

# ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY OF EMOTIONS

Theoretical and Ethnographic  
Perspectives from Turkey and Beyond

Editor

Ramazan Aras



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Theoretical and Ethnographic Perspectives from Turkey and Beyond

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Ramazan Aras

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# Memories of Fear: Narratives of Qur'ān Memorizers (*Hafız*) from the Single Party Era

Büşra Demirden\*

## Introduction\*\*

The foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, with the proclamation of a new secular state, initiated the forced transformation of political, social, and cultural structures to create a new nation and society. The new nation-state project was based on some ideological frameworks such as secularism, westernization/modernization, and Turkish nationalism. This new power elite mobilized all the institutions and means of the state (policy, discourse, law, economy, military, education, and media) at the local and national level and frequently applied various forms of violence to segments of society that failed to conform to the imagined nation.

Known as the period of one-party government, the years between 1923 and 1950 were a period when the Republican People's Party (RPP) was in power as the fundamental political unit of the new Republic. In the post-WWI era, Turkey witnessed the formation and development

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\*\* This work titled *Religion, Sense of Belonging and Memory: Qur'an Memorization Tradition in Early Republican Period 1923-1950* (the Project Number: 1901) was supported by Research Fund of Ibn Haldun University. I am grateful for their generous support. This study is based on my master's thesis completed under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ramazan Aras at the Department of Sociology in 2022.

of a new nation-state where secular ideology, secularization policies, and Turkish ethnic nationalism progressively became the basis of the new regime. In this new period, the religious and ethnic groups were challenged and then targeted by diverse state apparatuses. As a result, many non-Turkish ethnic and religious groups were marginalized due to the westernization/modernization discourses and authoritarian secular policies in the new era. This study uses the case of Qur'ân memorizers in this era to discuss diverse forms of violence and discrimination that started with the new nation-state regulations. In this context, it becomes critical to ask what kinds of defense mechanisms the communities and circles of Qur'ân readers with Islamic sensitivity developed against the restrictions on religion in the public sphere. One of the major arguments of this chapter is that the Kemalist secular state's violent reaction to Qur'ân memorizers was an attempt to marginalize their task along with their identities. Therefore, I will focus on subjective and collective experiences and emotions of violence and fear that Qur'ân memorizers tried to cope with. Additionally, it examines police violence in the context of "the use or threat of violence by the state or its agents or supporters, particularly against civilian individuals and populations, as a means of political intimidation and control"<sup>1</sup> in the building process of the nation-state to maintain its sovereignty as well. Thus, this research will illustrate what forms of resistance, struggle, and adaptation came from this community against the acts of state violence in the context of politics of emotions.

### **State Violence in Everyday Life**

The word violence in Turkish, which means *şiddet* and was transferred from Arabic, is derived from the words شِدَاد and شِدَات, meaning hard and strict, and connotes hardness, rigid behavior, and unleashed brute force.<sup>2</sup> It is also defined as violence when a person is exposed to it

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1 Jeffrey A. Sluka, *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 13.

2 Artun Ünsal, "Genişletilmiş Bir Şiddet Tipolojisi", *Cogito* 6-7 (1996): 29-36.

by being “disturbed, detained, come to rude or harsh intervention or by deterioration of immunity, and humiliation as a result of the use of physical force.”<sup>3</sup> One of the most well-known discussions concerning the violence is its role in preventing bodily movements of individuals or denying freedom of action. In this context, violence is considered to violate civil society rules such as solidarity, freedom and equality among citizens.<sup>4</sup>

It is not an appropriate analysis to limit violence to solely physical force. Following Ramazan Aras, I claim that violence has many forms such as “psychological, symbolic, structural, epistemic, aesthetic, visible or invisible, physical or emotional.”<sup>5</sup> Focusing on psychological form of violence, Doğu Ergil emphasizes that violence stems from the social relations of the parties whose interests are in conflict. According to Ergil, violence can be defined as “physical and/or psychological harm inflicted by any individual, group or organized entity against the physical and moral integrity, property, cultural or symbolic values of a person or community.”<sup>6</sup>

Emotions and experiences of violence are the subject of this study to the extent that they try to inhibit the recollection of social memory. The subject of violence has been discussed only regarding the legitimate use of force. Because the use of legitimate force is a reaction against the power of social memory, this research examines whether state violence was effective in the formation of social memory or not. The government deliberately attempted to systematically erase certain events from the collective memory by exerting control over the remembrance of Qur’ân memorizers through state apparatuses. This deliberate strategy aimed to obliterate these memories, thus instituting a policy designed to enforce collective amnesia. Some events can be kept alive in memory by being repeated continually and not allowed to be forgotten. For example, the

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3 Yves Michaud, *Şiddet*, trans. Cem Muhtaroglu (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991).

4 John Keane, *Şiddetin Uzun Yüzyılı*, trans. Bülent Peker (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 1998).

5 Ramazan Aras, *The Formation of Kurdishness in Turkey: Political Violence, Fear and Pain* (Routledge, 2014), 15.

6 Doğu Ergil, “Şiddetin Kültürel Kökenleri”, *Bilim ve Teknik Dergisi*, 2001.

phrases in the narratives of my interlocutors, “the pursuit of Qur’ân memorizers as a target”, “having been left in custody”, “groups of people who constantly watch over the gendarmerie”, reveal the psychological and emotional dimension of violence by Kemalist regime’s oppression of Qur’ân memorizers. In this context, Hafız Karaman, one of the Qur’ân memorizers, stated:

As we were coming to our village from the mosque with my late uncle’s son, we met the military sergeant major. You know, it was forbidden to wear a cap (*takke*), in the village of Karadere, where we were studying, the sergeant major of the police station snatched my cap from my head. We tried to take it, but he drew his gun, we couldn’t take it. We followed him. He disappeared at that time. So, we experienced that thing. It was forbidden to wear a cap. Also, one morning, they took 35 people to the police station. Let me not explain in detail, but unpleasant things happened there! I mean, at the gendarmerie station... The thing is, we don’t know what happened there, then, of course, a two-rank sergeant was the one who did this!<sup>7</sup>

In this story, the concept of violence includes “demeaning, humiliating, psychologically damaging implicit actions.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, violence can be classified with such as evil, fear, oppression, harassment, and persecution.<sup>9</sup>

Jeffrey Sluka discusses state terror and violence as “the use or threat of violence by the state or its agents or supporters, particularly against civilian individuals and populations, as a means of political intimidation and control.”<sup>10</sup> According to Sluka, state terror and violence as a rational and cost-effective means aim to achieve politico-economic privilege—namely, to preserve its hegemony within the system of social stratification. In the early Republican period, the state, as a form of po-

7 Hafız Karaman, interview by Büşra Coşkun, July 17, 2019, Fatih, İstanbul

8 Robert Wolff, “On Violence”, *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 19 (1969): 601-616.

9 Seçil Büker and Ayşe Kıran, *Reklamlarda Kadına Yönelik Şiddet* (İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 2004).

10 Sluka, *Death Squad*, 2.

litical power, was based on the unequal relationship between the ruler (Kemalist regime) and the ruled (citizens). Considering that the ruler is active and the ruled is in a passive position, the shortest way for one party to impose its will on the other, that is, to establish power, is to use violence, as it produces direct and quick results. In this respect, the phrase “violence is the conjoined twin of power, it is the protector of power”<sup>11</sup> can be an appropriate definition for Kemalist regime.

Louis Althusser believes that “no class can hold state power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the state ideological apparatuses.”<sup>12</sup> According to Althusser, it is through ideology that the dominant group, which is the minority, maintains its power over the majority by non-violent means. The state’s ideological apparatuses fulfill the duty of legitimizing violence on behalf of the state through apparatuses such as school, family, religion, media, culture, trade unions, political parties and law.<sup>13</sup>

Since the single-party regime had the monopoly of using force and violence, society either had to adopt these features of the power or accept it reluctantly. Those who rejected the regime’s ideology and policies were either executed or incarcerated during that era. Therefore, submission to authority prevailed at that time. In the article titled “The Role of Nationality in the Genesis of Modern Turkey”, Erdal Aydın investigates the nationalist flow of the early Republic era and says:

Kemalist nationalism as a modernist nationalism is a project that adopts and imitates all aspects of material and spiritual western civilization. To achieve this goal, it was decided to break ties with the past. Several reforms were carried out for this purpose. That is why the caliphate was abolished, the Latin alphabet was adopted, the civilized clothing style was adopted, the women allowed to participate in the public sphere through professionalization, the

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11 Semra Somersan, “Şiddetin İki Yüzü”, *Cogito* 6-7 (1996): 49.

12 Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), 20.

13 Louis Althusser, *İdeoloji ve Devletin İdeolojik Aygıtları*, trans. Alp Tümertekin (İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2017).

principle of secularism was accepted, madrasahs, dervish lodges (*tekke*) and orders (*zaviyeth*) were closed, the hat revolution was made, the Swiss civil code and the Italian penal code were quoted. With these reforms, Westernization was tried to be captured and imposed in social, political and cultural life.<sup>14</sup>

As a result, accounts of various forms of state violence and the pervasive emotion of fear towards the state were prevalent in the life stories and narratives of my interviewees. The following recollection from one of my interlocutors, Pakdil Hoca, serves as an excellent example. He narrated:

One of the children used to keep guarding in the garden of the mosque. When he saw the gendarme coming from afar, he would warn those in the mosque to run away. As the children of the village, we used to run away from the door and window of the mosque. Because in those years it was forbidden for imams and hocas to teach children the Qur'ân. They would take that hoca to the police station and beat him violently. Therefore, Hoca used to teach us the Qur'ân secretly in the village mosque. When we heard that the gendarmerie was approaching, we would run out of the window of the mosque.<sup>15</sup>

The life stories and narratives of Qur'ân memorizers have documented the ways in which the acts of violence were perpetrated towards Muslim subjects during the single-party regime era as tools of elimination and suppression of Islamic culture and institutions and foundation and reproduction of Kemalist secular ideology and its apparatuses. One of my interlocutors, Hafız Hızır, believes that individuals interested in the Qur'ân faced harsh discrimination in society. He asserts that, during that time, the state effectively sought to eradicate Qur'ân memorizers. Hızır Hoca remembers that after state security agents came to Mehmet Aşıkutlu Hoca's house and insulted him, he cried for 2 days in his house at Trabzon. Hızır Hoca was so disturbed by this situation, and he

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14 Erdal Aydın, "The Role of Nationality in the Genesis of Modern Turkey", *Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 18, no. 72 (2019): 1757-1766.

15 Pakdil Hoca, interview by Büşra Coşkun, December 8, 2019, Erenköy, İstanbul.

said, "It is a deep wound in my heart, I cannot accept it."<sup>16</sup> According to Hafız Hızır, Qur'ân memorizers avoided revealing their identity as *hafız* in any institutions until recently because they were not accepted. He adds that those institutions also have a different perception of the Qur'ân memorizers as they were labeled as "poor, needy, third-class family, unwanted people, humbled and naive." The stories about arrest of imams and muezzins when reciting the call for prayer (*adhan*) in Arabic were very common within the memories frequently told during the interviews. Hafız Kemalettin narrated his experiences as follows:

When I was a primary school kid, the gendarmes used to come to our place in the single-party period- it was called patrol, people were used to stay at their houses. We used to walk around the villages with our caps (*takkes*), but people would take off the caps and wear a western hat for the gendarmerie. The gendarme looked like a king in the eyes of the people, so they were constantly intimidated; people were looking for a place to escape.<sup>17</sup>

For Althusser, the most fundamental and important point that distinguishes the ideological state apparatuses from the repressive state apparatuses is that the former prioritize ideology, while the latter prioritize the use of violence. Althusser's theory of state repression apparatuses (RSA) applies physical and sometimes mental violence mechanisms such as government, police, army, courts and prisons for the reproduction of relations and the sustainability of power. RSAs form the political infrastructure for the functionalization of ideological apparatuses. Likewise, the task of ideological apparatuses is to legitimize oppression, to reproduce existing social classes, to find ways to ensure the dominance of power, and to produce consent. The dominant ideology ensures the harmony between these two, thus, maintaining power. Althusser believes that governments that fail to implement this harmony will not remain in power for long.<sup>18</sup>

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16 Hafız Hızır, interview by Büşra Coşkun, April 6, 2020, Adapazarı

17 Hafız Kemalettin, interview by Büşra Coşkun, April 31, 2020, Bayrampaşa, İstanbul.

18 Althusser, *İdeoloji ve Devletin İdeolojik Aygıtları*, 29-35.

According to many Qur'ân memorizers, Kemalism reproduced its hegemonic power through utilization of the army in Turkey. The militaristic hegemony and its "top-down" process of secularization negatively influenced visibility of religious life and moral values in society. In this context, Ümit Cizre discusses that the army has two important tools to reproduce Kemalism and to act as its watchdog. The first of these is through military, education, discourse and practices, and the second is via direct social practices and variables through intervention.<sup>19</sup> For instance, Hafız Nureddin stated that the involvement of the gendarmes in the events turned Qur'ân memorization into a kind of torturing process and that incidents grew with the uninterrupted police violence. He stated:

Isn't it forbidden? Excuse me, the gendarmes would come, I don't want to say the rest. Excuse me, they would put the Qur'ân in the toilet, they would burn it. Now there is that mosque, maybe you saw it while you were coming here, there was a Qur'ân school in that mosque. We used to run away from the school when the gendarmerie was mentioned. We would run away and come home. This is the gendarmerie, the state, what will you do? There is no other way. They will take you away.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, Hafız Fahreddin, who could not hide his surprise about this event, mentions that the gendarmerie resorted to direct violence in the public sphere in order to preserve the Kemalist regime and its central place in political, social and cultural life. He claimed that:

Qur'ân memorizers have worked, they have done something, but it is not official. Let's say they work in a room, there is a door at the back: When the gendarmes arrive, they send them to another place, this is how they trained Qur'ân memorizer. We would hide the Qur'ân when the gendarmes came, out of fear. Out of fear, we would run home

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19 Ümit Cizre, "Egemen İdeoloji ve Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri: Kavramsal ve İlişkisel Bir Analiz", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm*, ed. Ahmet İnsel (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), 19.

20 Hafız Nureddin, interview by Büşra Coşkun, November 28, 2019, Bağcılar, İstanbul.

as the gendarmerie came. They would tear off our caps when we were not wearing hats.<sup>21</sup>

In the same vein, Hafız Hasan also agrees that the state clearly was intimidating, suppressing, and controlling Muslim subjects. I think one of his most striking stories about this intimidation and violence follows:

My late father came out of the mosque, he was a veteran and did not have a foot. There were inn-yards of houses in Hendek at that time, horses were housed in the inns. He would come and ride his horse and come to the village. Once, he forgot his hat in the mosque. He came wearing a cap. He was about to ride his horse. There were no police then. There were military officers. "How can you walk around wearing a cap?" He was asked. He answered, "I left the mosque and forgot my hat there." The soldier said to my late father that "pray for your foot, or I would put you in jail."<sup>22</sup>

The Qur'ân memorizers most criticize the state policy of Westernization, which, as the main determinant of the new administration's domestic and foreign policies, led to exclusion of Muslim identity. This policy was disseminated and implemented not only at the "state" level, but also at the "societal" level. This framework started to be formed based on abandoning the Ottoman past with the project of uprooting forms of Islamic civilization and culture in Turkey and turning the whole state foundation towards Turkification along with Westernization-modernization movement. In a wider perspective, the experiences of Qur'ân memorizers document how the state violence and assimilation policies created a climate dominated by emotion of fear in the country. Hafız Münevver stated that the political act was wrong in the sense that many Qur'ân memorizers were either killed, tortured, or arrested. She narrated:

Sometimes the law got hold of them. For example, very valuable religious officials had to wear hats. "What are we doing with the hat that the French wear? We wore the hats that priests wear on their heads, don't we? This is what the Jews wore, but they forced

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21 Hafız Fahreddin, interview by Büşra Coşkun, August 12, 2019, Eyüp, İstanbul.

22 Hafız Hasan, interview by Büşra Coşkun, August 15, 2019, Fatih, İstanbul.

them, so aren't you ashamed?" They hung a lot; they killed a lot. Scholars were sentenced to death because they did not accept to wear hats, they were hanged in Ankara one by one. How do you expect to be a Qur'ân memorizer after all this?<sup>23</sup>

According to Mehmet Yetiş, any claim that the military bureaucratic sector was impartial was invalid. In this sense, the army's duty was not to remain constitutionally neutral but to protect the constitution that legally upheld and reproduces the supremacy of hegemonic power.<sup>24</sup> The Turkish Armed Forces played an important role in making Kemalism a hegemonic ideology and ensuring its reproduction. After the proclamation of the Republic, the army was used to suppress and liquidate the supporters of the sultanate and the caliphate, together with the members of religious organizations and oppositional groups. Likewise, the Independence courts acted as revolution courts, internalizing the Republic and its revolutions among the people. Thus, in such a political crisis, socio-political relations between Qur'ân memorizers and the state demonstrate how authoritarian regime used ideological and oppressive state apparatuses to create its hegemony through violence, torture, and the use of fear.

As can be seen from the above practices, in the Turkey's nation-building process, the government reinforced its legitimacy with laws that functioned as pressure devices by including prohibitions. Transforming social life by purging cultural dynamics that permeate daily relationships was the main characteristic of the second half of the 1920s. The state's repression tools came into play, and it carried out persuasion by resorting to the marginalization and subordination of Qur'ân memorizers. The Law of Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i Sükûn Kanunu*) and the Independence Courts (*İstiklal Mahkemeleri*) were the "legalized" instruments of the army and means of violent actions in the early Republican period. The narratives and life stories of my interlocutors describe this era as one of state violence and fear.

23 Hafız Münevver, interview by Büşra Coşkun, February 10, 2020, Fatih, İstanbul.

24 Mehmet Yetiş, "Gramsci ve Devletin İki Görünümü." *Mülkiye*, 2009, 42-45.

## Emotion of Fear

Fear, as one of the significant effects caused by state violence, should be investigated since “a secular state does not guarantee tolerance; it introduces different constructs of passion and fear. Since law always aims to regulate violence, it never seeks to eradicate violence.”<sup>25</sup> The relationship of fear and violence has been one of the major concerns of social scientists. I agree with Aras who claims that “the emotion of fear of the state should be defined, not merely as a subjective experience, but as a social and cultural practice.”<sup>26</sup> Here, I endeavor to document and analyze how ordinary Muslim subjects, the Qur’ân memorizers, experienced fear of state apparatuses during the early Republican period.

Many studies in the literature examine the nature of fear.<sup>27</sup> Fear, as one of daily emotions, “is a density-increase emotion: it is activated by a rather rapid increase in the density of neural firing.”<sup>28</sup> In his book *Liquid Fear*, Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017), one of the most influential sociologists of the contemporary era, provides an eloquent definition of fear. Bauman explains:

Fear is at its most fearsome when it is diffuse, scattered, unclear, unattached, unanchored, free-floating, with no clear address or cause; when it haunts us with no visible rhyme or reason when the menace, we should be afraid of can be glimpsed everywhere but is nowhere to be seen. Fear is the name we give to our uncertainty: to our ignorance of the threat and of what is to be done.<sup>29</sup>

In the same vein, in his article “*The Only Thing We Have to Fear is the Culture of Fear Itself*”, Frank Furedi discusses:

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- 25 Talal Asad, *Sekülerliğin Biçimleri*, trans. Ferit Burak Aydar (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2007), 8.
  - 26 Aras, *The Formation of Kurdishness*, 14-16.
  - 27 Peter Muris, Harald Merckelbach, and Ron Collaris, “Common Childhood Fears and Their Origins”, *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 35 (1997): 929-937.
  - 28 Caroll Ellis. IZard, *Human Emotions* (New York: Plenum Press, 1977), 18.
  - 29 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear*, Kindle ed. (Polity, 2013), 112.

Fear plays a key role in twenty-first-century consciousness. Increasingly, we seem to engage with various issues through a narrative of fear. You could see this trend emerging and taking hold in the last century, which was frequently described as an 'Age of Anxiety'. But in recent decades, it has become more and better defined, as specific fears have been cultivated.<sup>30</sup>

As Füredi argued, the emotion of fear became one of the most important concepts in contemporary social sciences. It also emerged as a key emotion during the interviews in my ethnographic research on the experiences of Qur'an memorizers in the early decades of the Republic. As Kim argued "fear is an internal emotional reaction composed of psychological and physiological dimensions that may be aroused when a serious and personally relevant threat is perceived."<sup>31</sup> Ralph Adolphs mentions a functional concept of fear and defines it as an emotion "caused by particular patterns of threat-related stimuli, and in turn causing particular patterns of adaptive behaviour to avoid or cope with that threat."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Sara Ahmed points out that "the worlds we 'are in' might not be of 'our making', but they are made, and through being made, they 'make us.'"<sup>33</sup> In this world, fear finds place and becomes visible in the narratives. As Aras stated, "the state-sponsored systems of surveillance, spying and stigmatization have contributed to the development of a culture of fear."<sup>34</sup> Along similar lines, sociologist David states that "fear does not just happen; it is socially constructed and then manipulated by those who seek to benefit."<sup>35</sup>

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30 Frank Füredi, "The Only Thing We Have to Fear is the 'Culture of Fear' Itself", *American Journal of Sociology* (2007), 4.

31 Kim Witte, Gary Meyer, and Dennis Martell, *Effective Health Risk Messages: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 1.

32 Ralph Adolphs, "The Biology of Fear", *Current Biology* 23, no. 2 (2013): 80

33 Sara Ahmed, "The Politics of Fear in the Making of Worlds", *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16 (2003): 378.

34 Aras, *The Formation of Kurdishness*, 13.

35 David Altheide, *Creating Fear: News and the Construction of Crisis* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 2002), 26.

Many of my interlocutors remembered with deep sorrow how the military interventions supported by the authoritarian secular regime drastically affected their lives. According to narrations, the oppressive actions of the Kemalist regime on the social, cultural and political existence and rights of the Qur'ân memorizers can be interpreted in two ways. One aspect of Kemalism's oppression is that the regime systematically ignores Qur'ân memorizers, excludes them from the public sphere, and thus deprive them of their rights. The second is the direct use of violence. Personal testimonies of Qur'ân memorizers reveal both perception of fear of the state among Muslim subjects and the constant state of fear among Qur'ân memorizers. One of the most terrible experiences and feelings of Qur'ân memorizers was also the fear of losing their Muslim identity and moral values and visibility in the public sphere.

The labeling and exclusion of Qur'ân memorizers were seen as demonstration of hatred and oppression towards Muslims. Hafız Münevver was highly critical of the state practices and policies imposed through that climate of fear. According to her, the Kemalist secular state made radical changes and mistakes, which worsened relations between Qur'ân memorizers and the state. In her own words:

Does any human deny his/her ancestors? When I read the Qur'ân and sing hymns until the evening, I don't get tired. But when I talk face to face to someone, I get tired. I am living it; my language does not speak when I speak. One day, they said to Akif, what kind of poet are you? You are writing about a nightingale, you are writing this, the martyrs of Çanakkale they are always sad, and at war. Out of his sadness at that time, he said a couplet: "If I had seen the rose era, I would have been a nightingale, O Lord! What would have happened if you had brought me earlier?" ... They thought it was a skill to look like them (the West); our women would wear like them; our girls would read like them! These were all events that happened after the Republic. People persecuted their own sultans. That's the sad part of it...<sup>36</sup>

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36 Hafız Münevver, interview.

Hafız İhsan, someone interested in political issues, claimed that the lack of respect for Islamic values was one of the significant factors that disseminated and intensified the culture of fear:

If we don't return to our love, we can't be a Qur'ân memorizer, may Allah help us, but here are good families who took care of their children, Allah bless them. They would almost declare Christianity in the country, which was more striking in terms of understanding the perception of the Qur'ân memorizer at that time: I know very well that the adhan was recited from the minarets in Turkish. *Tanrı Uludur, Tanrı Uludur*. Nowhere in the world has the adhan been recited except in Arabic; only read in Turkish in Turkey.<sup>37</sup>

In the discourses of the Qur'ân memorizers, the pressure exerted by the Kemalist regime gradually turned into an attack that threatened their existence. The excerpts below highlight the aggressive stance of the regime, which included both psychological and physical violence. One of Qur'ân memorizers, Hafız Kemaleddin, narrated:

As we were coming to our village from the mosque with my late uncle's son, we met the military sergeant major. You know, it is forbidden to wear a cap/takke, in the village of Karadere, where we had been studying, the sergeant major of the gendarmerie station snatched my cap from my head. We tried to take it, but he drew his gun, we couldn't take it. We followed him. He disappeared at that time. So, we experienced that thing. It was forbidden to wear a turban (*sarik*).<sup>38</sup>

State violence against Qur'ân memorizers continued through law enforcement agencies, including the police, gendarmerie and prisons. In the following lines, Hafız Kemaleddin describes the consequences of these authoritarian secular policies in everyday life. He narrated:

It was time to patrol the village. Since Hoca was in custody, there was no one to wash the funeral, so we call a hoca from another

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37 Hafız İhsan, personal interview by Büşra Coşkun, October 17, 2019, Üsküdar, İstanbul.

38 Hafız Kemaleddin, interview, 2020.

village. They bring the hoca from the other village on horseback. Then, we made the funeral, and they buried our dead. "Why isn't there a hodja in that village? Because the hodja was in custody."<sup>39</sup>

Another narrative from Hafız İhsan reveals how fear became a "normalized" aspect of lives of ordinary people. He remembered those days with tearful eyes:

So, some people could just start to learn and read the Qur'ân in the ages of 45-46. At the earlier times, there was a lot of pressure. We used to arrange someone as a guard (surveillant) outside to see and let us know immediately if the gendarmerie was coming on the roads, hills and in the streams. That's how we studied. Sometimes, the gendarmerie would come straight from the town through the forest, that is why we had to keep a guard. If the gendarmerie came, they would tell us and we would immediately run away from school (mosque) and go to our homes. That's how we studied. We started memorization at a very late age. Our memorization continued in the same way. For instance, I became a Qur'ân memorizer, that is, in 1950. Until then, we always studied illegally. I mean, we were afraid of the state. There was no such authority for hocas to teach freely. We always studied as kind of fugitives.<sup>40</sup>

Hafız İhsan also complained that the spread of single-party ideologies and state power was implemented with the support of domestic powers and the foreign states. According to him, the single-party administration limited the sphere of practice of religion and insistently imposed the regime's ideology through the village institutes and community centers it had established. He believed that understanding the Muslim experience of state violence raises awareness about the feelings of fear, trauma, and alienation in their own society. As can be understood from all the stories and narratives of Qur'ân memorizers, the authoritarian secular sovereign power tried to protect its hegemony and assert domination through the military forces and civil bureaucracy. The emotions of fear and violence were instrumentalized during the

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39 Hafız Kemaleddin, interview.

40 Hafız İhsan, interview.

implementation of secular policies and then transformed into legal regulation forms by the state apparatuses. While the creation of this culture of fear facilitated state practices and power performances, it also caused subjective and collective traumas, leaving deep traces in memories and on the lives of survivors and later generations in the contemporary history of Turkey.

### **Conclusion**

This study presents a critical evaluation of authoritarian secular policies during the single-party regime era and aims to reveal how these secular policies affected the identity, religiosity, memory, and everyday life of ordinary Muslims in Turkish society, based on the life stories and testimonies of witnesses from that period. It documents the impacts of the Turkish Republic's foundation on the formation of a marginalized and traumatized Muslim population. Their memories and narratives allow us to comprehend the processes and relations between the secular regime and ordinary Muslim subjects.

An investigation of the reconstruction and transformation of identity and memory of Qur'an memorizers, both subjectively and collectively, between 1923 and 1950 required analyzing their oral life stories and their lived experiences of state violence and fear. This study argues that the use of violence and fear has traumatized people, alienated them, and weakened their sense of belonging to the state as marginalized individuals by examining the experiences of Qur'an memorizers.

The testimonies and narratives of survivors have shown that the question of "who are we?" occupied the agenda of ordinary people and the Qur'an memorizers who tried to learn the Qur'an during that period. However, it was quite challenging to find an answer to the violence and trauma created by the new nation-state project. Caught between their own Islamic culture and the dominant secular culture, the Qur'an memorizers defined themselves as having an undefined identity and stated that they could not belong to the state in any way. Therefore, we witnessed that the Qur'an memorizers could not adapt to their social

identity and struggled to maintain their culture, as the official ideology oppressed and imposed a different culture on them. On the other hand, I found that many Qur'ân memorizers were trying to resist forced assimilation, diverse forms of violence, secular policies and discourses which often resulted in their imprisonment and exclusion from social and political life.

In this chapter, I examined the politics of the state violence and the instrumentalization of emotion of fear as two critical dynamics during the formation of the Turkish nation-state. Authoritarian secular policies were applied as tools of assimilation and alienation through the Westernization process. In this regard, Qur'ân memorizers criticized the Kemalist regime for its orientalist logic and colonial strategy, citing discriminatory practices. Orientalism, as an approach that enables the West to systematically address the East as a subject of learning and discovery, has transformed from a research discourse into an imperial institution since the end of the 19th century.<sup>41</sup>

I think, to better understand power relations, it is necessary to examine the resistance tools, patterns, and strategic coping mechanisms of the Qur'ân memorizers in everyday life. The life stories and narratives of Qur'ân memorizers also document how they tried to cope with diverse forms of state violence in everyday life, how they survived and dealt with that constant state of fear, and how they challenged state hegemony at the local level. Relying on the analysis of power, "Where there is power, there is resistance"<sup>42</sup> and "where there is resistance, there is power",<sup>43</sup> I think that Qur'ân memorizers narrated their own resistance tactics to undermine sovereign power. Their continuing struggle and diverse efforts to becoming Qur'ân memorizers and thereby preservation of Qur'ân education represent one of the most significant challenges to the practices of secular and nationalist Kemalist regime.

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41 Edward Said, *Şarkiyatçılık*, trans. Berna Ülner (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020).

42 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1978).

43 Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Beduin Women", *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 1 (1990): 41-55.

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