible to talk about two main groupings within the Caferi community, the Zeynebiye group and the Kevser group. Albayrak states that the Kevser mostly consists of the people who have received their religious education in Iran while the second group appears in Istanbul, Halkalı. He also notes that Caferis in Ankara, whom he has studied, did not display any visible support for any figure as the leader within the community, as opposed to the general tendency among the Caferis in Zeynebiye.[96] As mentioned above, the Zeynebiye group takes its name from the mosque in Halkalı. The second group takes its name from a publishing house called *Kevser Yayıncılık* (Kevser Publications). While the first

[96] Albayrak, p.81.

group builds closer relations with the state and expresses the community as one of the constituting elements of the Turkish nation rather than being a minority, the second group departs with its political outlook from the former one.

Kevser Yayınları was established in Istanbul in 1992. It publishes mostly the Islamic resources of Shi'i history, theology and jurisprudence and translations of Iranian clerics and intellectuals such as Allame Tabatabai and Murtaza Mutahhari. Also it has published several books covering issues related to morals, family, religious law and history from the perspective of the Shi'is. In addition to books, audio visual products, mostly films about the lives of religious figures and movies originally produced in Iran but translated into Turkish are among the products of the publishers. Politically this group positions itself close to the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic revolution while the affinity of the first group is insignificant.

Those who feel themselves close to *Kevser* group consider the Azeri Caferis in Halkalı as traditionalist and lacking a radical and more accurate interpretation of Shiidom which basically gained momentum following the thoughts of Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution in Iran.[97] Almost all of the Müteşeyyis or converted Shiites of Sunni origins position themselves with the *Kevser* group rather than *Zeynebiye*. The main periodical of the group is a magazine called *Kıble*[98] (the term referring to the direction of worship) while *Zeynebiye* also publishes a periodical called *Caferi Yol* (Caferi Path).[99] Meanwhile, despite the fact that the Caferis around *Kevser* circle do not accept the conservation of traditional elements and some rituals attached to

[97] Yener H., interview with the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 25.May 2008.

[98] This magazine is published since 2001 as quarterly and the 25th volume was published in summer 2009.

[99] This magazine has been published since May 2006 monthly and it has a circulation around 1000-1500 copies.

Muharram mourning, they specify that they participate in the Muharram processions held in Halkalı on Aşura while they prefer small *mescid*s (praying halls) for the sessions during the first nine days. Therefore, it is possible to claim that Aşura processions in Halkalı serves as a unifying and pooling practice which brings ideologically, culturally and ethnically different sub-groups within the Caferis in Turkey.

Visibility in the Virtual Space

Another field or space in which Caferis become visible is the Internet. All the associations, publishing houses or publications mentioned above, have Internet sites. In addition, there are www.caferilik.com, which covers the basic religious tenets of *Caferilik*; www.zeynebiye.com, which broadcasts news and other social activities organized by the Zeynebiye group; and www.kerbela.net which covers narratives, history, and audio visual materials about Kerbela, Muharram and Hussein; www.kevsernet.com appears to be the site of Kevser group, and news portals closer to Kevser group; more radical elements such as www.rasthaber.com, www.yakindoguhaber.com and the portal of Alevi converts to Shiidom www.alevisesi.com among notable sites developed by *Caferi*s in Turkey.

Chat rooms via web platforms such as Inspeak are also mentioned by the members of community for communication, debates and virtual social networking activities. Also it is possible to see the Caferi groups of Turkey ossn global networking sites such as Facebook.

CHAPTER 3

THE MUHARRAM PROCESSIONS OF CAFERIS IN TURKEY

A Brief History of Shiite Rituals

Muharram and Aşura in the Shi'ite World

Historical records regarding the first appearance of *taziye* rituals or Muharrem processions in the public space in an elaborate form date to the period of Buyid Empire and the tenth century A.D. Almost all references provided by the scholars such as Ayoub, Mottahedeh, Chelkowski, Nakash and Aghaie mark the encouragement and gaining popularity of *taziye* celebrations under the patronage of Buyid rulers parallel with the spread of Shi'ism and Shi'i rulers in the Islamic world.

As Aghaie asserts "The earliest reliable account of the performance of public mourning rituals… concerns an event that took place in 963 during the reign of Mo'ezz al-Dowleh, the Buyid ruler of Southern Iran and Iraq. The Buyid rulers, who were Shi'is themselves, promoted this practice… in order to promote their religious legitimacy and to strengthen the sense of Shi'i identity in an around Baghdad."[100]

Ayoub notifies that on the *Aşura* of 963, Mo'ezz al-Dowleh "closed the markets of Baghdad and draped them in black sackcloth,"[101] and as Ansary explains, Shi'i women and men "expresses their mourning in a ritual procession which wound through the streets of the city"[102] According to Ayoub, "similar practices and

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[100] Kamran Scot Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shii Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), p.10.

[101] Mahmoud Ayoob, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspect of 'Ashura' in Twelver Shi'ism* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1978), p.153.

[102] Rebecca Ansary Pettys "The Ta'zieh: Ritual Enactment of Persian Renewal" *Theatre Journal* 33, no.3 (1981), p.343.

customs appeared in Syria in the Hamdanid court, in Egypt during Fatimid rule, and later in Iran with the rise of Safavid dynasty."[103] However, these celebrations were being held in special houses known as '*Hüseyniye*'(Building for Shi'i ritual gatherings) even at a relatively early date such as the end of the third Islamic century or tenth century A.D. and these '*Hüseyniyes*'served as the "starting point of the Ashura processions on special occasions".[104]

Actually the rapid stage of growth of Muharram processions is observed parallel to the establishment of the Safavid state nearly six centuries later. As Roy Mottahedeh notes, "Until the sixteenth century Shi'ism was the majority belief in only a few areas of Iran" and "the intellectually important centers of Shi'ism were in the Arab world, in the mountains of southern Lebanon and the southern Iraq, where the Shiah madreseh founded in Najaf in the eleventh century"[105]

According to him, long before the Safavids, the background feeding the development of Shi'i rituals around the paradigm of *Kerbela* and the martyrdom of *Hüseyin* was prevalent. "The passion constituted by the suffering and martyrdom of heroes was a resonant theme in the Iranian tradition"[106] and "despite the militant character of Safavi rulers and the unacceptable claims and esoteric interpretation of Shi'ism" by Şah İsmail and other Safavid rulers, the shi'ite clergy of pre-Safavid Iran could reach an agreement with the rulers on "the passion of Hussein," in order to

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[103] Ayoob, p.153.

[104] Ibid., p.154.

[105] Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p.170.

[106] Ibid., p.174.

"implant a deeper commitment to Shi'ism in the Iranian masses"[107] who were converting to Shi'ism by the use of violence.

The flourishing of public mourning processions revealed the need or the demand for literary works or "talented authors of elegies" and "the court poets, who had previously maintained favor by praising their royal patrons, were encouraged to concentrate their literary efforts on elegies centering on Hussein and his passion."[108] The forms and the content of the rituals also took different shapes in accordance with the historical developments. While the first Muharram ceremony consisted of Shiite participants who, with faces painted black and hair disheveled, proceeded through the city wailing songs of lament and beating their chests. Processions of the Safavid era brought eulegic recitations of the passion of Hussein, which were called as *Ruze Hani* (reciting *Ravza*).[109] Mottahedeh writes that "Ashura processions in the Safavid period also included *tableaux vivants* of butchered martyrs with blood which were along on wheeled platforms."[110]

Ayoub describes the development of visual, iconographic and theatric elements in the mourning processions as follows:

> Quite early in the development of the Muharram cults, people felt the need for some concrete symbol or representation of the events of Karbala. First a horse appeared in the middle of the procession covered with a shroud and smeared with blood; this represented the horse of Husayn after Imam's death. By the tenth Islamic century (fifteenth century AD), this procession began to

[107] Ibid., p.173.

[108] Ansary-Pettys, p. 343.

[109] The noun comes from the classical poetry work of shi'ite liturgy literature written in the 17th centurty under the name of *Ravza't ül-Şüheda* (The Garden of Martyrs), telling the life and tragedy of Hüseyin and his family and fellows. See Kamran Scot Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shii Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), p.90.

[110] Mottahedeh, p.175.

> evolve into the familiar passion play, or what may be more accurately termed the representation (shabih) of the entire battle of Karbala with people playing the various roles of its major characters.[111]

Within centuries, the processions continued to accumulate different elements and symbols such as riderless horses and coffins and mourners dressed to represent the martyrs. [112] These traditions were designed to arouse a profoundly emotional response from the audience/participants which often found release in varying degrees of self-flagellation.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, in the era of the Qajar dynasty in Iran- the processions developed another form called Ta'ziyeh, which is referred to by Chelkowski as "passion play" which reenacts the Kerbala event consisting of a staging area, costumes, and cast of professional or amateur actors.

As Ansary Pettys writes, "During the nineteenth century the Ta'zieh reached its fullest development under the Qajar rulers and attained its zenith during the reign of Nasir-al-din Shah" who supported the construction of Takiyah-i-Dawlat (the Takiyah of the State), "modeled after London's Albert Hall and capable of housing three thousand spectators"[113] to provide the stage for the *taziye* procession.

This tradition was discouraged in the twentieth century with the establishment of Pahlavi rule and was banned in 1932. Ansary adds that "The potent repertory of symbols, popularized by the Ta'zieh, became the artillery of the religious revolution which toppled the Pahlavi regime."[114]

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[111] Ayoob, p. 155.

[112] Ansary-Pettys, p.346.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid., p.347.

Today, Muharram and *Aşura* processions are held in various forms and contents embodying the tradition of almost eleven centuries and recreating and reinterpreting in a global framework in almost all small and large shi'i communities around the world from Iran, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Syria, India, Lebanon, and Turkey to the diaspora groups in the U.S, Trinidad and France.

The Aşura or Muharram processions of Shi'i people are multidimensional performances which grew into different forms by the time and accumulated different symbols and genres and encapsulate different cultures and codes depending on the ethnic, political, national and historical characteristics of the groups who perform it.

Muharram and Aşura in the Ottoman Empire

With respect to the adaptation of the *taziye* tradition across diverse Shi'i communities in the world, Yitzak Nakash emphasizes the influence of Iran and the centrality of the Persian elements.

> Introduced into Iraq only in the late eighteenth century, the shabih never developed into a full-scale theater and its nature was fundamentally different from that of the Iranian, reflecting the strong Arab tribal character of Iraqi Shi'i society. In Lebanon, oral traditions relate that the ta'ziya play was introduced into Nabatiyya (a small Shi'i town in the south) by some Iranians only in the late nineteenth century. It was not until 1970 that the play in Nabatiyya took on its current form, and was performed entirely on stage. While the Azari Turks on the western bank of the Caspian Sea and in the frontier area between Iran and Turkey observed certain forms of the ta'ziya play early in the twentieth century, the Shi'i Turks in Anatolia did not develop a traditional ta'ziya format, probably on account of the Sunni predominance there.[115]

While there is the possibility of Nakash's meaning Alevis in Anatolia, with respect to taziye performances of Shii Muslims in Turkey, Metin And, by quoting White, says

[115] Yitzhak Nakash; "An Attempt to Trace the Origin of the Rituals of Ashura," *Die Welt des Islams*, New Ser. 33, no.2 (Nov. 1993), p.173.

us that "while giving us the traditions about celebration of Muharram by the Alevis in Anatolia he states that there is not taziye tradition among Shi'i Turks."

When we look at the history of lamentation rituals in the geography of Turkey beginning the Ottoman Empire, it is not possible to see a comprehensive study or treatment with respect to the Muharram processions of the Shi'i subjects of the Ottoman Empire. However, because of the public processions of Muharrem and the *taziye* tradition in particular that gained a systematic outlook after the seventeenth century during Qajar rule in Iran, a few studies mention the Shi'is in the Ottoman Empire only in the nineteenth century. With regard to the Shiites of today's Iraq Nakash, Momen and Cole discuss the ban of the Muharram *ziyaret* (visitation of shrines) and Aşura rituals in the nineteenth century by the Ottoman Empire. [116] In addition to them, Norton also refers to the repression of Muharram processions in Lebanon by the Ottomans until 1918 and claims that the annual mourning processions became popular in the 1920s, featuring "auto-flagellation and ritualized bleeding to mark the culmination of the Kerbela tragedy". [117]

Nevertheless, And himself supposes that such performances had to have been held secretly due to the pressure of the Sunni majority approving the argument of Nakash on this matter. He gives the first historical records about Muharram processions in Istanbul with regard to the Iranian Diaspora living in Istanbul in the nineteenth century.[118]

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[116] Juan R. I. Cole and Moojen Momen, "Mafia, Mob and Shiism in Iraq: The Rebellion of Ottoman Karbala 1824-1843, *Past and Present*, no.112 (August 1986) pp.112-143.

[117] Richard Agustus Norton, "Ritual, Blood and Shiite Identity: Ashura in Nabatiyya Lebanon," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (Winter 2005), pp.140-155, p.141.

[118] Metin And, *Ritüelden Drama, Kerbela- Muharrem-Taziye* (İstanbul: YKY Yayınları, 2002), p.57.

Anja Pistor-Hatam's work exploring Aşura in Istanbul towards the end of nineteenth century,[119] gives an account of *Aşura* processions celebrated in nineteenth century Istanbul by Iranian subjects living in the Ottoman Empire. In addition to the records of European diplomats and travelers who provided the records of *Aşura* ceremonies mostly during the second half of the nineteenth century, Pistor-Hatam grounds her findings on the examination of *Ahter* (Star) newspaper, which was published in Istanbul between the years1875-1896 in Persian.

According to Pistor-Hatam the Shiite believers living in the Ottoman territories performed their religion with difficulty in the public space despite the imperial decrees of *Tanzimat* and *Islahat* regulating the religious liberties of the minorities and different *millet*s in the Ottoman Empire. In addition to the citation of the close-door Muharram gatherings in 1849 due to the lack of official permission of the sultan for public ones, she specifies that this situation changed after the1860s and credits this to the good diplomatic relationships developed by Mirza Hüseyin Han and Hacı Mirza Safa with the Ottoman court.[120]

She notes that in the nineteenth century it is estimated that almost 16,000 Iranian Shiites were living in Istanbul and 10,000 in Anatolia, mainly in the regions of Adana and Izmir. These were generally the diplomats, intellectuals and merchants. Pistor-Hatam offers accounts from *Ahter* on the Muharram processions of the years 1879 and 1880. While she notices the lack of any accounts regarding the theatric performances, traditional rituals such as *ruzehani* or *mersiyehani* and *sinezen* were accomplished and the places of gathering was Validehan Mosque and Sünbül Palace

[119] Anja Pistor-Hatam, "Asura in Istanbul Religiöse Feierlichkeiten als Ausdruck persisch-schiitischen Selbstverstandnisses am Ende des 19. Jahrhundrets" (Ashura in Istanbul: The Religious Celebrations as an Expression of Persian-Shi'ite Self-Understanding towards the End of 19th Century), *Die Welt Des Islams* 38, no.1 (March 1998), pp.95-119.

[120] Ibid., p.101.

and the Seyit Ahmet Deresi Mescidi in Üsküdar. She also reports the narrations of people with bloody shirts, men in bloody shrouds, carrying black and colorful *alem*s (standards) and marching with embellished horses and beating their chests.

Among the observers of the processions she mentions Ottoman officials, Istanbul's major and chief of police, clerics and sheikhs, and the diplomats and consuls of European countries and their wives and some travelers. She concludes that these processions served to the expression of Shiite identity beside the emphasis on Shiite piety.[121] This was because of lack of official recognition towards Shiites in the multi ethnic-anti multi-religious Ottoman Empire. Shiites were considered to be heretic and usually were called '*rafizi*' (deviated) by the Ottomans and the *millet* status was not provided to them. Actually, the emergence or gaining visibility of these processions is related to the political context, the pan-Islamist politics of Abdulhamit II, developing friendship with the Muslim countries and communities.

Pistor-Hatam refers to the problems celebrating Muharram in the Ottoman provinces such as in Iraq and notes that the small community in Istanbul attained more tolerance. Claiming the assimilation or the decline in the size of the population, the processions diminished in the public space and totally disappeared as a result of the ban of all religious gatherings and processions in 1926.

Nonetheless, the rituals were carried out in private houses with smaller groups for more than half a century. [122] Following the changing social and political context in Turkey, parallel to the developments such as the Alevi revival, the Caferis began to be seen in the public space with their public rituals. While the community in

[121] Ibid., p. 118.

[122] Some of the informants I interviewed told that their fathers and grandfathers used to come together in the houses to commemorate Aşura. See Kasım N., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 27 March 2009.

Istanbul gathered in their mosques until the second half of the1990s, especially within the last decade, they have carried out these public processions in a wider arena, with a larger participation in tens of thousand of adherents and observers.

The Forms of Ritual Developed for Kerbela Commemoration

The commemoration of *Kerbela* during the month of Muharram consists of a group of rituals and processions. Some of these rituals are practiced all over the Shiite world while some others emerged and evolved in a local setting. Also some of the genres or type of action moved to other Shiite communities carrying their original names or adopted new ones. In this regard, there has developed a wide glossary for rituals and symbols appeared around the concept of Muharram and *Aşura*. Yitzak Nakash classifies these rituals as follows:

> Over a period of twelve centuries there developed five major rituals around the battle of Karbala. These rituals include the memorial services (*majalis al-taziya)*, the visitation of Husayn's tomb in Karbala particularly on the occasion of the tenth day of 'Ashura' and the fortieth day after the battle (*ziyarat ashura* and *ziyarat al-arbain*), the public mourning processions (*al-mawakib al-husayniyya or al-'aza'iyya*), the representation of the battle of Karbala in the form of a play (the *shabih*), and the flagellation (*tatbir*).[123]

In fact there is not a single term all encompassing the Muharram processions nor a unique format of rituals in the Shi'i Muslim world. As well as the differences of rituals from one place to other, the names given to them also differ. In addition to the divergence of the naming due to the different languages spoken by the adherents of this sect, i.e, the naming of a similar ritual might be different in Persian or Arabic speaking groups or sometimes a certain word might be used for naming different

[123] Yitzhak Nakash, "An Attempt to Trace the Origins of the Rituals of Ashura," *Die Welt Des Islams*, 33, no.2 (November 1993), pp.161–181, p.163.

practices. As Nakash asserts; "the diverse nature of the Muharram observances reflected the specific cultures and concrete socio-political realities within which they developed," and therefore as well as naming, the meanings attached to these rituals differ from country to country and culture to culture. Hence, "the comparison of the rituals of Aşura observed by different Shi'i groups can shed further light on the particular ethnic, social, and cultural attributes which have distinguished Shi'i communities in the Arab world, Iran, India, and Turkey."[124]

However, the literature treating the subject seems to use two words in general to reference to the rituals of Muharrem; *taziye* and *mecalis* (mourning sessions or assemblies).

As is illustrated by Peter Chelkowski, "Ta'ziyeh" is a verbal noun from an Arabic verb, *azza,* meaning "to mourn", "to console," and "express sympathy with." In some countries it denotes a Shiite passion play; in others, any ritual devoted to the suffering and passion of Hussein; and, yet in others, it represents an imaginary copy of Hussein's mausoleum."[125] However, in current study I prefer to use the term taziye to refer all kinds of rituals and processions held during Muharram and refer *celese* or *mecalis* for more small scale gatherings mostly during the first nine days of Muharram.

Also, in Turkey Caferis do not use a single word to represent their processions. However, the word *Muharremlik* or *Muharrem matemi* (Muharram mourn) seems to cover more rituals from mourning assemblies to *sinezen* and other mourning rites. Similar to Nakash's classification it is also possible to categorize these processions held in Turkey in five groups. The first is the *mecalis* or the

[124] Ibid., p.180.

[125] Peter Chelkowski , "From Karbala to New York City: Taziyeh on the Move," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (Winter 2005), pp.12-14, p.13.

sessions held in the mosques of community especially during the first nine days of Muharram. This is called *Muharremlik* , *eza meclisi* or some hybrid names such as *taziye meclisi* among Turkish *Caferi* community.

The second is the procession of *Aşura* and the most prominent ritual is the passion play, which is called '*taziye*' or '*şebih*'. Şebih literally means "similar" or "simulation" and it consists of the reenactment of the events during the martyrdom of Hussein and his fellows. The third, seventh and the fortieth days of Aşura are also commemorated by the Caferis with similar gatherings in smaller size but performing chanting elegies and beating chests. Among these, participation in the Aşura and then *Erbain* (the fortieth day of martyrdom) is more common and overrated. It is possible to count *sinezen* (chest beating) or marches of *deste* (public mourning groups) clusters as the public mourning rituals as the third among the category of Muharram rituals. Visitations to the sacred places of the Shi'is (preferably Kerbela or the shrines of Zeynep in Damascus, Imam Rıza in Meşhed of Iran, and Imam Hüseyin's and Ali's shrines in Kerbela and Necef are among these places) on Aşura or Erbain are included in the fourth category. This is called *ziyaret* in general.

The self-flagellation practices which are prevalent in almost all Shiite communities[126] with diverse degrees and consist of acts like sinezeni (beating chests), zincirzeni (beating with chains), and kamezeni (striking one's self with a dagger), and these are known as *latam* among Arabic speaking societies.[127] Moderate self-flagellation forms such as *sinezen-sine vurmak* (beating chests with hand) or

[126] See David Pinault's records with regard to Shiites in Hyderabad, India and Chelkowski's narrations on the Shiis in Trinidad etc. David Pinault, *The Shiites: Ritual and Popular Piety in a Muslim Community* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1992); and Peter Chelkowski, "From the Sun-Scorched Desert of Iran to the Beaches of Trinidad: Ta'ziyeh's Journey from Asia to the Caribbean," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (Winter 2005), pp.156-169.

[127] Richard Augustus Norton, "Ritual, Blood and Shi'i Identity: Ashura in Nabatiyye, Lebanon," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (Winter, 2005), pp.140-155.

slapping heads exist in all Shiite cultures while the more violent forms such as *kamezeni or kama vurmak* (shedding blood with a dagger) evolved into a quite novel practice such as donating blood to local blood banks.

Muharram Commemoration in the Turkish Republic until the 1980s

After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, in the newly founded nation state, in accordance with the contraction in the size of the territories and the huge migration movements and the population exchanges in the early years of the Republic, the population became more homogenous in terms of religious, ethnic and sectarian minorities. The demographic profile and the figure of the Caferis in the Turkish Republic have been discussed in the previous sections and will not be mentioned here again.

All such public rituals were banned in Republican Turkey and, as told by the Caferis, these mourning gatherings were held indoor in rural areas and in private houses. One of my informants said that even in some periods, these people were afraid of being arrested for organizing or participating in illegal activities or gatherings. One said that during the İsmet İnönü era, Muharram processions were held in houses in remote villages and watchmen were set at the entrances of villages due to the danger of raids by the military forces. Kasım N. also mentioned once in Izmir gendarme raids on his uncle's house at which people had gathered for Muharram and 39 Caferis were kept in detention in the early 1970s while the military ruled the country.[128]

[128] "*İzmir'de bizim mesela 1972'de camiler falan yok. Ben o zaman çocuğum. Sıkıyönetim zamanı. Amcamların evinde mersiye vardı. Emniyet jandarma bastı. Topladı götürdüler 39 kişi. Yani yeni yeni o zaman daha… Ben artık biliyorum. Evlerde mersiye*

It is not possible to talk about public ceremonies of Muharram until the post-1980s in the history of modern Turkey. Parallel with the socio-political developments in Turkey which took place after the 1980s, [129] like with the other ethnic and religious groups, the discourses and the practices of Caferis also became more visible in the public space. My informants told me that the first generation that migrated to Istanbul in the 1960s was unhappy about not being able to find any place or group to commemorate Aşura. Sema told me that "When my father learned about the mosque in Valide Han (known as *İranlılar mescidi* (mosque of Iranians) for centuries) he was as happy as a kid…He used to ask himself how I can live in such a city where the mourning for *Ehli Beyt* is unseen." [130] In the 1970s, single families who had migrated before began to come together in the private houses of their *hemşeri*s (people coming from the same city, town or village) to commemorate Aşura. She said "We were walking here (Halkalı) from Bağcılar for hours…

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okunuyordu. Muharremliklerni aksatmaz bizim insanlarımız. Beş kişi on kişi bir araya gelse o Aşurayı Muharremi yaşarlar yani yaşatırlar. Gittiler üç dört gün içerde yattılar sonra salıverdiler. Bişey yok ki. Sıkıyönetim vardı işte. Gazeteler yazdı. Bir yandan da iyi oldu açığa çıktı. Bu insanların da cesareti geldi. Daha önce gizli saklı böyle mecburen işte o psikoloji öyle, sonra açık oldu.."Kasım Naz, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 27 March 2009.

[129] As it is asserted by Markus Dressler "After the coup of 1980, the new military regime responded to the clashes of the late 1970s between the rival groups of the ultra-nationalist right and left by destroying the left and boosting Islamic institutions as a bulwark against them…Religious symbols entered the public sphere and religious language became a part of public discourse to an unprecedented degree". Markuss Dressler, "The Turkish Alevi Poetry in the Twentieth Century: The Fusion of Political and Religious Identities," *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 23 (2003), p.114.

[130] *"'1960' da gelmiş ve hep ağlıyordu. İşte o büyük göç diyorlar. Anadolu'dan İstanbul'a göç. Ekmeği buluyorlar, her şeyi buluyorlar ama. Ben bu şehirde nasıl yaşayacağım? Ehli Beyte yas tutulmayan bir yerde yaşayamam deyip ağlıyordu. Beyazıd'da mescid vardır ya İranlıların… Valide Han. Sonra orayı da keşfedince babam altın bulsa o kadar sevinmezdi. Çok sevinmişti. Bir şekilde başlamıştı. Etrafındaki bütün köylüleri toplayarak gidiyordu."* Sema Serin, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 1 July 2009.

Everywhere was in mud."[131] In the late 1970s and early 1980s Caferis began building mosques for their community and commemorations also began to be held at the mosques for the first time.

Later, due to the demographic factors such as the rise of migration and the population, and the expansion of the use of technology and these apparatuses, celebrations of Muharram and Aşura were carried into larger public spaces and presented to the public gaze. The mourning rituals which were being held in the mosques or streets began to be staged for a wider public and in a larger arena.

Now I want to present the development of public Muharram observances in Halkalı, Istanbul, and the rituals which have been preserved and transformed or reformulated by the Caferis in Turkey depending on social, political and economic context and under the authentication process through which they pased.

Muharrem Liturgies in Istanbul in the post-1980s Era

The rise in the Caferi population in the urban setting brought the Muharram processions to the square-like place in the early 1990s. The processions evolved significantly in terms of technology and the numbers participating in the mourning rituals.

Shemeem Burney Abbas, who gives an ethnographic record of women's majales (mourning assemblies) in Pakistan, denounces the rituals in the first ten-day celebrations of Muharram as follows

> First to fifth of Muharram: reenactment of events on a day-to-day basis according to the Karbala tragedy; accompanied with ritual lamentations and self-flagallation (matam)

[131] Ibid.

> Sixth of Muharram: naratives about Karbala and enhanced matam
> Seventh of Muharram: new rituals are introduced, such as carrying a replica of Ali Asghar's cradle, Qasem's henna ceremony, and Sakineh's nowhehs.
> Eight of Muharram: Hazrat Abbas alam or Standard, raised with the panjatan
> Ninth of Muharram: general intense mourning with narratives from Karbala
> Tenth of Muharram: Ashura –the day of Imam Husayn's martrydom. Pakistani shiis fast on this day, breaking the fast in the later afternoon after noontime prayers. The final activity is the Sham e Ghariban ritual which commemorates the act of trying to find corpses of the fallen martrys. [132]

Similar to other Shi'i groups in the different regions of the world, Caferis in Turkey also hold mourning *mecalis* in the first nine day of Muharram in the mosques. In these gatherings the ahund gives a sermon, the novhahans or meddahs recite liturgical poetry and chant *mersiye* together with the participation of the audience through *sinezen* (beating their chests with rhythms).

Small-scale Mourning Sessions

During my fieldwork, I observed the meclis gatherings in different mosques in Istanbul during the first ten days of Muharrem. For observing these Muharremlik sessions, I preferred Haznedar, Çamlıkahve and Eminönü Validehan Mosques. Actually, these places were frequanted by different groups of Caferis. The mosque in Haznedar was a big one and it was the only mosque which is under the official control of the DRA.

The second place was a small hall at the bottom of a building and the people close to the Kevser group mostly preferred the assembly held there. The third mosque was widely known as İranlılar mescidi and pious Azeris, Iranians and

[132] Shemeem Burney Abbas, "Sakineh, The Narrator of Karbala: An Ethnographic Description of a Women's Majales Ritual in Pakistan," in *The Women of Karbala: Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi'i Islam*, edited by Kamran Scot Aghaie (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), pp.141-161.

Afghans –most of whom are merchants, consulate staff and refugees- and also some radical Caferis prefer to attend the sessions there.

However, more or less, the form of the sessions was same. All sessions started after the evening prayers. At the beginning, a mullah or "*ahund*" gave a sermon covering the historical events that happened in Muharram and their meanings, then a *meddah* or *mersiyehan* (professional elegy reciter) recited *novha, ruze* or *mersiye*. And then *deste* (mourning chorus) groups displayed *sinezen* accompanying the *mersiye*s. These groups wore black shirts, carrying a standard topped with a metal head, and a painting depicting Hussein. While the participants of the first two were mostly Azeri who had migrated from Kars or Iğdır, in the last, the profile of the participants was much more diverse.

Mostly the young people participated in *sinezen* groups and older ones participated to the rhythm of *sinezen* with a lower tone some on foot, some while sitting. While the elegies were chanted almost all of the people shed tears. The talent of the *mersiyehan* or *meddah* was correlated with his capacity to bring the listeners in an emotional mood to shed tears. The chanters should chant effectively to deliver the messages of these liturgical poetries as well as keeping themselves out of a total trance, but displaying a violent grief through themselves weeping as much as possible.

As it is underlined by Shemeem Abbas,

> The chest beating had percussion qualities that brought our emotion in the assembly; these elements put together as text and context, created the majles. The assembled listeners too, performed their function by ratifying every utterance, every move; they were the one who understood the ritual-ceremonial discourse of Karbala and who understood the linguistic variety involved.[133]

[133]Ibid., p.152.

On the other hand, the harmony between the chants and flagellation is important and it necessitates a certain habitual learning. Actually what is at work is a habitus attained and repeated through practice as "the poems had a rhyme and rhythm that made them particularly suitable for accompanying flagellation," and in turn, this allowed them "to participate with their hearts and minds, expressing sorrow, grief and allegiance."[134]

Public Mourning Rituals and Symbolic Objects

On the commemoration of Kerbela, certain symbols were carried to remind significant cases or scenes from the narrative of Kerbela even some of which are criticized for being fictions and having no relation to the "true" or reliable historical records. [135] Sometimes my informants referred to these traditional symbols which are maintained to preserve the exotic and aesthetic accumulation of centuries as the "ritual".

These symbols might be listed as a) an empty cradle, which is carried for the sixth month old son of Hüseyin Ali Asgar who was killed with arrows by the enemy; b) *alem* (it is pronounced *elem* by the Azeris), which means a standard and it represents Ebu'l Fazl Abbas, Hüseyin's step brother who carryed the standard of Hüseyin's army, and his arms have been cut; c) a coffin, which represents the

[134] Ingvild Flaskerud, " 'Oh, My Heart is Sad. It Is Moharram, the Month of Zaynab': The Role of Aesthetics and Women's Mourning Ceremonies in Shiraz," in *The Women of Karbala*: *Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi'i Islam*, edited by Kamran Scot Aghaie (Austin: University of Texas Pres, 2005), pp. 65-91, p.86.

[135] İlyas Üzüm asserts that according to some well known Shii scholars such as Murtaza Mutahhari some narratives regarding the wedding of Hüseyin's nephew Ali Ekber and with his daughter Fatma are considered to be false and have only a mythological character and hence practices developed around this narrative such as Kasım Otağı are also irrelevant rituals attached to Kerbela paradigm. See Üzüm, p. 337.

martyred son of Hüseyin, Ali Ekber; and d) Kasım Otağı, the tent-like chamber of Kasım, which represents the unfinished wedding ceremony of Kasım with Fatima.

Besides these symbolic objects, all those participating to the processions wear black shirts and clothes. [136] The shirts of some deste groups might be white, if they had been printed certain pictures on them. Almost all of the men and women among the deste groups also wore head bonds with written names on them. The names written on these headbands were the significant figures of Kerbela; such as Ya Rugayye, Ya Ali Asgar, Ya Ali Ekber, Ya Zeynep, Ya Hüseyin, Ya Ebul Fazl, Ya Abbas etc. Also the deste groups had these names.

My informants told me that for example, the *deste* groups of little boys called themselves *Ali Asgar Destesi* and put headbands written *Ya Ali Asgar*, while young ladies called their *deste* group Zeynep or Fatıma- Zehra Destesi and wore headbands with these names. [137] This provides identification with the heroic figures of Kerbela. The 72 people in Kerbela appear as a representation of the micro community and provide different role models for believers of different ages and sexes. In this way, the objects (headbands) help in the constitution of a bridge of identification with the real historical figures and heroes of the event and the collective memory operates

[136] As my informants told me, there are people who always wear black for two months (Muharrem and Sefer lunar months until the fortieth day of martyrdom) or people carries a black element in their clothes such as black headscarf, black ties etc. See interview with Kerim A., tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[137] As was told me by the organizers, in addition to the Caferis living in Zeynebiye, Halkalı Caferis from other neighborhoods also constitute their mosque deste groups. Both boys and girls, men and women participate in or constitute these groups. These people who want to participate in the destes are grouped in accordance with their ages. The boys between the ages of 7-12 are classified under Ali Asgar Destesi, boys between the ages of 12-16 constitute Kasım group, young men between 18-25 Ali Ekber destesi and those over 25 are called as Hz. Abbas destesi. The same classification is applied for women's *deste*s as well. The names given appear as Rugayye, Zeynep, Gelin Fatıma and Fatıma Zehra destesi respectively. See interview with Hüseyin Kurban, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13 June 2009.

effectively. Some of my informants emphasized that everyone could find a role model in Kerbela irrespective of her age, sex and social status.

> Everybody sees something from him/herself there. There is a seventy year old man there with Hussein. There is a spouse, a sister, how do I know, a daughter, a little kid in four years old. She is Rugayye. There is Ali Ekber at eighteen years old. There is an infant of six months, Ali Asger. There is a brother. The example of Abbas… Everyone find something for him/herself. It is a family a nice model family. How was the solidarity like there? The unity of family, everybody accepted his fate there without rejection. So, the kids in a way see themselves as a part of something there. She always hears there was Miss Rugayye there. And even I am surprised when I see this. Little kids of three or four ages come and weep during the processions. [138]

> There are so many role models in Kerbela everybody from seven to seventy can find one. Kids try to be that. In accordance with their age, young people choose the headbands to represent the figure s/he wants to be.[139]

Hardly Maintainable but Longing Act: *Ziyaret*

Like their fellows, *Caferi*s in Turkey also give great importance to the visitation of Kerbela for Aşura or Erbain besides other holy places. However, this ritual is less frequent for several reasons and it is performed only by a minority of people among

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[138] "*Sonra öyle bir şey var ki. Kerbelada muharremlikte herkes kendinden bir şey buluyor orada. 70 yaşındaki insdan da var orda Hz. Hüseyinin yanında. Habib ibni Mezahir mesela. Bir eş var. Bir bacı var orda. Ne bileyim kız var. Bir çocuk var orda dört yaşında Rugayye. On sekiz yaşında Ali Ekber var. Altı aylık yavru var. Ali Asger. Yani kardeş var Abbas örneği mesela. Herkes orda kendinden bir şey buluyor. Bir aile zaten o güzel örnek bir aile. Orda bile dayanışma nasıl olmuş nasıl birbirlerine katlanmışlar. Aile birliği beraberliği o andaki yapı hiç kimsede itiraz yok herkes canı gönülden kabul gelecek her şeye. Dolaysıyla o çocuklar da kendilerini bir şekilde o şeyin bir parçası görüyorlar. Kız çocuk duyuyor onu. Hanım Rugayye vardı. Onu dinleye dinleye orda bakarsınız gelir hayret edilecek bişey. Ona hiç kimse ağlamayı öğretmiyor. Öyle bir rolü yok ama ben çok etkileniyorum. Orda bu çocuklar bir bakıyorum üç dört yaşında, buradan akıyor gözyaşı. Ben onu yeminle söyleyebilirim. Onun öyle bir rolü yok. Görevi yok orda her şey tabi. O orda ağlıyor işte etkileniyor. Duyuyor onu*." Kasım N., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 27 March 2009.

[139] "*Yani yediden yetmişe herkesin ders olacağı örnek alacağı şeyler var Kerbela içerisinde. Çocuklar o oluyor, gençler onu örnek alsın gibi onlar da yaşına uygun bandajlar takarlar. Onlarla özdeşleşmek isterler*." Kerim A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

them. The security concerns because of the war in Iraq, the official requirements such as passport and visa and financial budget to maintain such a visitation makes it difficult, but they say that it is one of the ideals for every Shiite to see those places, similar to the importance of pilgrimage to Mecca for pious Sunni Muslims.

Taziye as a form of Passion Drama

One of the distinctive practices rooted in the tradition of Shiite Islam is the passion play or "distinct form of music drama," [140] which is known as *taziye* or *şebih*. It is regarded by some scholars as the only genre of drama which has developed in the history of Islam.

In the nineteenth century Iran, *taziye* emerged as an "elaborate ritual drama or theatrical performance of the Kerbela story" and it involved "a large cast of professional and amateur actors, a director, a staging area, elaborate costumes, and props."[141] While this ritual was popular and provided patronage from the Qajar dynasty, it was banned during the Pahlavi era in Iran (1925-1979), but persisted on a smaller scale and regained popularity as the dramatic performances was found to be useful tools for moral and national propaganda by the Islamic Republic. It has been "translated into visual and pictorial arts" and carried to new platforms such as televising and film.[142]

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[140] Peter Chelkowski, "Time out of Memory: Ta'ziyeh, The Total Drama," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (Winter 2005), pp. 13- 27, p. 15.

[141] Kamran Scot Aghaie, "Introduction: Gendered Aspects of the Emergence and Historical Development of Shi'i Symbols and Rituals," in *The Women of Karbala*, pp.1-21, p. 8.

[142] Ibid., p.12; and Negar Mottahedeh, "Ta'ziyeh: A Twist of History in Everyday Life," in *The Women of Karbala*, p. 32.

Actually the whole Aşura processions as an "occasion for collective atonement through lamentation and self-flagellation" appears as a "distinctly Shia practice and has no parallel in Sunnism". [143] The aesthetics feeding these practices is quite significant. In this regard, as Nasr puts it, "the most vivid distinction – and one that grates on Sunni sensibilities- is the love of visual imagery evident in Shia popular devotunalism. Sunnism tends to frown on the visual arts as possible inducements, if not outright expressions of, idol worship. The piety of Shia, by contrast, is steeped in visual representation."[144] As Chelkowski argues, "The rites of Karbala resonate differently with diverse peoples scattered around the globe. Nevertheless, love and veneration for the artistic expression" in different forms and through various genres "is universal"[145]

According to Ingvild Flaskerud, "aesthetics is applied to create the necessary and desirable religious space, creating an emotional environment that can aid participants to mentally cross the threshold of everyday life to participate in mourning rituals,"[146] and it becomes "a necessary instrument functioning as medium or channel for communicating with the spiritual realm."[147]

As Fernea stresses, today, the Aşura "passion play is performed all over the Shiite Muslim world, in communities ranging from Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan to India,

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[143] Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival; How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future* (New York, London: W.W Norton Company, 2006), p.32.

[144] Ibid., p.44.

[145] Peter Chelkowski, "From the Sun-Scorched Desert of Iran to the Beaches of Trinidad: Ta'ziyeh's Journey form Asia to Caribbean," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (Winter 2005), 156-169, p.167.

[146] Ingvild Flaskerud, "'Oh, My Heart is Sad. It is Moharram, the Month of Zaynab': The Role of Aesthetics and Women's Mourning Ceremonies in Shiraz," in *The Women of Karbala*: *Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi'i Islam*, edited by Kamran Scot Aghaie (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), pp. 65-91, p.65.

[147] Ibid., p.88.

south Lebanon, Anatolia in Turkey, and immigrants in other areas throughout the world, such as Jamaica and Trinidad."[148]

The *taziye* repertory consists of plays devoted to the events at Kerbela and in some countries the events that occurred on different days may be enacted on separate days. However, usually, it is staged on the tenth of Muharram.

Even though the taziye plays have been performed in Halkalı publicly since 1992, they have been staged in a more professional way since 1998. The scale and the format of taziye presented in Halkalı are claimed to be unique in the world. During my fieldwork I saw the records of plays displayed in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and personally took my place among audience during the celebrations in 2009 and saw the play personally.

In Halkalı the main drama occurs on a curtainless platform which is covered with sand representing the desert of Kerbela. All the actors and actresses are chosen among the community members volunteer to take role in the play. Even though they work with a professional director, all of the players are amateurs. Due to the size of the yard and the number of audience running into the tens of thousands the support of the stage with audio visual technical equipments make these performances unique in its track. The number of actors taking role in the play is in the hundreds. All of the actors are responsible for bodily acts rather than using their voices. A technique of playback is used and the script is voiced by professional actors and actresses. Therefore, the players on the stage act only with bodily gestures. In fact, it is not possible to find plays displayed here as professionally successful ones, that's because the "acting styles of the players are exaggerated". As it is argued by Beeman,

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[148] Elizabeth Fernea, "Remembering Ta'ziyeh in Iraq," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4, (Winter 2005), pp.130-139, p.130.

> The greatest challenge in such a broadly realized acting style is artistic balance. One might say that the purpose of all live performance is to have an emotional effect on the audience. However, the rhetorical aim of ta'ziyeh is to affect the audience emotionally in a manner that might be considered extreme by the standards of Euro-American spoken drama. In the tragedies surrounding the Karbala cycle, if the audience is not openly weeping at strategic points, the rhetorical purpose of the drama will have failed…Paradoxically, too much exaggeration in the acting style will lessen the intended effect of the drama.[149]

The paradox problematized by Beeman is transcended through the use of professional sound and actors at the audio level in the *taziye*s in Istanbul. In this way, also the multidimensional performative character of *taziye*s, which make it unique and difficult for actors –which is emphasized by Beeman and Ghaffari- (such as projecting their voices to huge crowds, so much athletic movement such as running, fighting and sometimes horse riding, etc.) is removed and have been put into a novel version by the over-use of technology.

One of the points made by the scholars giving the records and evaluations of taziye plays all around the world is that even though there are women characters in the taziye play women appear as audience rather than actors. However, in the taziye in Halkalı, women take part as actors as much as men. Indeed, the actors representing the angels are women, beside the historical figures with Hussein such as Zeynep and other new characters may join the play depending on the script and the narration preferred.

Some challenges met regarding the participation of women in *taziye* plays have been resolved within the boundaries of religious jurisprudence. If the play involves, for example a scene in which the male and female actor need to embrace

[149] William O. Beeman and Mohammad B. Ghaffari, "Acting Styles and Actor Training in Ta'ziyeh," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (Winter 2005), pp.48-60, p. 49.

each other (as a male and female can not do that if they are not close relatives) in this case, actors are chosen from among couples or sisters and brothers, thereby resolving challenge of *mahremiyet* (privacy). The faces of Hussein and Zeynep, as primary protagonists, are always veiled as the representation of these holy figures is not welcomed by religious jurisprudence tradition.

Taziye stands somewhere between reality and fiction and it also stands somewhere between theater and ritual. Or in Dabashi's definition, it is "a performance of mourning –that has historically spread over a whole constellation of dramatic and ritual performances."[150] The perception of time is also fluid. As is brilliantly explained by Ayoub, the ritualistic dimension in the Aşura processions combines the past and the present or even leads to a sense of lost within time and space.

> Through ritual, religious men and women can relieve an event in their spiritual history and renew their relationship with it. Through the enactment of an important event of the past, the 'now' of a religious community may be extended back into past and forward into the future. Thus, history is no longer the mere flow of happenings in time without purpose or direction. Rather, through the present moment, that is, the ritualistic moment, time and space become unified and events move toward a definite goal. In the ritualistic moment, serial time becomes the bridge connecting primordial time and its special history with the timeless eternity of the future. This eternal fulfillment of time becomes the goal of human time and history.[151]

This situation creates a "flow" in the sense that Victor Turner discusses. According to him, "flow denotes the holistic sensation present when we act in total involvement," and is "a state in which action follows action according to an integral

[150] Hamid Dabashi, "Ta'ziyeh as Theatre of Protest," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (Winter 2005), pp.91-99, p.92.

[151] Ayoob, p.148.

logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part…we experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is no distinction between self and environment, …or between past, present and future."[152] This sense of trance might be interpreted as an act of penitence or self-purification and, as Afary underlines, the "variety of ceremonies engages with the body in physical, emotional and spiritual sense and leading to an enormously gratifying experience."[153]

Mottahedeh writes that "the staging of the performance situates the audience-participant as both a believer in the present who is mourning the carnage of Imam Hussein in the distant past, and a contemporary of Hussein on the plains of Karbala."[154] In addition to that, "taziye erases the distinction between the performer and the audience, and "it retains a fundamental principle of intimacy" and it is described as "*le theatre total.*" [155]

Therefore, the success of the play lies behind its representation as if it is not a play, but reality. This should lead to a total identification of the audience with the reenactment and a mental or emotional transition to the past or an oscillation between the past and the present. As is argued by Dabashi, "The two moments of the act, its historical roots and its momentary remembrance, are equally collapsed into each

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[152] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Thetaer*: *Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ, 1982), pp.55-56.

[153] Janet Afary, "Shi'i Narratives of Karbala and Christian Rites of Penance: Michel Foucault and the Culture of the Iranian Revolution, 1978-1979" *Radical History Review* 86 (2003), pp. 7-35 p.20.

[154] Negar Mottahedeh, "Karbala Drag Kings and Queens," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (Winter 2005), pp. 73-85, p.82

[155] Peter Chelkowski, "Time Out of Memory: Ta'ziyeh The Total Drama," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (Winter 2005), pp. 13- 27, p.25.

other, preventing a sympathetic distancing of the audience from the fact of the event."[156]

This provides taziye a peculiar status "which is neither fictive theatre nor stylized ritual, neither real nor unreal. It is located on a tertiary plane between the real and the unreal, from which both the real and unreal sustain their relevance."[157]

While the mourning or lamentation refers to a sense of regret due to the events that happened in Kerbela in the way that they occurred, at the same time all of these events are regarded as pre-destined happenings as a realization of the divine authority. Hussein himself knew that he was going to be martyred. This discourse is uttered in a paradoxical way. In the historical narration, it is believed that even the prophet himself announced the event of Kerbela decades earlier. In this regard,

> Ali's exclusion from power, the defeat at Karbala, the sufferings of Ahl-e Bayt: these were not accidents, chance failures because of poor leadership among the Shiites. These events were predestined and were merely played out as the fulfillment of a cosmogonic drama enacted at the very beginning of time. Seen then from the perspective of eternity, the sorrows of the seventh century disclose a divine patterning, and Shiites become part of this divine economy as they experience for themselves the sorrows of Karbala in the annual Muharram liturgies.[158]

It is believed that Hussein died for the preservation of Islam in its authentic or original form for the future generations. His martyrdom represents a symbol of sacrifice for a higher ideal. He opposed the evil and the corrupt authority rather than make compromises and he displayed the resistance and undermined the legitimacy of the existing political authority ruling the Muslim society by his martyrdom.

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[156] Dabashi, p.94.

[157] Ibid., p.95.

[158] Pinault, p.40.

This notion of willing sacrifice is crucial in the Kerbela or Aşura paradigm. Aghaie mentions the hot theological debates among the Shii *ulema* (scholars) about the willing or unwilling death of Hussein throughout Shiite history. In the orthodox resources it is claimed that Hussein knew that he was going to be killed and that he chose martyrdom to show his followers how to revolt against the oppressors even at the expense of death. Therefore the discourses around Kerbela represent a "tension between free choice and determination and good and evil."[159]According to Pinault, "Karbala then was the necessary outcome of Hussein's voluntary *kenosis* or self-emptying," and thus, "Shia meditations on Karbala can be said to have evolved a distinctive spirituality and ethos linked to motifs of expropriation, persecution, and suffering."[160] In addition, as Ansary-Pettys puts forth,

> He, like Jesus, is part divine, part human; and, again like Jesus, earns his position as intercessor by his willing and noble sacrifice. To forget this sacrifice is to forget the purpose for which the sacrifice was made. To shed tears, to cry out in anguish, to beat the body with chains, and slash the head with knives is to remember what the faithless Kufans did not. Perhaps the excessive lamentation and actual physical abuse that occurs during the Muharram ceremonies negate the need for the missing element of resurrection mentioned earlier. The frenzied and active participation of the audience during the Ta'zieh may produce its own special brand of catharsis.[161]

Therefore, "the redemptive suffering as manifested in the tragedy of Muharram has been viewed in two ways." The death of Hussein is regarded as a sacrifice in the fight of good vs. evil and it resembles the participation of the faithful through one's suffering. In this manner, weeping is a merit and it symbolizes the sympathizing with

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[159] Ayoob, p.121.

[160] David Pinault, "Shia Lamentation Rituals and Reinterpretations of the Doctrine of Intercession: Two Cases from Modern India," *History of Religions* 38, no. 3, (February 1999), p.290.

[161] Ansary-Pettys, p.351.

the suffering of the Imams and of the Prophet and "gaining absolution from Almighty for the historical sin of betraying Hussein" and the Muharram ceremonies turn into the "public manifestation of penitence." [162]

The sense of lament in the Shii rituals is not how to deal with the suffering, but the suffering or mourning itself is necessary to perpetuate the collective memory and to affirm the religious identity. As Geertz argues, "The problem is not how to avoid suffering but how to suffer, and how to make a physical pain, personal loss or worldly defeat sufferable". [163]

All these traditions, liturgical materials and mourning practices are meant to evoke a deep sorrow for the participants and remind the faithful of his/her part in the sacred drama. This is because, "by being part of the sacred drama, nature itself becomes sacred. This sacralization of nature may be seen symbolically in the sanctity of the days of Muharram, the sacralization of time, and of Karbala, the sacralization of space."[164] In these discourses, practices and symbols it is relevant to point and the similarities between Shiism and Catholic Christianity. The notion of redemptive suffering, the notion of intercession that is believed to be attained through the Imams, and the variety of rituals grew around these discourses have their counterparts in Catholicism. Referring to Henry Corbin, Ayoub describes "Shii imamology as a kind of Islamic Christology"[165] In this manner, interpreting Muharram rituals as rite of

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[162] Afary, p.20.

[163] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers: 1973), p. 104.

[164] Ayoob, p.147.

[165] Ibid., p.199. For a detailed depiction of the similarities between Shiite Islam and Catholic Christianity, see James A. Bill, and John Alden Williams, *Roman Catholics and Shi'i Muslims: Prayer, Passion and Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

penance as well as "collective, dramatic public festival of death" and display of commitment to the religious and ideological credo or system of belief is meaningful.

As is asserted by William O. Beeman, "the tazi'yeh performance offers the opportunity for the spectators ritually to renew their commitment to a religious and ideological order of which they are an integral part. This ideological order does not limit itself strictly to religious dimensions but includes a political and nationalistic dimension as well."[166]

Organizing Muharram processions or controlling them enables Caferis to give political messages to the public and other subgroups within the community. For example, with regard to the Muharram observances in Lebanon, Richard Norton states that "Ashura is not merely the grassroots practice of a religion; it is also a political event, an opportunity for rivals Amal and Hizbellah to show their strength and demonstrate their solidarity."[167] The same is true for the Caferis in Turkey.

First of all, processions increase the public visibility of the community. The festival-like atmosphere of the rituals inviting the participation of political figures, community leaders and an army of press and media members gives the community the chance to announce their political demands from the government and civil society. They deliver their political messages to a larger audience. On the other hand, organizing Aşura on behalf of all of the Caferis in Turkey, the leadership or the collectivity active in Zeynebiye, positions itself as representative of the whole community in Turkey. Indeed, the leadership or the Zeynebiye is not considered to be the ultimate leader of all Caferis in Turkey. However, the role gained by the

[166] William O. Beeman, "Cultural Dimension of Performance Conventions in Iranian Ta'ziyeh," in *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, edited by Peter J. Chelkowski (New York: New York University Press, 1979), pp.24-31, p.30.

[167] Norton, p.149.

leading position in organizing Aşura contributes to the symbolic capital and political representation of the figures active in Zeynebiye, Halkalı.

Other Festive Events being held in *Aşura*

Aşura also appears as an intense commitment-demanding work and act of generosity carried out in the name of Imam Hussein. Norton tells about the preparation of foods associated with *Aşura* in Lebanon and celebration of it as a family holiday and occasion for reunion and feast.[168] Similar to the house of mourning, the meal is offered in the name of *ihsan* (grant). Many of the households cook large amounts of food to offer lunch for the guests participating in Aşura from distant neighborhoods or other cities.

I was invited by one of the inhabitants in Halkalı on the day of Aşura. The family of whose *ihsan* meal I partook preferred local foods for the purpose of making the Azeri culture and traditions known. After the lunch, they began to cook *helva* (a dessert baked with flour, sugar and butter) which is offered after the funeral. Caferis do not drink water until the afternoon of the day of Aşura to remember the thirst of the martyrs of Kerbela and instead of pure water they offer a drink with added content like cola or traditional syrups to the guests participating in Muharram observances. All these practices hold the memory of mourning quite alive as it was experienced on that day. And this provides the embodiment of the well known slogan "Every day is *Aşura* and, everywhere is Kerbela".

> The renewal of the relationship of the pious Shi'i Muslims with their Imams, who lived in the long ago of the community's history, can be achieved at any moment in time through the ta'ziyah ritual, but especially on the day of Ashura. Every Muharram becomes the

[168] Ibid., p.150.

> month of tragedy of Karbala and every Ashura the day of the martyrdom Imam Husayn. [169]

Despite the effort to commemorate each Aşura as if it were the 'original' one, by definition it fails since to preserve the sense of trauma alive is crucial and its success relies on this sense of lack or failure or insufficiency of mourning, suffering or remembering enough. As it is revealed brilliantly by Dabashi,

> No mourning could or should ever be successful. The success of mourning is its failure. Mourning is successful only to the degree that it fails… The success of mourning means the eradication of the central trauma that has caused it, and no such eradication of a trauma definitive to a culture is possible- without nullifying that very culture. Shi'is are condemned/blessed forever to remember the central trauma of their history, but never so fully that they can forget it. The act of remembrance will have to always remain incomplete… In commemorating the death of a martyr, shi'is are seeking to identify with absolute Otherness … with the face and the body, miasmatic memory and creative incantation, of the saintly and the diseased. In that impossibility, mourning choreographed and staged, ta'ziyeh is made possible.[170]

[169] Ayoob, p.149.

[170] Dabashi, p.98.

CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCING MUHARREM

Positioning the 'Ritual'

While analyzing and summarizing the theories on ritual, Catherine Bell asserts that "Most influential theories of ritual belong to one of these two camps: some stress the distinctiveness of ritual, how it is clearly different from all other kinds of activity; others stress the congruity of ritual with other forms of human action, usually by seeing ritual as 'the expressive, symbolical and communicative' aspect of action in general."[171]

In fact, as Bruce Kapferer writes, "Ritual is one of the most used, perhaps overused, sociological categories and one of the most resistant to adequate definition." [172] Although ritual is frequently defined as a "behavior that is formal, stylized, repetitive and stereotyped, performed earnestly as a social act"; it may be regarded as "a composite of a behavioral pattern – a visible performance … that has a meaning to all. A ritual 'means' (operates or refers to) an invisible process – frequently a transformation- in a given cultural ensemble"[173]

Representational, meaning-driven or meaning centered and symbolic approaches to are of importance while dealing with rituals, but there is also a shift

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[171] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 70.

[172] Bruce Kapferer, "Ritual Dynamics and Virtual Practice: Beyond Representation and Meaning," in *Ritual in Its Own Right: Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation*, edited by Don Handelman and Galina Lindquist (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp.35-71, p. 35.

[173] Piroska Nagy, "Religious Weeping as Ritual in the Medieval West," in *Ritual in Its Own Right*, pp.119-137, p. 120-21.

toward viewing ritual as a dynamic process for meaning production. Therefore, rather than analyzing ritual in the form of textual analysis, the perspective conceiving ritual performance "as a dynamic field of force in whose virtual space human psychological, cognitive and social realities are forged anew" would contribute to the understanding of how ritual works for the construction of social meanings. [174]

In this study, several terms such as "performance", "spectacle", "procession", "observance" have been used to describe or name the activities held around the concept of Muharram and Aşura. However, within the theoretical framework the best applicable concept seems to be the term "ritual," even though the meaning given to this term by the people whom I studied implied not to cover the spirit of their acts. In other words, Caferis themselves do not prefer to use the concept of ritual for their acts. I will try to explain this below after giving my use of the term as an analytical tool.

Inspired by Kapferer, Schieffelin argues that ritual actually works through "the performative manipulation of ritual frames, aesthetic distance, audience/participant focus, attitude, and commitment to the performance reality" so, it is crucial to draw our attention towards "1) the arrangement of space and the organization of audience and participants in the performance setting and 2) the media (song, dance and so on) in which the symbolic action is carried out". This is because "performance does not construct a symbolic reality in the manner presenting an argument, description, or commentary. Rather, it does so by socially constructing a situation in which the participants experience symbolic meanings as part of the process of what they are already doing."[175]

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[174] Edward L. Schieffelin, "Performance and the Cultural Construction of Reality," *American Ethnologist*, (1985), pp.707-724.

[175] Ibid., p.709.

Similar to Schieffelin's analysis of the healing séances of the Kaluli people, performance unity and integrity gain importance through Aşura lamentations. Schieffelin refers to the strategic use of songs by the medium and argues that, "it is through the people's participation in chorusing the songs that their divided attention is brought together and focused, and it is through the content of the songs… that the mood of pathos and nostalgia….can be evoked and intensified."[176] In my case the talent of mersiyehan also became crucial in this sense and the harmonic integrity of sinezen with mersiye and their support with costumes as well as the form and content of liturgical poetry promoted the concentration of the mourners and the aesthetic display of their grief. These mechanisms were at work also for ruzehan and the ruze s/he was reciting and the pathos appeared in form of the weeping of the audience. The audience thus became the arbiter of the authenticity of mourning assembly or deste groups. The diversity and the emotional efficacy of the mersiyes, ruzes, or nohas and the personal qualities of ruzehan, meddah or mersiyehan (i.e voice and pathos) are important. [177]

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[176] Ibid., p.713.

[177] My informants told me that the *mersiye*s recited by the *deste*s in the *Aşura* are determined by the organization committee or the people in charge of educating and preparing young *deste* groups for the observances. See Hüseyin K., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13 June 2009. In Iran which is the birth place of these performances, *meddah*s or *ruzehan*s are professionally performing their job and well-known *meddah*s are paid well. It is also true for the *taziye* players. See William Beeman and Muhammad B. Ghaffari. "Acting Styles and Actor Training in Ta'ziyeh," *The Drama Review* 49 no.4 (Winter 2005): 48-60, p.51. However, in Istanbul both players and deste participants consist of voluntary members of the community and selected by the organization committee depending on the applicants' personal qualifications and talents. But for private assemblies, for example, for a funeral gathering those well-known and talented mersiyehans are preferred and probably paid by the family inviting them to their private ceremony.

"The socially emergent dimension of performance, constructed through the interaction of the performers and participants but not reducible to them, constitute the reality in which the actual work of the séance gets done." Schieffelin writes,

> Because ritual in performance is a reality apart form its participants, the participants may not all experience the same significance or efficacy….the performance is bound to mean different for different people. … *(So)* … the meaning of ritual performance is only partly resident in the symbols and symbolic structures of which it is constructed. To a large degree… the meanings of the symbols and of the rite itself are created during the performance, evoked in the participants' imagination in the negotiation between the principal performers and the participants. (*Emphasis and the linking word belongs to the author of thesis*)[178]

During my case study, my informants referred to the concept of ritual several times. The term "ritual"[179] was conceived and used by them to define the acts done without any sense of consciousness, in a repetitive and traditional manner; that is to say, far from authentication or conceptualizing in a modern interpretation of the pious. For example, Kerem A. denoted letting blood as an activity "ritualized" by the people throughout the centuries to symbolize the density of grief.[180] Another informant also mentioned while telling the meaning of *Aşura* for herself, that "when it is looked at from outside, people think that it is commemorated only within one day and it's over. No it is not. It is something beyond the ritual for us. It is not only a celebration for us".[181]

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[178] Schieffelin, p.722.

[179] They referred to the term as *ritüel* or *tören* in Turkish.

[180] Kerem A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[181] "*Dışardan bakıldığı zaman bir gün içinde Aşura töreni yapılıyor, bitti. Biizm için öyle değil…Ritüellerden çok öte bir şey yani bizim için. O tören değil yalnız bizim için*". Melike A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

This refers to a pejorative approach to the concept of ritual in the minds of the performer/participants which by-passes the meanings and emotions it represents for them and limits its impact on the construction of social reality and the everyday life. That is to say, for my informants the term "ritual" meant a kind of repetitive action which was devoid of authentic meaning, and to some extent which was worthless from the perspective of personal or public piety. When I presented my study as basically focusing on the rituals, they began to tell me about the symbolic and traditional applications which were preferred to emphasize the exotic aspects of Aşura and to perpetuate that culture such as the cradle, the coffin, tent of Kasım and other similar symbols. This is because these actions were not seen as pious or religious acts but usually regarded as cultural and traditional ones.

Locating Muharram among the Rituals

Formalism, traditionalism, invariance, sacral symbolism and performance are listed as the major characters of ritual-like activities by Catherine Bell.[182] Therefore, it is not problematic to locate the Muharram processions in the framework of ritual-like activities and "ritual" in general from an analytical perspective. However, designating the genre of Muharram among rituals or limiting it to a single category is problematic.

Bell classifies the basic genres of ritual action as follows: a) Rites of Passage which are "ceremonies that accompany and dramatize such major events as birth,

[182] See Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 136.

coming of age initiations for boys and girls, marriage and death," etc. These rites "culturally mark a person's transition from one stage of social life to another";[183] b) Calendrical rites which "give socially meaningful definitions to the passage of time, creating an ever-renewing cycle of days, months and years";[184] c) Rites of exchange and communion "in which people make offerings to a god or gods with the practical and straightforward expectation of receiving something in return"[185]; d) Rites of Affliction which "seek to mitigate the influence of spirits thought to be afflicting human beings with misfortune"; [186]e) Feasting, fasting and festivals. These rites are enacted with "a great deal of emphasis on the public display of religio-cultural sentiments" and "in these rituals people are particularly concerned to express publicly…their commitment and adherence to basic religious values"[187] Finally f) Political rites which compromise "ceremonial practices that specifically construct, display and promote the power of political institutions (such as king, state, village elders) or the political interests of distinct constituencies and subgroups". [188]

Bell refers Muharram ceremonies under the fifth category, the feasting and festivals. However, from my point of view, it is possible to accommodate the group of rituals in Muharram under all of the ritual categories above. It carries or embodies different aspects and dimensions related with those categories. It has similarities with rites of passage in two ways. The notion of Muharram carries a liminal feature. A

[183] Ibid., p.94.

[184] Ibid., p.102.

[185] Ibid., p.108.

[186] Ibid., p.115.

[187] Ibid., p.125.

[188] Ibid., p. 128.

two-month period (from the beginning of Muharram until the 20th of *Sefer* (the second lunar month) or the fortieth day of the martyrdom known as *Erbain*, a 50 day period in total) is experienced as a collective transition state in which people pay special attention to their clothing (prefer not to wear fancy colorful clothes or wearing something black (a tie, scarf etc) for keeping the mourning alive, and never held wedding-like activities or join in such joyous events. In fact, it is possible to consider all the practices of commemoration as ways of passing through this phase of liminality. On the other hand, the notion of martyrdom also leads the experience of Aşura as a ritual related to death and hence the rite of passage. The memory of Hussein is alive among Caferis so that they act as if they have a funeral happening on that day. The meals prepared in the houses in the afternoon of Aşura especially the *helva*, which is traditionally cooked in the house of mourning, is a symbol of this approach.

It is also a calendrical rite, because even though it is determined by the lunar calendar, it has a certain date for commemoration and it is commemorated annually for a certain period of time.

On the other hand, it is also possible to mention it among the rites of exchange and communion. The grief and commitment displayed during the processions and the tears shed for Hussein are expected to return to the believer in the hereafter as redemption and intercession by the holy people or at least as divine compensation and *sevab* (divine reward).

Indeed it is not very difficult to relate it to rites of affliction in some cases, especially the traditional interpretation with regard to Aşura and especially the ziyaret ritual, the visitation of shrines of Imam Ali or Hussein in Necef or Kerbela or other holy figures that is carried out as a search for healing from uncured physical

illnesses as well as psychological and sometimes spiritual problems. The therapeutic dimension of Aşura commemorations and especially violent mourning acts might be evaluated in this regard.

Finally, these processions are related to the political rituals as well. It contributes to the affirmation and normalization of group identity. It also empowers certain institutions while also contributing to the symbolic capital of leading figures. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that *Aşura* has so many aspects that touch on different categories of rituals and it embodies and collects a set of rituals from different categories.

The Authentication of Aşura

According to Lara Deeb, the concept of "authentication refers to the sense of shift that has occurred in the believers' religious understandings and practices and this shift is 'a key aspect of how they conceptualize social change and dynamics of Shi'i identity in the contemporary world'."[189] This concept is mostly referred to pious Shi'i Muslims as the true, original, ideal understanding of Islam in a way different from that of their grandparents and its re-interpretetion in accordance with the conditions and the means of modern times. This new discourse and practice is generally positioned against the traditional practicing of religion. As Deeb writes this process "is dependent on textual study and historical inquiry, as well as on a particular notion of rationality," and is similar to the concept of "objectification" as

[189] Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 8.

"a heightened self-consciousness" or "the systematizations and explicitness of religious tradition."[190]

Actually, what Deeb means by the enchanted modern is this understanding which is structured through authentication and refers not to a rationalization in the Weberian sense resulting in secularization and disenchantment but rather, it uses reason to think about any religious knowledge or practice and makes sure that it makes sense. [191]

During my research, especially the interviews revealed and reflected this authentication process. It was quite effective in the discourses of my informants to express their understanding of Muharram and Aşura.

According to Deeb, in case of Lebanon, "the shift from 'traditional' to 'authenticated' Aşura is apparent with regard to three areas: the *masira*s (self-flagellation practices) the *majales* (mourning sessions) and, most crucially, the meaning of the events of Muharram."[192]

The most significant practice which is re-articulated in the Shii pious discourse in a novel form is the striking of one's self or self flagellation and the most violent form of it, *kamazeni or kama vurmak* (striking oneself on the forehead with a dagger to shed blood). The traditional style involved the shedding of one's blood either by beating oneself with chains or one's forehead with knives. As mentioned in the previous chapters in the case of Turkey, the Caferi identity is mostly known by these images carried into the public gaze through popular media.

[190]Ibid., p.20.

[191] Ibid., p.23, 27.

[192] Ibid., p.133.

Almost all of my informants mentioned this issue and complained about this "mal-representation" or "mis-representation" in the media and continuity of this representation despite the fact that they had given up these practices more than a decade previously. Actually, the practice had a milder form in Turkey in the form of *zincirzeni* (one's beating his/her back with chains) rather than more violent shedding blood.

This practice of mortifying or shedding blood purposely was condemned by the Shi'i clerics all over the world and *fetva*s were issued against the application of these practices. Deeb also reports the ban of this in Lebanon in the mid-1990s. The believers who want to shed their blood in order to empathize with Hussein and the sorrows of Ehli Beyt are encouraged to donate blood to the blood banks or *Kızılay* (Turkish Red Crescent) in the case of Turkey. The Caferis in Turkey claim that Aşura celebrations in Turkey are appreciated and represented as a model to the Shiite world. When they are asked about the criteria of being a model they reply that the order and the discipline and the lack of bloody, violent images in their practices constitute them as such. When I asked them the cause behind these practices, they told me that this practice originally did not have any place in their beliefs, but was adopted in the times of Safavids and then it gained popularity and became traditionalized.

> To hit chain or to hit cleat they call it… these are not the requirements of our belief. In fact it was a thing put around our heads by the Erdebil Turks…In the background, this lies. After martyrdom the daughters of the Prophet's family were taken to Damascus with chains on their wrists and feet. Before, they tied these chains to wrists but this representation was transformed to hitting backs. …It became something traditional. They are the forms of discharge in mood of trance developed by the people. And the source of hitting cleat, they display the truncated head of Hussein in front of Zeynep

> to put her in more pain. When she sees that she faints and hits her forehead on the pack saddle of the camel. It is inspired from that.[193]

Nevertheless, the meaning of these practices need to be re-articulated and put into new forms of action depending on the historical social context and so much related to the image and the reflection of it in the public eye. The change in the function of the practice led to the conceptualization of the meaning behind the action and this meaning has been produced in a novel and civilized form which would also contribute to the representation of the identity and fulfilling the function of remembering the suffers of martyrs.

> But if there were not such practices there would be no media or press. The Aşura tradition lived with these. Otherwise it would have been lost…But in this era we live we see that it doesn't contribute to the Kerbela event. Instead of understanding the essence of Aşura it was being understood as people beating themselves with chains. When we saw these reactions right we said let's dissolve this…What can we do instead of this? If you want to shed blood or discharge yourself, then let's transform it into donating blood rather than shedding blood. This is better, we could serve more than one purpose. And this has been popular and dispersed to other countries…and also Iğdır.[194]

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[193] *"Zincir vurma, kama vurma derler, bunlar inancımızın bir gereği değil. Yani erdebil türklerinin aslında başımıza sardığı bir şeydi. Bunun da arka planında şu yatıyor. Bu zincirler peygamber kızları, gelinleri şahadetten sonra zincirlerle çıplak derilere ayaklarına ellerine zincir vurmaya götürüldü. Kadınlar Şam'a götürüldü. O zincirleri önce ellerine bağladılar. Daha sonra onlar temsil şekli zamanla sırta vurmaya dönüştü. Zamanla hızlandı farklı şekillere dönüştü. Bu örfi bir şey haline geldi. Yani trans halinde insanların farklı dövünme farklı deşarj olma. İşte o kama vurmanın da şeyi Hz. Zeynep İmam Hüseyin'in kesik başını onun gözünün önünde dolandırıyorlar ki daha çok acı versin daha çok canı yansın diye. Yolculukta tekrar getirip onu gösterdiklerinde bayılıp alnını devenin semerine çarpıyor ve kanıyor. İşte ondan esinlenerek o.*"Kerim A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[194] "*Fakat onlar bunlar da olmasa o zamanlar basın, yayın hiçbir şey yoktu. Bunlarla yaşadı aşura kültürü geleneği. Başka türlü bu geleneği örtbas ediliyordu kayboluyordu. Kimse bunu dile getirmiyordu. Ama yaşadığımız bu çağda artık bunların bu aşuraya Kerbela olayına herhangi bir katkı sunmadığını gördük. Çünkü hep bizi Caferiler deyince aşuranın içini anlamaktan öte "zincirlerle kendilerini dövenler" olarak algılanıyordu Biz de baktık tepkiler doğru, yerinde haklı, biz de dedik kaldıralım atalım onu… Peki, bunun yerine ne yapalım? Mademki kan akıtmak, kan dökmek istiyorsun o olaydan içini biraz daha boşaltmak istiyorsun, deşarj olmak istiyorsun o zaman bunu kan dökmek yerine "kan verip hayat kurtarmak can kurtarmaya dönüştürelim". Bu daha güzeldir daha hoştur. Birden çok amaca hizmet etmiş oluruz. Onun için o da rağbet gördü gerçekten.*

It can be said that the most important motive behind the reformulation of these practices is very much related to the collective image of the community. The Caferis do not like the equation of the Caferi identity only with Aşura and Muharram and especially in the form of "people beating themselves with chains." These descriptions are connoted as the "mediatic" representations. This representation also has been effective in the reformulation of these practices. Actually, this brought a sort of conflict with the traditional form and an authentication process took place.

> We excluded those elements. It was because to deliver the essence of the message to the people… You can not push the traditional tissue out suddenly. By the time that it is forbidden by religion… to torture the body…I say to understand the doctrines as a whole and then to perpetuate them is important… Primarily the verdicts of Islam should bind us, not the traditional religion of fathers and grandfathers.[195]

On the other hand, such extreme actions are justified within the context of the very nature of events. These celebrations are protest-like events and emotions run high. The emotional dimension of the action might transcend the order and the discipline of the events and the crowd can become uncontrollable. The mass spirit might express such emotional and extreme reactions.

Also concerning the shedding of blood, actually the function of the practice continues although the form of the action has changed with time. It has been softened

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Bütün ülkelere de yayıldı. Azerbaycan'da, İran'da, Irak'ta herkes artık kan vermeye başladı. Iğdır'da öyle". Ibid.

[195] " *Sonra biz o unsurları çıkardık. Samimi olarak mesajın özü ulaşsın diye insanlara, biz o unsurları çıkardık. Geleneksel dokuyu birden bire çok fazla itemezdin. Zaman içerisinde bunun haram olduğu, kan çıkarmanın, vücuda eziyet etmenin.Diyorum yani öğretileri tam anlamıyla anlayıp yaşatabilmektir doğru olan. Öncelikle bizi İslam'ın hükümleri bağlamalı. Geleneksel baba, dede dini değil*." Melike A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

in form and new meanings have been attached to the action, such as giving or donating life to the people through their blood. Depending on the national and global context the donated blood has been given to the victioms of natural disasters such the earthquake in Pakistan in 2006 Aşura, to the people of Gaza under Israeli attack such as was the case in 2009.

Another outcome of the reformulation of self-mortifying practices might be seen in the transformation of the gendered aspect of the lamentation rituals. The ethnographic observations of Mary Elaine Hegland regarding the Muharram commemoration in Pakistan, interpret the exclusion of women from bloody exercises of *matem* (mourning) as signifying women's lack of worth because "women were not able to convert their bodies into signs of martyrdom in imitation of Imam Hussein." [196] However, novel practices or the reformulation of these rituals has promoted to the eradication of traditional gender roles. In the novel form of ritual, women can also donate blood as is the case in Turkey.

I have also witnessed that the narratives of my male informants signaled the deconstruction of traditional behavioral models attributed to males such as "men do not cry". They reject this and present weeping for Hussein as a common wisdom for all Shiites irrespective of their gender, age and social status.

> Some say that weeping is forbidden. What kind of a human are you? Something happens. Then you cry and feel relaxed. Man needs to cry. It is quite useful for the eyes. Think scientifically, leave them aside. It is a humane wisdom. "Men do not cry!" These are absurd things. You are a human and human beings cry. On that day (he means Aşura), the one who cut the head off Hussein also cried. [197]

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[196] Mary Elaine Hegland, "Flagellation and Fundamentalisms: (Trans)Forming Meaning, Identity and Gender Through Pakistani Women's Rituals of Mourning," *American Ethnologist* 25, no. 2 (May 1998), pp.240-266, p.249.

[197] "*Kimisi diyor, "ağlamak haramdır." Nasıl, insansın, bir şey oluyor ağlıyor rahatlıyorsun. Ağlamaya da ihtiyaç var. Bu göze çok faydası olan bir şey. Bilimsel olarak düşünün onları boş ver. İnsani bir şeydir, erdemdir. "Erkekler ağlamaz", abuk sabuk*

The significance of the context in the determination of the reformulation of these practices is explicit. While the Caferis in Turkey prefer a sort of transformation in the application of some rituals depending on the national setting in which they live, for example, the Shiites in India (even though they also constitute a sectarian and religious minority in their country), preserve these practices i.e., the bloody form of *matem* as a symbol and strong mark of their collective identity. According to David Pinault,

> The regulation of doctrine and ritual is undertaken for the sake of issues involving the image of Shiism abroad and international rapprochement with non-Shia Muslim communities. But at the popular level bloody matam persists precisely because such practices serve to mart Shias as distinct from other communities within their immediate environment. In its performative and demonstrative aspects, then, perhaps it can be said that all ritual, like politics, is local. [198]

In addition to the protection or reformulation of traditional practices, in authenticated *Aşura* new forms of activities are also adopted. For example, as was explained by my informants, every year a conference on Aşura is organized, and an exhibition on Aşura photos is displayed consisting the photos by local and international photographers.

The Position of Tradition with Respect to the Authentic

In the narrative of my informants there was a dual approach with respect to the concept of tradition. Mostly, the traditional elements which are seen to be in conflict

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sözlerle şunlarla bunlarla. İnsansın, insan olan ağlar. O gün orada İmam Hüseyin'in başını kesen de ağladı." Kerim A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[198] David Pinault, "Shia Lamentation Rituals and Reinterpretations of the Doctrine of Intercession: Two Cases from Modern India," *History of Religion* 38, no.3 (Feb. 1999), pp.285-305, p.305.

with the correct or "authentic" interpretation of the religious discourse have been rejected or reinterpreted and reformulated in an appropriate form. As mentioned above, this is what has happened with the self-mortifying practices.

On the other hand, some symbolic traditions such as the objects carried during Aşura to refer to significant figures and events are preserved and seen as folkloric elements of Aşura and welcomed as they serve the attraction of more public interest to the event. Indeed, radical Caferis strongly reject these elements as purely cultural and superstitious practices.

However, this anti-traditional or authentication discourse is articulated among the Azeri Caferis in a more moderate form and they follow an evolutionary way for the transformation of the traditional elements and adaptation of new practices. To determine or classify what to throw away or what to preserve from "tradition", they consider the function of a certain tradition within the cultural and social setting.

Sometimes they can express a longing for the traditional form of Aşura.

> In Iğdır *Aşura* was different. It had a different tone….It was more among us and more traditional, more cultural, the one we were sovereign to our language, not opened to the world, more local. The ones here (in Istanbul) have become more like addressing the world. Maybe the recent situation in Iğdır is also like that. I have spoken about Iğdır of my childhood, fifteen years ago. It was like that at that time.[199]

The Aşura celebration in Istanbul is considered to be located in a more national and even global context and therefore it is not regarded as a Caferi-only ritual. Its social

[199] "*Iğdır'da aşura daha farklıydı. Farklı bir tınsı vardı. Daha kendi içimizde ve daha geleneksel, daha kültürel, kendi dilimize hâkim olduğumuz, dünyaya açılmamış, kendi içimizde daha yöresel. Burdakiler daha çok Dünyaya hitap eder duruma gelmiş. Belki Iğdır da son durum da burdaki gibidir. Ben onbeş sene öncesinin Iğdır'ından bahsettim. O zaman öyleydi.*" Zeynep Ö., interview with the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

and political function and contribution to the visibility or representation of the collective identity by-passes its spiritual dimension to some extent.

> It has gained a universal dimension and the cultural tissue has remained backward. Even the politicians attend it… As they look with humanly feelings, everybody joins the event. It is not limited to the people living Islam (*the pious Caferis*) anymore. (*Emphasis and words in brackets belong to the author of the thesis*) [200]

While some of my informants seemed to be a bit uneasy about the challenges brought by locating Aşura in a global context and the authentic form that it takes, the pure traditional form without the authentic meaning attached to it is rejected as well. The traditional form has to be complemented and supported with the "true" meaning of Aşura; it has to find its ideal place within the pious conceptualization of the believer to sustain its spiritual function. In this regard, the practice of the Caferis participating in Aşura rituals in a way learned from their parents and considering it as a social or cultural duty without adopting it within the framework of piety is seen less worthy.

> For example, you know gambling is forbidden. It is not ethical…It is a bad element for humanity. But those who are doing such acts give them up during Muharram. The one drinking alcohol leaves it and beats his chest in Aşura. And he leaves with the sense of fulfilling his duty. But, prayer is more important than it. He has to perform his prayers first… But with that sense of conformity he goes and starts drinking alcohol again. There are such people among the Caferis as well, like in other communities. There are many unconscious people. …They take Aşura as the only religious duty in a traditional way. Probably the parents imposed it on him and filled his subconscious and his genes indeed (laugh) His only religious responsibility is participation in Aşura and he feels OK after that.[201]

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[200] "*Şimdi evrensel bir boyut kazandı. Kültürel doku biraz daha geri planda kaldı. Şimdi mesela siyaset adamları da katılıyor…İnancıl duygularla baktığı için olaya artık herkes katılıyor. Yani sadece İslam'ı yaşayan insanlarla sınırlı değil artık.*" Melike A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[201] "*Ama mesela kumar biliyorsunuz. Haramdır. Kötüdür. Ahlaki değil. Sonuçları ortada. Bunu Hristiyan da, ateist de biliyor ki kumar, içki kötüdür. İnsanlık için kötü bir unsurdur. Ama o içkisini içen Muharremlikte bırakır. En alkoliği bile. Gelir aşurada sinesini döver. Görevini yapmış olmanın huzuruyla o çıkar gider. Hâlbuki namaz ondan daha öncelikli, farz olan. Önce namazını kılması lazım… Ama o vicdan rahatlığıyla gider içkesine*

Actually, the approach to the tradition in the narratives appears as one of the most controversial issues. The discussion of some of the female informants among themselves regarding the determination of the boundaries for a sound approach to the tradition may give some information about this paradox. In this manner, the conception of the religious culture which has taken shape throughout history under the influence of extra-religious cultural elements is subjected to a sort of purification. This is because such a religious culture has not been determined or shaped by the principles of religious world view. It is also expected that the true practices based on true interpretations have to be adopted and preserved for long time to be transform into "new" and authentic traditions.

> Z. The important one is the belief. The traditions might change by the time…It was shedding blood before…
> M: If you adopt your truths in a correct way and live with them
> Z: They transform into good traditions.
> S: But tradition should never preclude the religion.
> Z. Of course not. What is important is to know what to do and for what.
> M: The fundamental values. That is to say, the true doctrines of our prophet, the basic principles of Islam.
> S. Tradition is the most important thing that holds a society together. We should maintain our traditions. But we should stop when it by-passes religion.
> M: It turns into *bidat* (innovation) and *hurafe* (superstition) in that case. [202]

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başlar. Yani bilinçsiz insanlar çok fazla. Olmaz mı yani. Mutlaka vardır. Her toplumda her oluşumda… Sadece o aşurayı almıştır. O da geleneksel baba, dede onu empoze etmiştir. Bilinçaltına işlemiştir. Hatta daha ileri gidiyorum genlerine işlemiştir. (Gülerek) Aşuradır onun tek İslami sorumluluğu gelir dediğim gibi orada sinesine vurur. Ben her Aşura gidiyorum, sinemi vuruyorum der, gider istediğini de yapar." Melike A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[202] "*Z. Asıl olan düşünce ve inanç. Gelenekler zaman içerisinde değişebiliyor. Önceden bu şekilde imiş kan akıtma…M. Doğrularını çok iyi bir şekilde sahiplenip yaşadın mı Z. Güzel geleneklere dönüşüyor sonra. S. Ama gelenek hiç bir zaman dinin önüne geçmemeli. Z. Geçmemeli tabi. Önemli olan inanç ve neyi niçin yaptığını bilmek. M. Temel değerler yani. Peygamberimizin gerçek öğretileri. İslamın farzları. S. Gelenek toplumu ayakta tutan en önemli şey. Mutlaka geleneklere sahip çıkmamız gerekiyor. Ama dinin önüne geçtiği yerde durmamız gerekiyor. M. Bidate dönüşüyor hurafeye dönüşüyor o zaman*."

The Caferis that I interviewed also state that these celebrations were for delivering the true or correct narrations with respect to the historical events and this contributed to removing the prejudices towards and historical atrocities or disinformation against them. Most of my informants repeatedly told me as a reference to Imam Ali, "One is the enemy of what he does not know," and so they emphasize the importance of being known and receiving recognition more closely by the non-Caferis and told that Aşura serves this function of correct representation of the discourse and the practice of their beliefs. In this regard, Aşura works as the mark of identity and symbolically construct the collective identity consisting or articulating folkloric and exotic elements within it. The function of Aşura ceremonies is the declaration of their belief culture and identity and their existence within the society as a community.

According to my informants, Aşura fulfils the insufficient representation or image of the Caferis vis-à-vis the non-Caferi and the prejudices stemming the lack of knowledge and inadequate representation can only be removed through the correct representation of the Caferis within the public space which is promoted through Aşura. They become visible, tangible and accessible in the public sphere via their religious practices to a larger extent.

> In the country, unfortunately people on the point of knowing each other… they do not know what a Caferi is, in which tree it grows up or for how many pennies it is sold...
>
> *Then, you suffer from or complain about being not known by the others?*
>
> We suffer from mis-recognition. …It is not recognized. People go and say *sapık mezhep kopuk mezhep* (deviant, pervert sect)… this leads to mis-conceptions and bad thoughts. This is not nice and does

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Zeynep Ö., Melike A. and Sevgi C., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

> not contribute to the social or national peace. It makes us other unfortunately. (*Öteki beriki yapıyor malesef*) [203]

As is argued by Arweck and Keenan, "Such material means as religious art, literature, music, architecture, film, pilgrimage, festival, ceremonial, drama, dance and dress,… are able to reveal what religious ideas 'look like'."[204]

Some of my informants told me that as much as the people face these correct representations of the Caferis and the authentic narration of Kerbela, it would provide other people to know Caferis correctly and in turn this would lead to the removal of negative attitudes toward them as a "deviant" sect.

> Yet, instead of what s/he learned from his/her parents, s/he throws it away and this leads people to search for the truth. This is a good thing… we have the possibility to know each other more closely. Sometimes this is seen as a Shiite propaganda. … But people see that the ones who truly understand Kerbela and Ehli Beyt also understand the life, Islam, social life and law in a correct manner….Therefore, religion is not a hobby. You will believe what you believe in a correct way. With its method and fitting to its original version. Love or not, but to know in a true way is a conscientious duty…Man is the enemy of what he does not know…We want our religion to be understood from the right perspective, the perspective of the prophet. To understand truly, live truly, deliver truly…far from dirty information… Without these Kerbela or Aşura does not make any sense.[205]

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[203] "*Memlekette malsef insanlar birbirini tanıma noktasında Caferi nadir onu da pek bilmiyor. Hangi ağaçta yetişir, kaç liraya satılır, öyle düşünüyorlar. ...Siz yani dolayısıyla tanınmamaktan mı muzdaripsiniz ya da şikayetçisiniz? Yanlış tanıtılmaktan muzdaribiz. ... Tanınmıyor. İnsanlar çıkıp af edersiniz sapık mezhep, kopuk mezhep işte şu bu falan. İnsanların yanlış algılaması yanlış düşünmesine sebebiyet veriyor. Bu da hoş olmuyor, toplumsal barışa milletin kaynaşmasına katkı sağlamıyor. Öteki beriki yapıyor malesef*." Kerim A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[204] Elizabeth Arweck and William J. F. Keenan "Introduction" in *Materializing Religion: Expression, Performance and Ritual,*edited by E. Arweck and W. Keenan, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.2.

[205] "*Artık anadan babadan öğrendiği şey, geçmişten gelen şeyi kafasından atıp hür iradesiyle bunların doğrusunu aslını astarını araştırmaya sevk ediyor insanları. Bu da güzel bir şey…Daha yakından tanışma imkanımız oluyor. Zaman zaman bazıları bunun Şii propogandası gibi görüyor…Ama insanlar onları anlayan Ehli Beyti anlayan Kerbelayı anlayan insanların aslında hayatı doğru anladığını, İslam'ı doğru anladığını, sosyal hayatı toplumsal hukuku doğru analadığını görüyor….Onun için din yani hobi değil. İnandığın bir şeye adam akıllı inanacaksın. Usulüne uygun, orjinaline uygun. Sev ya da sevme ama doğru*

> The people used to see Caferilik very different. How is it like? One fears from what he does not know. But our leader told this to all Turkey. He showed that there is not so much difference among us.[206]

The Visibility of Religiosity or Public Piety

The level of religiosity in the sense of strong attachment to religious identity, belief and practices is comparatively high among the Caferis in Halkalı. This was ascertained by the members of the community as well. Since this research pertained to this group of Caferis, the findings and related analysis may not necessarily reflect how Aşura or Caferi creeds and rituals impacts the lives or daily practices of more secular, non-practicing Caferis in Turkey.

The reasons behind the high level of religiosity among the Caferis in Halkalı are diverse and explaining them would require further research. It might be related to the migration process and it is argued by Özyurt that "immigrants become more religious in their new country than they were back home. The disorientation and stress caused by migration process can be theologizing experience." [207] In the process following the migration, collective rituals may give a sense of continuity between life in hometown and the newly migrated urban neighborhood, thus making the

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tanımak insani vicdani bir görevdir….İnsan bilmediğinin düşmanıdır….Dinimizin doğru perspektiften peygamberin getirdiği perspektiften anlaşılmasını arzu ediyoruz. Doğru anlamak, doğru yaşamak, doğru aktarmak. Kirli bilgiden uzak…Bunlar olmadıktan sonra anlamı kalmıyor zaten Kerbelanın Aşıranın." Kerim A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[206] "*İnsanlar Caferiliği çok farklı tanıyorlardı. Nasıl bir şeydir? İnsan bilmediğinden korkar. Ama liderimiz bunu tüm Türkiye'ye anlattı. Aramızda çok fazla fark olmadığını gösterdi.*"Ali M., interview by the author, not recorded, Istanbul, Halkalı, 27 March 2009.

[207] Saba Senses Özyurt, "Living Islam in non-Muslim Spaces: How Religiosity of Muslim Immigrant Women Affect Their Cultural and Civic Integration in Western Host Societies" Working paper, 179 June 2009 University of California. Retrieved from the web site of Center for Comparative Immigration Studies on 1 July 2009 http://www.ccis-ucsd.org/PUBLICATIONS/documents/WP179.pdf

adaptation to the new environment easier. Özyurt writes, "in addition to meeting spiritual needs, religious communities can provide material, psychological and social benefits for newcomers help them find jobs and housing. Religious affiliation can help immigrants overcome social isolation."[208]

As was discussed in previous chapter, the performance of Muharram mourning is important for displaying the believers' faithfulness to their Imams and joining the sorrows of Hussein and *Ehli Beyt* in a visible and concrete way is crucial. In this regard, the accusation from non-Caferi Muslims of turning the mourning rituals into a spectacle is highly criticized. They emphasize that being in sympathy or empathy with *Ehli Beyt* or opposing the cruelties done to them throughout history should be seen.

> Do they pay commission for us to advertise Imam Hussein? The blood money of suffering is to put it in practice. [209]
>
> They (Sunnis) claim that they are suffering, too. How much do you feel? How much do you suffer? Who sees you suffer? Did a tear drop fall from your eyes?"(*Word in brackes belongs to the author of thesis*).[210]

The lack of any reaction towards the event of Kerbela and lack of adoption by the non-Caferis is met with confusion and disappointment. This empathy is constructed within the framework of humanitarian values and ethics. At least people should join the same reaction due to the sensitiveness of their *fıtrat* (nature). To show their sincerity, they should develop other activities for the commemoration of Hussein if

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[208] Ibid., p.6.

[209] " *Bize komisyon mu ödüyorlar? İmam Hüseyin'in reklamını yapıyoruz. Üzülmenin dost olmanın diyeti eyleme dökmektir*." Melike A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[210] " *Diyorlar işte biz de üzülüyoruz. Ne kadar üzülüyorsun? Nasıl üzülüyorsun? Üzüldüğünü kim görüyor? Gözünden bir damla yaş geldi mi?*" Sevgi C., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

they dislike the traditional version adopted by the Shiites. This is seen as necessary for them to display their side, whether to be on the side of Hussein, good, and justice, or Yezid, the bad, evil and corrupt.

> *Do you mean everyone should join to the mourning of Hussein?*
> M. Of course. Or let them not join. Let them organize and let us join. Let him commemorate. In any way, to organize a panel or conference, call it different, but do something. Let him/her choose his/her side. Is s/he on the side of Yezid or Hussein? [211]

They claim that they would give the same reaction even if the hero of this event had not been Hussein. They argue that being on the side of the oppressed and opposed to wrongdoers is the basic paradigm behind this commemoration and these events emerge as a signifier of this ethical and political stand.

> We do not look only from our Muslim identity. …First of all, he was a human being. He was *mazlum* (oppressed) and he was oppressed on behalf of sacred moral values. …How can you remain silent against the cruelty done to a six month old baby? You are not Muslim, not Shiite not a lover of Ehli Beyt. How can you stay silent as a human being? This surprises me.[212]

> Those insensitive people do not give any reaction to the events in Iraq in China…. When Hrant Dink was killed, people demonstrated by saying "All of us are Hrant." Well, this is very nice. I wish all of us could be Hussein or Zeynep when Aşura comes. I wish I could see that crowd also here. But people embrace the events coinciding with their ideology. [213]

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[211] "*Herkes Hz. Hüseyin'in yasına katılmalı diyorsunuz yani. M. Tabii ki. Katılmasın, o yapsın biz katılalım. O benim yaptığıma katılmasın O da kendisi ansın. Bir şekilde panel düzenlesin. O da adına başka bir şey koysun, yapsın. Safını belirlesin. Yezid tarafında mısın yoksa Hüseyin tarafında mısın*?" Melike A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[212] " *Sadece müslüman kimliğimizle bakıp işte o müslümandı peygamberin torunuydu demiyoruz. Bir kere her şeyden önce insandı. Mazlumdu ve yüce değerler uğruna, çok ulvi değerleri yaşatma uğruna öyle bir mezalime maruz kaldı. Bu boyutu beni çok ilgilendiriyor. Sonra altı aylık yavruya yapılan o zulme insanların hani müslüman da değilsin, yani Şia da değilsin, Ehli Beyt muhibbi de değilsin, insane olarak nasıl duyarsız kalabiliyor ben buna çok şaşırıyorum*." Melike A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[213] "*O anlayıştaki insanlar bugün Irak'a da tepkisiz kalıyorlar, Uygur kardeşlerimize de tepkisiz kalıyorlar…. Hrant Dink öldüğünde mesela o da mazlum bir şekilde öldürüldü herhalde biz hepimiz Hrant Dink'iz diye eylem yapıldı. Tamam çok güzel. Aşura zamanı*

On the other hand, the delivery of the universal message of Hussein or the message symbolized in the oppression of Hussein becomes crucial. The community in general and the women particularly identifying with Zeynep adopt this mission as a duty out of indebtedness to their Imams. The display of this piety or public piety gains its focus here. In addition to the contribution of the Aşura discourse in the spiritual realm, public piety serves the sincerity of the believers and fulfillment of their duty of delivering the message to those who are ignorant about it.

> We could do this (commemoration) among ourselves…in our mosque in our community. Nobody would hear about it. As we did in the earlier times. …But in that case we could reach nobody….In this way, we make Hussein a flag… We deliver his message….Similar to Zeynep, who carried his message and told it to others… We are burdened with the mission of Zeynep.[214]

The role of rituals in the construction of piety is related to the mechanism of framing, which is intrinsic to the performance of the ritual. The framing refers to the perception of the practice as a deliberate and different action. As Bell writes, "by virtue of framing, performance is understood to be something other than routine reality"[215] and these frames provide the creation of an artificial world and "the microcosm

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geldiğin zaman da hepimiz Hüseyin olsak, hepimiz Zeynep olsak. Keşke olabilsek. Hani orada gördüğüm o topluluğu burada da görebilsem keşke. Ama insanlar herhalde kendi düşünceleri ile örtüşen olayları sahipliniyorlar." Sevgi C., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[214] "*Biz bunu kendi içimizde de yapabilirdik. Kendi camimizde kendi cemaatimizde yapardık. Duymazdı hiç kimsenin ruhu duymazdı. Daha önce yaptığımız gibi, ilk senelerde yaptığımız gibi yapabilirdik. Ama o zaman ne olurdu. Hiç kimse bizi duymazdı. Biz bayraklaştırıyoruz Hüseyin'i bir yerde. Onun mesajını iletiyoruz… Bir yerde tabiri caizse Hz. Zeynep'in misyonunu yüklenmiş gibiyiz*." Sevgi C., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[215] Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Dimesions and Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Pres, 1997), p.160

constructed on stage purports to provide the experience of mock-totality, an interpretive appropriation of some greater elusive totality," through modeling the world rituals "shape people's experience and cognitive ordering of the world"[216]

This sense was revealed by the interviewees many times and they underlined the fact that it was possible for them to see almost all of the aspects of the life in Kerbela. Hence Kerbela appeared as a microcosm for the believer.

> Kerbela is not only a plain where 72 men were martyred …It is every thing, really every thing…You can see everything in life there…Which aspects of life aren't there in Kerbela?... Our preparation is for 364 days and to apply these in our lives we need to think and talk about all these things immanent in Kerbela.[217]

> When it is seen from outside it seems as if it is only one day: Aşura. The Shiites commemorated Aşura and it's over. No, for us, every day is Aşura. We live Aşura every day. When we hear a sinezen mentioning Hussein's name, our eyes fill with tears….The ones among us can see this. [218]

Regarding the ritual prayers of Muslim mosque attendee women in Egypt, Saba Mahmood, writes that

> For women…ritual acts of worship are the sole and ineluctable means of forming pious dispositions. A central aspect of ritual prayer… is that it serves both as a *means* to pious conduct and *end*…. Thus the desired goal (pious worship) is also one of the means by which this desire is cultivated and gradually made realizable. Moreover, in this worldview, neither consummate worship nor the acquisition of piety are possible without the

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[216] Ibid., p.161.

[217] " *Kerbela sadece yetmiş iki kişinin şehit olduğu bir alan değil…Orası her şey gerçekten her şey. Hayatın her şeyini bulabiliyorsunuz orada. ...Hayatın hangi boyutları vardır Kerbela'da. Neresi vardır ki biz onu Kerbela'da görmeyelim. Onun için bizim hazırlıklarımız 364 gün. Biz bunları konuşmak zorundayız hayatımıza uygulamak için*." Eren F., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13 June 2009.

[218] "*Dışardan bakıldığı zaman bir gün gibi gözüküyor. Aşura. Hani Şiiler Caferiler Aşura gününü yaptılar bugün oldu bitti. Hayır, bizim için her gün Aşura. Her gün biz Aşura'yı yaşıyoruz. Hüseyin'in adının geçtiği bir sinezen duysak herkesin gözü doluyor….Bizim içimizde olanlar bunu gerçekten görürler*." Sevgi C., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

> performance of prayer in prescribed manner and attitude. As such, outward bodily gestures and acts (such as salat or wearing veil) are indispensable aspects of the pious self in two senses: first in the sense that the self can acquire its particular form only through the performance of the precise bodily enactments; and second in the sense that the prescribed bodily forms are necessary attributes of the self.[219]

Similarly, the Muharram lamentation rituals serve to the construction of pious self for Caferi Muslims. However, for the believers, it is also necessary for the reclamation of this piety. On the other hand, to perform the mourning rituals in a "correct," "ideal" manner, the pedagogic training and supporting the ritual with a sense of humility and assimilating the words and deeds of their Imams and adopting and embodying the form of religion carried through the authentic message of Hussein, is more important. In this regard my informants said that,

> We have seen this within last 13-15 years of my life. If we do not live him in our inner lives, our feet do not take us there on the tenth of Muharram. We go there detached. However much we care for Hussein, we look forward to tenth Muharram. This is very important, really.
>
> If I do not apply this to my life or make an effort for it, how does it make sense just to go there to be seen on the final day? I have to give this to the kids coming for sinezen. I need to implant this mentality those young tillers. They should work for 364 days for the last one day. Otherwise it turns into something empty, meaningless and just a ceremony, and as you will appreciate, Hussein doesn't want this. So our studies are for 365 days and they are charged. [220]

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[219] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.133.

[220] *"On, on üç yıllık hayatımızda şunu gördük, iç dünyamızda onu yaşamazsak artık ayaklarımız Muharremin onuncu gününde bizi oraya götürmüyor, kopuk gidiyoruz. Ne kadar Hüseyin'i dert ediyorsak on Muharremi o kadar iple çekiyoruz. Bu inanın çok önemli.*

Ben bunu hayatıma uygulamadıktan sonra uygulamaya çalışmadıktan sonra final günü maça çıksam ne anlamı var. Ben bunu sine vurmaya gelen çocuklara oturtmak zorundayım. O mentaliteyi üç yaşındaki fidanlara aşılamak zorundayım. Çalışma mı işte 364 gün nasıl çalışmasınlar, inanın bu olmasa içi boşalmış, anlamsız, sadece tören havasında geçen bir şey olur ki bunu da takdir ederisiniz ki Hüseyin istemez. O yüzden çalışmalar 365 gün ve dolu dolu." Eren Fırat, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13 June 2009

Weeping As an Act of Piety

Piroska Nagy, who describes weeping as an "intimate ritual," says that, "crying belongs to body language, which, people feel, frequently communicates things of a depth that would be reduced and deprived of if its very meaning if it were described in the analytical terms provided by language."[221]

My informants usually explained the intense weeping during lamentation rituals as humanly wisdom and a natural reflex which emerge in the emotional mood of joining the grief or feeling the sorrows for the loss of loved ones.

> Hussein victimized himself for the survival of universal principles and values of original religion, the true source of religion…Weeping for Hussein is a big happiness. [222]

> Kerbela is not a weeping ceremony…But of course this is a human thing. When that *zulüm* (oppression) is remembered people cry, they weep. In this manner our tears are ample. It is useful for the eyes.[223]

Weeping for Hussein besides remembering the sufferings of imams has a redemptive dimension which in the hereafter is expected to sustain the intercession of holy people and, in turn, eternal salvation. This understanding is emphasized by Ayoub comprehensively and I witnessed this discourse in the mejalis in which I participated. People are encouraged to weep to find intercession and even bodily and spiritual healing through weeping. However, the believers' narratives with regard to weeping seemed to locate the act of weeping serving an inner purification process and similar to Nagy's analysis on the medieval notion of religious weeping, "it is viewed as a

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[221] Nagy, p.122.

[222] " *Hüseyin kendisini evrensel ilkeler ve değerler yaşasın diye, dinin aslı ve orjinal kaynakları yaşasın diye feda etti. Onun için Hüseyin'e ağlamak büyük saadettir*." Kerim A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

[223] " *Ağlama merasimleri değil Kerbela. Ama bu tabii bir şeydir, insani bir şeydir. O zulüm anıldığında insanlar ağlar yani ağlıyorlar. Biraz da o anlamda bizim göz yaşımız bol. Ağlamanın da gözlere faydası var zaten*." Kasım N., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 27 March 2009.

visible, bodily sign of sanctity, seems to have worked as a ritual outside of any social control. As a means of inner transformation necessitating (and witnessing) God's intervention in the soul, it seems to have functioned as a ritual –an intimate ritual-operating 'in its own right'."[224]

However, the visibility of the same act performed by children in addition to adults, as is true for my case, might bring the questioning of the mechanism providing this act.

Habitus and the Adaptation of Pious Behavior

Assimilation or the embodiment of pious behaviors can be understood within the framework of certain mechanisms which is influential in the promotion of this. In this manner Mahmood's application of the term of *habitus* different from Bourdiue's use of the term, is inspiring. As she sets forth,

> *Habitus* in this older Aristotelian tradition is understood to be an acquired excellence at either a moral or a practical craft, learned through repeated practice until that practice leaves a permanent mark on the character of the person. Thus, moral virtues (such as modesty, honesty, and fortitude) are acquired through a coordination of outward behaviors (e.g., bodily acts, social demeanor) with inward dispositions (e.g., emotional states, thoughts, intentions) through the repeated performance of acts that entail those particular virtues.[225]

Actually the narratives of my informants with respect to their emotional reactions and while comprehending its meaning for them, they told me that they had been attainding these processions since their childhoods. They used the phrase "cultivated into our genes," referring to the sense for mourning for Hussein and those acts became part of

[224] Nagy, p.133.

[225] Mahmood, p.136.

their characters. They interpreted the attractive deeds of little kids during Aşura ceremonies or their weeping as a result of implantation. Hence adults feel the duty to implant or transfer their belief and practices to their descendents.

While talking about her feelings about Aşura and on mourning sessions Gülnur did it in a self-reflexive manner. "I don't know. This is maybe because of the implantation since our childhood, even since our birth. I really feel the sorrow in my body when they tell what Hussein lived. He tells for example the arrow hit there..." [226] In this manner, the animated description of the events and recreation and repeated telling of these stories from generation to generations are carried with the visual and aesthetics elements in them.

Another informant again, explained this with two lines of poetry.

> While our mothers cried for Hüseyin on elegy,
> Her tears mixed with the milk we sucked. [227]

As Mahmoud emphasizes, "What is noteworthy is that *habitus* in this tradition of moral cultivation implies a quality that is acquired through human industry, assiduous practice, and discipline, such that it becomes a permanent feature of a person's character."[228] Interestingly several of my informants used the word "*aşılama*" (implantation) referring to cultivation with respect to the settling the consciousness or deeds to be displayed for personal piety and to publicize this in the

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[226] "*Bilmiyorum belki bu çocukluğumdan beri hani o aşılama dediğim böyle bir şey. Ne bileyim sanki o anı yaşıyorum gibi. Hani böyle anlatılıyor ya ok şurasına değdi boynu koptu falan. Benim içim acıyor. Acaba diyorum çocukluktan beri gittiğim için mi? Anlatınca sanki ben ordaymışım gibi. Yani aşılama böyle bir şey*". Gülnur A., interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 27 March 2009.

[227] *Analarımız ağlarken mersiyede Hüseyin'e, Gözyaşları karıştı emdiğimiz sütlere* See, Sema S., Interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 1 July 2009.

[228] Mahmood, p.136.

relevant context and also for the pedagogic process to deliver this to thechildren of the community.

Mahmood refers to the pedagogical process by which a *habitus* is learned. She argues that while the body seems to be the field of moral cultivation and this works like an unconscious imbibing in practice; however, the point is not only simply to act virtuously, but also how to enact a virtue, therefore, "constant vigilance and monitoring of one's practices is a critical element in this tradition of ethical formation. This economy of self-discipline therefore draws attention to the role self-directed action plays in the learning of an embodied disposition and its relationship to 'unconscious' ways of being." [229]

As Mahmood argues, "it is customary to analyze debates about religious marker of public behavior through the lens of identity politics, a politics that presupposes that each individual and group seeks to express its authenticity through symbols of ethnic, religious, and other forms of particularistic belonging so as to achieve recognition and respect from other members of social collectivity."[230]

Despite the emphasis on identity politics or how the concept of "recognition" by the Other was significantly underlined by the Caferis subject to this study, the discourse of understanding Aşura on the basis of constituting the inner self and the narrative conceiving Aşura both as a means and end for the maturation of a virtuous moral life and the spiritual progress of the self and the community was also prevalent. These two narratives often cross-cut each other or appeared in an intermingling way.

In addition to the significant role of action or practice in the construction of collective memory as well as representation of public piety, the dimension of

[229] Ibid., p.139.

[230] Ibid., p.192.

reflexivity and the pedagogic process of learning through the authenticated discourses were crucial.

Therefore, while the folkloric or traditional elements of lamentation rituals are preserved as a marker of collective identity, the meaningless or unconscious performances are denied or rejected; in other words, the unconscious reenactment of tradition is rejected while a critical reflection and re-interpretation upon the tradition is welcome and, in turn, this may also provide a reformulation or re-organization in the performance and practice of the ritual.

The Muharram celebrations stand in a context of a movement which is oriented both toward recognition and toward the retaining of ethical sensibilities so as to create a new social and moral order and to attain progress spiritually in the process of personal and public piety. The direct engagement of this movement with the state institutions and political and social rights separates it from the piety movement of mosques that Saba Mahmood analyzes.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the last two decades, parallel to the rising visibility of religion in general and diverse ethnic, religious and particularly sectarian identities in the public space, Caferi Muharram rituals, especially Aşura commemorations have emerged in the public realm representing the Caferi collectivity. Parallel to the rising visibility of these religious practices in the public arena, Caferi identity has also become more visible to non-Caferis and in an interactive relationship this visibility has provided the reinterpretation and reformulation of these rituals. This recent observation was the concern of this study, which focused on the relationship between a religious practices of a religious community (Muharram and Aşura rituals) and the identity of the community (Caferis).

As discussed in the first part of this study, Caferi rituals have been conceptualized within the framework of the visibility of collective identity and of piety. In addition to this, section and meaning driven approaches to the concept of ritual were elaborated.

In the second chapter, the controversies related to the location of the Caferi identity with respect to other heterodox sects in Turkey was clarified and the discussions regarding the population and areas of settlement of the Caferis living in Turkey, and basic categories of distinctions were presented. As well as ethnic and cultural distinctions, ideological diversities were also mentioned. In this regard, the issue of migration in the shaping of the urban Caferi arenas, and the importance of mosques for the construction and representation of the Caferi collectivity were emphasized.

The last two chapters of this study were based on the analysis of the data collected during the research process, which aimed at the relation between the publication of collective religious identity and of piety with the meanings attached to the performance of certain rituals in the national and global contexts. The focus of Chapter 3 was the genres of rituals developed around the paradigm of Kerbela and their experience in historical and contemporary settings. In addition, their descriptions, and symbolic and authentic meanings of these rituals were evaluated.

In the fourth chapter, based on the narratives of Caferis, the understanding and the experience of Muharram rituals in general and Aşura in particular were elaborated. While the mourning rituals of the Caferis have been mostly visible within the last two decades, the last decade has witnessed the transformation and reformulation of some specific practices due to the perception of the public gaze. However, beside the negative approaches to violent actions of self-flagellation or shedding blood exercised by Caferis in the memory of the martyrs of Kerbela in previous years, in the last decade these practices have undergone a process of transformation and new practices have been interpreted and gained meaning within the "authentic" discourse of the Caferi faith. Hence, new practices are appreciated as they form the adoption of the "correct" meaning of Aşura and ways of commemorating the sorrow of their Imams.

The methodology of fieldwork and in-depth interviews were utilized to attain primary data with respect to the discourses and the practices of Caferis regarding their identity, constructing their pious self in the urban and post-modern context and their conceptualization and representation of Aşura at the cognitive and practical levels. This study was limited however; to the *Caferi*s living in Istanbul and particularly the grouping in Halkalı and therefore it does not have the capacity to

represent the whole Caferi population in Turkey. Halkalı was chosen as the field of Muharram processions, which find representation in the mass media and the observances in Iğdır and other small scale processions.

The data obtained through the analysis of the narratives showed that for Caferis participating in Muharram celebrations, displaying their faithfulness to their Imam, drawing their lines on the side of good and just and against the evil and oppression, experiencing self-purification through joining the suffering of their Imams and remembering the historical tragedy and delivering the message and mission of Hussein to non-Caferis and even non-Muslims are all of significant importance. In addition, through public processions on Aşura, they display the manner and formulation of "authenticated" Shiism.

The technological factors, rising media and public representation have brought changes in the formulation of Caferi public mourning rituals. The collective identity is formed by considering the non-Caferi and their Muharram processions make their identity known to non-Caferis. Even though Caferis had to perform their religious ceremonies in secret, behind closed doors before the 1980s, in recent decades they increasingly have found themselves in the national and global spotlight. Therefore, these rituals take novel forms and this fact simultaneously is fed and in turn contributes to their interpretation of their belief in an authentic manner rather than traditional. In this regard, the concept of tradition is also subjected to continuing reinterpretation and critical elaboration.

It is true that the paradigms of Kerbela and Aşura have been charged with different political meanings throughout history and contributed to the emergence of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. However, in the case of Turkey, beside the attachment of these meanings to Aşura to some extent (mostly by radical Caferis),

the event of commemoration itself turns into the field of political contestation of the community with the governmental authorities and the channel of delivering their demands regarding social and political rights and expectations.

Aşura processions appear as sites of blending tradition and change, representation of exotic, folkloric elements preserved to draw attention together with "authentic" interpretations and formulations to abstain from mis-recognition besides attaining the pious self in the way it is supposed to be. The shared experience of a certain public ritual provides a site for Caferis both to act and reflect about themselves. They see each other within a Caferi collectivity and field of practice and in the outer gaze watching this process serve the construction of identity. In other words, the Caferi identity is formed through performance. On the other hand, the meanings and symbols attached to these practices support the reflexivity behind these acts and it is supposed to contributing to the formation of a pious self and maintaining spiritual progress at the same time. That is to say, the piety and the collective identity of Caferis become more visible through the Muharram processions on the day of Aşura.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A-GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Alem	The Standard meant to suggest the battle standards carried by the martyrs of Kerbela. Usually written with the name Ebul Fazl Abbas and carried with a metal hand at the top of it and the scarves tied by the Caferis on the day of Aşura.
Aşura	The tenth, tenth day of the month of Muharram, the day on which Hussein was killed at Kerbela, the focal day of the annual Muharram observances.
Bidat	Innovation introduced to religion that contradicts the fundamental principles or resources.
Celese	Literally means session or gathering. Persian word for *meclis*.
Deste	Literally group, the groups chanting elegies in the mourning of Aşura, public mourning groups.
Ehli Beyt	Literally, the family of the household, the family of the Prophet for Sunnis, and only the people coming from the descendant of Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Hussein for Shiites.
Ehli tesennün	Adherent of Sunni Islam.
Ehli teşeyyü	Adherent of Shiite Islam.
Erbain	Literally, the fortieth. The commemoration rituals on the fortieth day of the martyrdom of Hussein.
Eza/Ezadar	Mourning, lamentation/mourner.
Fetva	A written opinion on a specific legal/moral issue.
Gadir Hum	It is believed by the Shiites that the Prophet assigned Ali as his predecessor in a region called Gadir Hum. And this day is celebrated as a festival by Shiites.
Gulat	Doctrinal extremists, they are rejected as heretics by orthodox Shiites and Sunnis alike. In Shi'ism it involves attempts to deify Imams or to ascribe divine powers to them.
Hurafe	Superstition.
Hutbe	Religious sermon given on Friday prayers.
Hüseyniye	Building for Shiite ritual gatherings

İctihad Religious interpretation, the use of independent reasoning, based on one's knowledge of Quranic scripture, the hadith literature, and the Shari'ah, in order to arrive at a decision concerning a moral/legal issue.

İhsan Literally, means grant. It is the meal offered on the afternoon of *Aşura*

Imam In its simplest meaning, one who leads a congregation in prayer; the word is used in this sense in both Sunni and Shiite traditions. The term is additionally used in Shi'ism to designate the descendants of the prophet's family who were the rightful spiritual and worldly heirs of the Prophet's authority and hence the leaders of the Muslim community. The theological doctrine based on this belief is *Imamet*.

Kamazeni Striking one's self to shed blood on the forehead with a dagger.

Kerbela The name of the desert in which Hussein was martyred and the name of the city in today's Iraq.

Matem Action of expressing grief, loss and condolence. Rituals of lamentation for Kerbela martyrs.

Masumiyet The state of perpetual sinlessness and infallibility inherent in the fourteen innocents (Prophet, his daughter Fatima and twelve Imams).

Meclis Mourning assembly, plural *Mecalis*.

Meddah A person telling the stories of Kerbela heroes.

Merce-i taklid A religious scholar of a certain rank who is emulated with regard to religious practice; literally "source for imitation."

Mersiye Liturgical poetry.

Mersiyehan A professional elegy reciter.

Mescit Hall or room for prayers smaller than mosques.

Methiyekar See *meddah, mersiyehan, ruzehan* and *novhahan*.

Muharrem The first month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

Muharremlik The lamentation rituals held during first ten days of Muharram.

Müçtehid The one capable of religious interpretation.

Müteşeyyi One who becomes Shiite or chooses the Shiite system of belief at a certain point of his life rather than being Shiite through birth from Shiite parents.

Müstebsir	Literally, the awakened, one who has adopted Shiite creeds.
Novha	A lamentation poem sung in honor of the Kerbela martyrs usually performed at the close of a Muharram liturgy.
Novhahan	The person who leads a congregation in the chanting of *novha*s.
Ruze	The poetry telling the stories of Kerbela which begins with a 16th century classic work of Hüseyin Vaiz el-Kaşifi with the title Ravzat'ül-Şüheda (The Garden of Martyrs).
Ruzehan	Muharram preachers.
Sinezen	Beating chests to join the suffering of Hussein and martyrs of Kerbela.
Sevap	Divine compensation, reward.
Şefaat	Intercession.
Tasua	The ninth day of Muharram.
Takiye	Dissimulation.
Taziye	Literally means to console. The Iranian "passion play" or dramatic representation of the battle of Kerbela and other events from Shiite sacred history.
Takva	Piety.
Taklidi	Traditional, bounded by the imitation of elders.
Ulema	(Plural of *alim*) Scholars learned in Islamic sciences.
Zincirzeni	Beating with chains.
Ziyaret	Literally visitation. Pilgrimage to the shrines and holy spaces for Shiite Muslims.

APPENDIX B-ILLUSTRATIONS FROM AŞURA 2009 IN ISTANBUL



Figure 1 *Deste* groups of young men marching towards the area of mourning, chanting elegies, beating their chests and carrying standards.



Figure 2 *Deste*s of women walking towards the square while beating their chests.



Figure 2 The crowd in the square of Halkalı on the day of *Aşura* participating in *Muharram* observances.



Figure 3 Two girls carrying the well-known illustration depicting the night of *Aşura*. It is possible to see a copy of this tableau in the houses or offices of majority of Shiites. It is widely used in other countries where Shiites live.



Figure 4 A *deste* of young men. *Mersiye*s are chanted from megaphones. The ones in the front beat their chests with more enthusiasm encourage the cortege and manage them.



Figure 6 Two girls carrying a painting depicting Hussein holding his six-month old baby boy Ali Asgar killed by the arrows of the enemy.



Figure 5 *Alem* carried as a symbol of Ebul Fazl Abbas. The metal hand at the top of standard represents his arms cut by swords. On the metal hand the calligraphy writes the names of Muhammad, Fatima, Ali, Hasan and Hussein.



Figure 6 Two boys carrying the coffin symbolizing the infant martyrs of Kerbela. The white shirts are reminiscents of shrouds and represent their readiness to die on the way of Hussein.



Figure 9 During the speeches in the Aşura program, instead of applauding the speaker, the participants shout ‘Lebbeyk Ya Hussein’ with their fists in the air.



Figure 7 The cradle carried in the memory of Ali Asgar.



Figure 8 The girl representing Hussein's daughter, Fatima. According to legend, her wedding could not be ended due to the martyrdom of her fiancé Kasım. Therefore, the brace she wears is black.



Figure 9 Women slapping their heads, shouting 'Vay Vay Hussein Vay.'



Figure 10 Chains are carried by some *deste*s as a symbol of the captivity of Hussein's fellows after the battle and displays the commitment of the believers to their Imam.



Figure 11 Boys beating their chests with great enthusiasm**.**



Figure 12 One of the moments in which the mourners experience a sense of trance during self-flagellation.



Figure 13 Red roses or ideally tulips symbolize martyrdom, the bowls recalls the thirst of the Kerbela martyrs and the bloody swaddle represents the killed babies at the battle of Kerbela.



Figure 14 These pigeons are released to the sky at the final stage of taziye symbolizing the freedom against oppression even in the form of embracing martyrdom in the road of justice.



Figure 15 The antagonists usually wear red and yellow in *taziye* while the protagonists wear green and black. In this scene from taziye, a secene at the palace of Yezid's commander is enacted.



Figure 16 Hussein dies after a long period of time he gives messages both to his enemies and his sympathizers throughout history. The two women in white carrying wing like things represent the angels carrying his spirit and also take Hussein's body from the stage in a gentile way.



Figure 17 The scene of Hussein's martyrdom at the battle of Kerbela. He dies after a long fight and killing dozens of enemies.



Figure 18 A woman in taziye enacting the wife of the governor of Medina.



Figure 19 A scene from *taziye* in which Zeynep and Hussein are together and the faces of both are veiled as it is forbidden by the religious jurisprudence to display sacred figures without mediation. In this way, it is underlined that even the symbolic representation of such figures should not transcend the limits of virtuality.



Figure 20 At the final of *taziye* the grief reaches its zenith and all destes run to the stage and the mersiyes and sinezen start.



Figure 21 Instead of violent forms of shedding blood in sympathy with Hussein, in the last decades Caferis donate blood to Kızılay. Thousands of people donate blood therefore the health officers take their place near to the field of processions with their equipment.



Figure 25 The tent of Kasım. People pass underneath three times and leave their vows for their wishes to come true.



Figure 22 An illustration from the *ihsan* meal on Aşura afternoon. Traditional regional foods are preferred to offer to the guests.

APPENDIX C- LIST OF INTERVIEWEE PROFILES

Caferis

Interview 1- Halis U., 34, male, college degree , translator& freelance researcher, interviewed on 24 April 2008, Vefa, Istanbul, tape record, a converted *Caferi* with Sunni origin for a period of 10 years, married with two kids, lives in Bahçelievler Istanbul.

Interview 2- Ersin Y., 37, male, high school degree, manager of a publishing house, interviewed on 17 May 2008, Cağaloğlu, Istanbul, not recorded, a converted *Caferi* with Sunni origin for 20 years, married, lives in Istanbul.

Inrterview 3- Yener H., 41, male, eight year education, production company owner, interviewed on 25 May 2008, Şişli, Istanbul, tape record, a Converted *Caferi* with Sunni origin for 10 years, married with two kids, lives in Şişli Istanbul.

Interview 4- Mustafa K., 46,male, eight year education, occupation not declared, interviewed on 31 May 2008, Kasımpaşa Istanbul, tape record, a converted *Caferi* with Sunni origin for nine years, married, lives in Kasımpaşa, Istanbul.

Interview 5- Falih Ç., 40, male, college degree, free accountant, interviewed on 31 May 2008, Kasımpaşa Istanbul, tape record, a converted *Cafer*i with Sunni origin for 20 years, married with two kids, lives in Kasımpaşa Istanbul.

Interview 6- Latif Ç., 40, male, masters degree, certified public accountant, interviewed on 31 May 2008, Kasımpaşa, Istanbul, tape record, a converted *Caferi* with Sunni origin for 22 years, married with three kids, lives in Istanbul.

Interview 7- Ali M., 35, male, eight year education, craftsman, interviewed on 27 March 2009, Halkalı, Istanbul, not recorded, an Azeri *Caferi* migrated from Iğdır 22 years ago, married, lives in Halkalı, Istanbul..

Interview 8- Gülnur A., 23, female, college degree, secretarial work, interviewed on 27 March 2009, Halkalı, Istanbul, tape record, an Azeri *Caferi* coming from a family from Iğdır, born in Istanbul, single, lives in Bağcılar.

Interview 9- Kasım N., 47, male, high school degree, secretary general of Caferi-Der, interviewed on 27 March 2009, Halkalı, Istanbul, tape record, an Azeri *Caferi* from Iğdır, married, firstly migrated to Izmir in 1960s,living in Halkalı, Istanbul for eight years.

Interview 10- Sema S., 53, female, education not mentioned, housewife, interviewed on 1st July 2009, Halkalı, Istanbul, tape record, an Azeri *Caferi* from Iğdır, married, living in Bağcılar, Istanbul for about fifty years.

Interview 11- Hüseyin K., 21, male, high school degree, student, interviewed on 13 June 2009, Halkalı, Istanbul, tape record, an Azeri *Caferi* from Iğdır, single, living in Halkalı for 16 years.

Interview 12- Eren F., 28, male, college degree, freelance, interviewed on 13 June 2009, Halkalı, Istanbul, tape record, an Azeri *Caferi* from Iğdır, married with three kids, born in Istanbul and living in Halkalı.

Interview 13- Kerim A., 35, male, high school degree, public and media relations, interviewed on 10 July 2009, Halkalı, Istanbul, tape record, an Azeri *Caferi* from Iğdır, living in Halkalı.

Interview 14- Zeynep Ö., 28, female, college degree, graphic and web designer, interviewed on 10 July 2009, Halkalı, Istanbul, tape record, an Azeri *Caferi* from Iğdır, single, living in Halkalı for 15 years.

Interview 15- Melike A., 34, female, high school degree, housewife, and president of Zehra Ana Association, interviewed on 10 July 2009, Halkalı, Istanbul, tape record, an Azeri *Caferi* from Iğdır, married with two kids, born in Istanbul and lives in Halkalı.

Interview 16, Sevgi C., 24, female, college degree, teaching Inglish in a private school, interviewed on 10 July 2009, Halkalı Istanbul, tape record, an Azeri *Caferi* from Iğdır, single, born in Istanbul and living in Halkalı.

Interview 17, Zeliha K., 24, female, college degree, teaching English in a private school, interviewed on 10 July 2009, Halkalı, Istanbul, tape record, an Azeri *Caferi* from Iğdır, single, born in Istanbul and living in Halkalı.

Others

Interview 18- Esra K., 35, female, high school degree, manager of a kindergarten, interviewed on 13 March 2009, Zeytinburnu, Istanbul, tape record, Sunni, married with three kids, attended *Aşura* as an audience in 2009.

Interview 19- Filiz T., 30, female, high school degree, teaching in a kindergarten, interviewed on 13 March 2009, Zeytinburnu, Istanbul, tape record, Sunni, single, attended *Aşura* to take photos as leisure activity.

Interview 20- Zehra T., 28, female, high school degree, not working, interviewed on 13 March 2009, Zeytinburnu, Istanbul, tape record, Sunni, single, attended *Aşura* as an audience for curiosity with her sister.

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Interviewees

Caferis

Halis Uygun, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 24 April 2008.

Ersin Yanar, interview by the author, not recorded, Istanbul, Turkey, 17 May 2008.

Yener His, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 25 May 2008

Mustafa Katar, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul Turkey, 31 May 2008.

Falih Çetin, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 31 May 2008.

Latif Çakır, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 31 May 2008.

Ali Mert, interview by the author, not recorded, Istanbul, Turkey, 27 March 2009.

Gülnur Atar, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 27 March 2009.

Kasım Naz, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 27 March 2009.

Sema Serin, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 1 July 2009.

Hüseyin Kurban, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13 June 2009.

Eren Fırat, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13 June 2009.

Kerim Alkan, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

Zeynep Özer, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

Melike Aka, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

Sevgi Can, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

Zeliha Kaf, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 July 2009.

Others

Esra Kaya, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13 March 2009.

Filiz Titiz, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13 March 2009.

Zehra Titiz, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13 March 2009.

Online Resources

(Available until August 2009)

News titled “Caferiler Guinness’e Hazırlanıyor”
http://arsiv.aksam.com.tr/arsiv/aksam/2005/02/08/gundem/gundemprn12.html

News titled, “Caferiler Kanalı Bastı”
http://www.habervitrini.com/haber.asp?id=297186

News Portal developed by Caferi group known as Zeynebiye
http://www.zeynebiye.com/

News portal of radical *Caferi*s http://www.rasthaber.com/

News portal by hardliner *Caferi*s http://www.yakindoguhaber.com/

Official web site of Turkish Institution for Statistics and reports on 2008 Census Data
http://report.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwservlet?adnksdb2=&report=turkiye_il_koy_sehir.RDF&p_kod=1&p_yil=2008&desformat=html&ENVID=adnksdb2Env

http://tuikapp.tuik.gov.tr/adnksdagitapp/adnks.zul

Official web site of Turkish Ministry of Justice,
http://www.mevzuat.adalet.gov.tr/html/1085.html

Web site of *Caferi*s of Turkey http://www.caferilik.com/

Web site for video sharing for videos related to Muharram processions
http://www.kerbela.net/list/list.asp?ktgr_id=2171

Web site of *Caferi*s known as *Kevser* group http://www.kevsernet.com/