



Antakya in the AKP Era: a Tendency towards Sunnitization?

A Study of Renovation Policies

Verda Asya Kimyonok

s2086476



**Universiteit
Leiden**

MA Middle East Studies

August 2019

Supervisor: Dr. H. Theunissen

Introduction

Since 2002, Turkey has been led by the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP), which is the most important Turkish political party in recent times. With hopes of entering the European Union and having a greater role in international politics, the AKP's ambitious party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan undertook reforms across the whole country intending to further integrate Turkey's peripheral regions closer to the rest of the country and fostering national unity. The AKP has a political and economic monopoly that means it can all but decide the fate of all Turkish citizens regardless of their religious confession or orientation. When Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected President of the Republic in 2013, his movement took a clear conservative and neo-liberal turn, politically, socially and culturally, with Islam becoming more prominent in public life. In 2015 the government took an even more explicit Islamist path, which emphasises the superiority of Sunnism in the country both in official discourse and actions. Portrayed as a sultan, he accumulated enough domestic political power to implement all of his projects without any opposition, as evidenced by the April 2017 referendum changing the constitution and providing him with an executive-style presidency. The AKP has established its own values on the Turkish State, these are to be respected and considered a national mission¹.

Approximately 90 to 95% of Turkey's population are Muslim citizens, 70% to 75% of which are Sunni, and 40% identify themselves as Muslim over Turkish². The Sunni community represents therefore a great majority of the population, which overshadows a myriad of religious and ethnic minorities, a remnant of the country's Ottoman past, yet insignificant in terms of numbers. More than numbers and statistics, this disparate demographic map is key to understanding the traditional political grid. A majority of the socio-ethnic and religious minorities that do not

¹Jenny White, "Islam and the Nation" in *Muslim Nationalism as part of a category on AKP and Turkey since 2002* (Princeton University Press, 2012), 24

²Soner Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey, Who is a Turk?*, (New York: Routledge, 2006)

identify with the mainstream definition of the Sunni Turkish identity are known to be hostile to both the State and the political parties associated with it in electoral votes, and see the government as exclusivist and discriminative. Minorities were therefore not acknowledged by governments and vice versa. And as a prototype of populist and nativist leaders Erdoğan is no exception. Since coming to power in 2003, he has “demonized, brutalized, and cracked down on demographics that are unlikely to vote for him”³. The AKP initially tried to resolve this hereditary dissension through a policy directed at the inclusion of these minorities and marginal groups (*açılım* policy) under the guise of a new interest in the very diverse cultural heritage of Turkey⁴. However, after showing hopeful signs of openness towards the Alevi community, the government understood that it was better to split the society and place itself on the side of the Sunni majority⁵. Helping in this process, liberal groups have been carrying and promoting the party's projects.

Through the years, the AKP has shown great ability to adapt its stance. From 2002, the AKP presented itself as a champion of religious freedoms combatting the Kemalist legacy of secular authoritarianism, and as an engine of democratization in Turkey. Although the Turkish Constitution includes secularity (*laiklik*) as a fundamental pillar, it has to be differentiated from the French *laïcité* which separates State and church. Despite *laiklik* refers to it, the State in Turkey totally controls religious institutions. This situation opens a path towards instrumentalization. Since the 2002 parliamentary elections, “few would dispute that the character of religion-State relations in Turkey has changed, but precisely *how* it has done so is a matter of considerable dispute”⁶. Because of the unprecedented concentrated nature of State power in a religious-affiliated one-party

3Soner Cagaptay, “Making Turkey Great Again”, *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, vol.43:1 (Winter 2019)

4Murat Yetkin, “Only a day to go, Erdoğan sets aside his terrorism rhetoric in fear of losing the Istanbul re-run”, *Yetkin Report*, <https://yetkinreport.com/2019/06/21/only-a-day-to-go-erdogan-sets-aside-his-terrorism-rhetoric-in-fear-of-losing-the-istanbul-re-run/>

5Samim Akgönül, “Les libertés religieuses en Turquie : où en est-on ?”, *The Conversation*, November 29, 2017, <http://theconversation.com/les-libertes-religieuses-en-turquie-ou-en-est-on-88053>

6James W. Warhola and Egemen B. Bezci, “Religion and State in Contemporary Turkey: Recent Developments in Laiklik” in *Journal of Church and State* vol. 52 no. 3 (July 20, 2010), 427–453

government instead of a coalition, these policies raise the question of the occurrence of identity shifting inside minority communities in local situations. While the AKP is trying to build an image of a homogeneous glorious orthodox Sunni Ottoman past, centered around the extent of the empire through culture and geostrategy (both soft and hard power), people tend to forget diversity was at the core of that functioning empire. The province of Hatay is one of the regions in Turkey which still retains this diversity both ethnically and religiously.

As the ancient capital of Roman Syria and a part of the former *Bilād al-Shām*, Antioch (Antakya) and its surrounding area are a prime example of cohabitation. During the Ottoman era, these territories were populated by Jews, Muslims and Christians of all denominations and composed of a majority of Arabs. That several cultural sites in Turkey have been used as places of worship for different religious traditions throughout history is a testimony to the diversity of its inhabitants. Before World War I, these sites were mainly protected by the local exercise of power. Rule in these places was more linked to authority over a community than over a specific territory, thus preventing the homogenization or destruction of such places of worship. Furthermore, territories were defined based on a living socio-cultural entity on which a central authority exerted a form of power called communitarian sovereignty that was traditionally rooted in the region⁷. While Lebanon and Syria were separated by a certain ethnic and confessional majority during the European mandates⁸, the Sandjak – or province - of Alexandretta (Iskenderun) specifically remained a sample of religiously and ethnically-speaking diversity. Despite the ancestral coexistence seen in the Sandjak and Alexandretta, the region has seen its demography fluctuate⁹, especially after it was handed over to Turkey in 1939. From the point of view of AKP Sunni-focused politics, such a region is a potential problem which needs to be monitored closely and

⁷Shaimaa Magued, “Turkey’s economic rapprochement towards Syria and the territorial conflict over Hatay”, *Mediterranean Politics* (2017)

⁸Ayse Tekdal Fildis, “Roots of Alawite-Sunni Rivalry in Syria” in *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIX, No. 2 (Summer 2012)

⁹Sarah D. Shields, *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 232-249

preferably integrated into mainstream Turkey. Today's Hatay is thus one case in the “periphery” that the State is keeping a close eye on, extending to all the other heterogeneous regions bordering Syria.

Characteristic for this unique mosaic are three religious sites in the Hatay province; the Habīb-i Neccār Mosque, the Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim türbesi (tomb of sheikh Yusuf al-Hakim), and the Hazreti Hızır Makamı (shrine of Khidr). This area that I propose to analyze falls within the definition of the Holy Land, a term that geographically corresponds to the earliest territories of Christian expansion, and where the line between Christians and Muslims is difficult to draw¹⁰. This makes the study of these places' cultural histories more difficult, because its actors are intertemporal. For this reason, these three major worship sites are places that are locally recognised as syncretic. The problematic term “syncretic” either carries a negative charge for those concerned with maintaining “pure” or “authentic” rituals, which is of concern of AKP's Turkey, and a positive one for those who criticize concepts such as cultural purity or authenticity¹¹. Without regard to it, I will use this term in its functional sense, in relation to the sites, as matters of the cults themselves are not my concern. Their description as such, that is, the combination of different forms of belief or practice, is based on several elements. First, the consensus of the inhabitants of the region who are concerned by the status of these places, whatever their religious background. Second, collective memory, or the perpetuation of local ancestral practices and oral narratives as a basis to value the representation of these places. Thirdly comes historical concordance: due to their long existence and the (at least partial) absence of an established official history until today, their status is not fixed yet. This helps to link them to local and political matters, playing a key role on different scales. This is particularly apparent in the two countryside locations of Harbiye and Samandağ, located 10 and

¹⁰Bas Snelders, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction, Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta (Peeters Publishers, 2010)

¹¹Hayden, Robert M., Aykan Erdemir, Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir, Timothy D. Walker, Devika Rangachari, Manuel Aguilar-Moreno, Enrique López-Hurtado, and Milica Bakić-Hayden, *Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites and Spaces* (Taylor and Francis, 2016), Chapter 4: Situating ethnography in trajectories of dominance, “Syncretism and Intertemporality”, 85

20 kilometers from the center of Antakya respectively, which demonstrate the absence of solid links with the national authorities as they lack administrative offices. Antakya houses all the central institutions for the people in the surroundings, forcing them to visit regularly. In many ways, these local communities consider themselves fairly independent from the State.

Such distinctive habits also marks the distance from the Turkish State. Indeed, in certain periods, the economy and wages of many inhabitants have depended on cross-border trade with Syria. Some families completely relied on these daily exchanges, including the smuggling of domestic or illegal products. Samandağ was often referred to as a *Küçük Moskova* (Little Moscow)¹² during and after the repression under military and fascistic governments, which illustrates the political and ideological mindset that stands out as a particularity of ethnic (and religious) minorities, common to Kurds for example. Due to their specific history, local people continued to transmit their own *alternative historical narratives* from generation to generation through orality¹³. A very distinctive *group identity* was thus formed, far from the standard vision of Turkish national history. In many ways, demonstrating that Hatay is a region that historically, politically, religiously and culturally always stayed a marginal part of Turkey is not challenging. It is, however, much more complex to create the opposite. This is, however, exactly what the AKP wanted to achieve.

With hopes of extending its influence to rural and marginal communities, AKP is trying to be more present and visible in these targeted marginal areas and increase its influence over these diverse groups. This materialises in every domain of life; education, social activities, businesses, media, etc., making it more than just a top-bottom process. The AKP makes noticeable contributions to development in all sectors of economic activity, but other less perceptible ways are used too. Through renovation, the government is imposing a vision of itself in a field that is central

12Mehmet Yuva, "Hatay'ı Madonna kurtarır mı ?", *Ayna Gazetesi*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.samandagaynahaber.com/hatayi-madonna-kurtarir-mi%EF%BB%BF/>

13Esra Demirci Akyol, *The Role of Memory in the Historiography of Hatay: Strategies of Identity Formation through Memory and History*, VDM Verlag Dr. Muller (Germany, 2009)

and vital to regional identity¹⁴. This renovation policy has in recent years also influenced (in various degrees) the Habīb-i Neccār Mosque, the Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim türbesi (tomb of sheikh Yusuf al-Hakim), and the Hazreti Hızır Makamı (shrine of Hızır). This work is an attempt to apprehend a transitional period; a time of evolution in one or several directions that involves no turning back. These sites underwent different levels of renovation that should be documented in order to evaluate their consequences in the current context. To be able to give this overview, the past must be acknowledged, and the differences between before and after recorded.

The Habīb-i Neccār Camii is a well-known mosque by its appearance in several tales highlighting the diversity of its past¹⁵. In *Ancient Antioch: The Mosque of Habib-i Neccar (Habib al-Najjār)*, Jørgen Christensen-Ernst reminds us the different phases of one site's conversions as religious influences come and go – first a roman temple, then a church, and finally a mosque¹⁶. Situated in the very center of Antakya, this key site embodies the changes of the city and its population in all aspects. The Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim türbesi was originally a little mausoleum erected in the name of a healer whose reputation is spread beyond the limits of the small city of Harbiye in Defne. His story is different depending on one's background, and his life so unknown that it is impossible to redraw a realistic chronology. Yet everyone regardless of their denomination agrees on the therapeutic characteristics of his person. The site was completely renovated and was subject to a rivalry between the town hall, as the reflect of the local community's desires, and other official institutions. Finally, Hazreti Hızır Makamı is an important pilgrimage site for Nusayris from outside the region as well as the local community, joining together people of a same conception of religious heritage whatever their current location. It supposedly contains the stone on which the

¹⁴Clement Moore Henry and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*, Second Edition (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

¹⁵“Anadolu'nun İlk Camisi”, T.C. Hatay Valiliği, <http://www.hatay.gov.tr/anadolunun-ilk-camisi>

¹⁶Jørgen Christensen-Ernst, *Ancient Antioch: The Mosque of Habib-i Neccar (Habib al-Najjār)*, 1 : “The author Zafer Sari, however, is more exact. He writes: “The story goes that originally there was a Roman temple on its present spot. After the spread of Christianity in Antakya, this temple was turned into a church. When the Muslims took over the city, the present mosque was built on the same spot. [...] The building, which has an architectural style reminding of the Baroque, was erected by Abu Obayda Ibn Jerrah after the Muslims conquered Antakya in 638. ” ”

Prophet Moses and the Prophet Khidr met and sat together. While historians believe it was already a pagan worship site before and during Antiquity¹⁷, this place holds a strong internal narrative of symbolism as it can illustrate a story common to the three Holy Books. A story of learning and adapting to God's creation: one's natural environment. Located at the junction of the Mediterranean coast, the end of the great Taurus Mountains and plains, and not more than twenty kilometers away from the Syrian border, the location of the shrine of Khidr emphasises this symbolism although inherent to the figure itself.

When we look at the literature dealing with the Hatay region we immediately notice certain tendencies. The written sources of the history of the urban and religious landscape of Antioch, from Antiquity to the end of the Ottoman period, are quite diverse¹⁸. James Grehan pictures in *Twilight of the Saints* what Islam and Christianity looked like in rural Syria and sets the ground to enlighten the difficult and obscure 19th century¹⁹. Along with the growing interest of the colonial powers in the Middle East, the sources describing the region in a complete and detailed manner are the work of individuals with a relation to the Mandatory Administration. Michel Gilquin produced a truly relevant analysis in “*D'Antioche à Hatay : l'histoire oubliée du Sandjak d'Alexandrette : nationalisme turc contre nationalisme arabe, la France, arbitre ?*” (2000)²⁰. The Sandjak of Alexandretta has the advantage in their eyes of being neither totally Turkish nor Arab and the significant presence of Armenians and Christians surely enhances its perceived reputation for a traditional European audience. Some researches were written on Antioch's communities', their regional and religious history, for example “*Geçmişte ve Günümüzde Antakya'da Hıristiyanlık*” by

¹⁷Serap Yıldız, “İlk Çağ'dan Hatay. Başlangıçtan Bizans Dönemine Kadar” (Master's thesis, Gazi Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara, 2004)

¹⁸Catherine Saliou, “Les sources écrites de l'histoire du paysage urbain d'Antioche et le projet de *Lexicon Topographicum Antiochenum*” in *Les mosaïques romaines d'Antioche*, detailed programme of the symposium Journée d'actualité de la recherche et de la restauration (December 10, Season 2012-2013), Auditorium du Louvre

¹⁹James Grehan, *Twilight of the Saints. Everyday Religion in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (Oxford University Press, 2014)

²⁰Michel Gilquin, *D'Antioche à Hatay : l'histoire oubliée du Sandjak d'Alexandrette : nationalisme turc contre nationalisme arabe, la France, arbitre ?* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000)

Ali Ekber Türkoğlu in Adana (2006)²¹, and “Değişim ve Etkileşim Boyutuyla Hatay'da Hıristiyan Kültürü” by Tefik Usluoğlu in Antakya (2009)²². From these studies it becomes clear that research on Hatay, but more precisely the southern parts of the province as a peculiar site of 'Alawite heritage and culture, is at least neglected, at most focused only on Christian minorities. Some analyses of the cultural and religious charge of Hatay's, and more specifically 'Alawite's, sites' throughout the local beliefs and practices have been carefully undertaken by anthropologists and historians. For instance, regarding the important figures of Hızır or or Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim, Jens Kreinath's *Virtual encounters with Hızır and other Muslim saints Dreaming and healing at local pilgrimage sites in Hatay*²³ gives an original and profound argumentation around their representation and role in local mentality. Describing to the details the sites, manners, and stories, his study successfully examines the immaterial link between the population and their cult sites. These cult sites, however, were never scientifically dealt with as architectural pieces or as a part of Turkey's own heritage. And therefore, they were never discussed as a “platform” of influence for a government's ideology. Consequently, very few studies – if not any - have been made regarding the contemporary sites of Habib-i Neccār Camii, Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim türbesi, and Hazreti Hızır Makamı. There is also no documentation evaluating the impact and consequences of their recent renovation. Looking more broadly at Turkey and its history, journalistic sources and academical studies about AKP's policies are more than abundant. They allow a wider vision of the subject as I can link the topic to politics in any aspect needed, and they testify above all for the many changes that have occurred in Antakya and its surroundings during the AKP leadership years. Starting from the 2000s until today, hardly any political change has been noticed at the national level, providing a

stable background on which I choose to build my argument on in order to answer my research

21Ali Ekber Türkoğlu, “Geçmişte ve Günümüzde Antakya'da Hıristiyanlık” (Master's thesis, Çukurova Üniversitesi, Adana, 2006)

22Tefik Usluoğlu, “Değişim ve Etkileşim Boyutuyla Hatay'da Hıristiyan Kültürü” (Master's thesis, Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi, Antakya, 2009)

23Jens Kreinath, “Virtual encounters with Hızır and other Muslim saints Dreaming and healing at local pilgrimage sites in Hatay, Turkey” in *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 2(1):25–66 (Sean Kingston Publishing, 2014)

question. My research concerns the political attitude of the AKP government towards historical Holy and religious places in the surroundings of Antioch. I will study the nature of the link between official renovation policies, its impact on the local population, and the evolution of mentality in a given community. The main question of my research will be: do contemporary renovation policies of Holy and religious places in Antakya show a tendency towards AKP Sunnitization?

As orthodoxy and Sunnism are emphasised across the country, a Sunnitization process could be embodied on any religious site, because they materialize faith both internally and externally as part of the urban landscape. Emphasising on religion and practices has been proved to be a useful way to legitimize one State's evolutions in a new political path. A few Ottomanists have studied this process in broader geographical limits but in the past, such as Derin Terzioğlu's "*How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion*" (2012)²⁴ and Hakan T. Karateke's "*Opium for the Subjects? Religiosity as a Legitimizing Factor for the Ottoman Sultan*" (Harvard University)²⁵. The advantage of a historiographical review is the focus on the later perception of history and its remains. I will rely on these two academic articles to understand the phenomenon of using religion. The theory of Sunnitization is built and traditionally applied by researchers exclusively on the Ottoman Empire. It follows the Ottoman State and structures in their ambition to unify a very disparate and broad empire through a fundamental unifying factor, religion. What better way for the elite to make all those subjects from different backgrounds, living in different continents, feel they belong to the same culture, the one that is spread and made official by the authorities? This theory can be based on diverse concepts and study cases undertaken by historians and specialists of nation-building. However, the anthropologic character of my subject requires a multidisciplinary approach. Indeed, Sunnitization is a process that is not limited to material actions. It is the result of a transformation of symbols, of rhetorical and recurrent notions in

²⁴Derin Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion" in *Turcica*, 44 (2012-2013), 301-338.

²⁵Hakan T. Karateke, "Opium for the Subjects? Religiosity as a Legitimizing Factor for the Ottoman Sultan" (Harvard University, 2005)

official speeches (propaganda), which satisfy the evolving society's constant need for consumption and “civilization”. Combined, all these aspects gradually trigger changes in social codes and get embedded in mentalities. They permeate in the long-term the group's identity vision. This way, the importance of official discourse compared to local discourse is measured. Witnessing this evolution is essential as it shapes society and society shapes it. I propose that analysing the discourse and comparing it to historical evidences will reveal this process of modifying history in a way that contributes to empowering Turkish Sunni-Muslim culture. As I will discuss in more details later on, an important percentage of Muslim religious sites are ancestral populations' modified heritage. These territories, inhabited by Armenians, Orthodox Christians, Jews, bore pagan vestiges before they were turned into churches under the Roman and Byzantine Empires. With the emergence of Islam and Islamic empires (the last of which was the Ottoman Empire), these same places were once again adapted. Several examples prove this arrangement all along the southern frontier, from Hatay to Diyarbakir, with particular cases in Şanlıurfa. From the value of these places, whether it is an institution or a person, arises the main problematic. They are not just physical “places”: they bear an essential spiritual character. The way they are perceived changes in relation with their influence on society. It is this depth that I will dissect through three main layers: the perception of the locals, the use of this perception by the State, and the consequences of subsequent policies on the environment of the locals. To support my argument, I have undertaken a month of field research during which I was able to interview locals of different confessions from regular practicing visitors to non-practicing, in a broad-spectrum from the youth to the elderly. Utilising the experience and knowledge of the elderly is important for the reason that they are best placed to give full account of the traditions of the region. Younger generations are often no longer practicing believers today, but they are perpetuating traditions in the sense of oral and external social behaviour. I met with the caretaker of the tomb of Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim, and the director of the Institute for Middle Eastern Arab People amongst other scholars. I tried, as much as possible during this brief period, to have an

insight into the changes by hearing the witnesses directly affected. I also collected popular stories, photos, along Habib-i Neccār Mosque's architectural plans of renovation. These documents are vital to understand how much the evolution of the local mentality has to do with their worship place.

To develop this idea, I plan to describe the area and its sites through their cultural history²⁶ by giving the context of representation and status of these places for the locals. This first part is an introductory chapter laying down the fundamentals and defining the general to specific history, beliefs and behavior of the local community. The reader's assessment of the relationship between the physical cult sites and their charge in the group mentality, the community and the influence of the AKP policies depends on this background. For that, pointing out the singularities of Hatay and its heritage in the Republic of Turkey will demonstrate its special status. In a second part, I will present the AK Party's policies and interventions on cult sites and their management. This chapter takes a closer look at the government's discourse, numbers, domestic and international policies as they testify for a common goal. To achieve this, for example in Hatay, the AKP allows itself to intervene in the local social fabric as it pleases by instrumentalising it and at the same time strengthening its Turkish and Sunni characters. To this end, the party slowly erases the locals' specific characteristics in order to integrate them step by step into the mainstream model. Interpreting the changes and decisions made these last few years will lead me to discuss and frame the theory of Sunnitization not only as an abstract notion but in the context of Turkey's national, political and ideological evolution. My focus in the third and last chapter will be on two sites of pilgrimage that have a strong local tradition of symbolic and esoteric significance in the population. The Hazreti Hızır Makamı and the Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim have different properties within the community, serving “as models for personal accounts [...] but also for forms of experiences of dreaming and healing as related to other Muslim saints. These narratives play a significant role in

²⁶Esra Demirci Akyol, *The Role of Memory in the Historiography of Hatay: Strategies of Identity Formation through Memory and History*, VDM Verlag Dr. Muller (Germany, 2009), 14

shaping local traditions of saint veneration among Sunnis and Alawites”²⁷ as well as Christians (shrines like *Kızma-Dimyen Ziyareti* - Kadmos and Daniel). Hızır and Şeyh Yusuf both intersect different spheres of identity in the small area I am studying: Christians (Orthodox and Catholics), Sunni Turks, and Alawites. This link used to be relatively supra-religious and supranational - it has been increasingly less so since 2010. The photographs and testimonies I have gathered during my fieldwork confirm the idea of attachment of the locals to their land as the cement of this interconnection. Thus, in the broader context of the nation, I suggest that these groups in question have a common vision of – and distance to - the Turkish State. A vision that is subject to aggressive push towards a standardization of society on a Sunni Turkish model according to the objectives and ideals of the AKP. I argue that all this allows the State to reaffirm its control and power over marginal structures and societies over which they have had no control initially.

²⁷Jens Kreinath, “Virtual encounters with Hızır and other Muslim saints Dreaming and healing at local pilgrimage sites in Hatay, Turkey” in *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 2(1):25–66 (Sean Kingston Publishing, 2014), 26

I. Hatay and its religious landscape

Turkey's internal dynamics are unique in the region surrounding it. Resulting from complex bonds between its different actors over time, the understanding of its historical, political, and cultural backgrounds is indispensable to a more comprehensive analysis. In such a vast country, these dynamics did not evolve straightly. This chapter aims to give an overview of the environment in which locals of Antakya and its surrounding countryside have evolved over time, from the late Ottoman period until now. Hatay's local communities were for the most part still living in the same social structure since the Ottoman period. Consequently Hatay's religious landscape stayed almost unmodified for a long time. This unique landscape is at the very root of the group mentality that exists there, which survived despite a historical context marked by Turkish nationalism. Between mountains and cultivated plains; the Orontes River and the Mediterranean Sea, Antakya used to look like a small city surrounded by even smaller villages side by side. At the dawn of the 1900s, big and integrated cities rapidly transformed, while in rural regions, the change was slow and gradual. In fact, Hatay has not always remained impermeable to external circumstances. The creation of the Republic of Turkey brought about major change in the situation for who do not consider themselves part of a nation but truly constitute community groups within a society. In this national background, I argue that the annexation of the region conditioned the relations between its inhabitants, of various identities, and the State. Through a description of their practices and beliefs, I will account for the studied area's largest heterodox community's group identity, the Alawites. This will allow us to further notice the changes if any.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire was the direct consequence of the First World War and the political problems resulting from the multinational character of the empire. The beginning of the 20th century marked the beginning of the *Nahda* (awakening) and demands for separatism of the Arabs. These, linked to the vision of the Ottoman empire as oppressor against liberating Europeans,

emphasised the feeling of them being foreign to the empire. But the separatist theories also accentuated inter-community conflicts²⁸. While battling for its survival²⁹, the empire was at war on several fronts - external as well as internal. Various groups within the Ottoman empire were pitted against itself, from the Balkans to the Arab provinces. The defeat of the Ottomans in the face of Arab revolts supported by Great Britain in Syria-Palestine forced the empire to capitulate at the same time as its allies, on October 30, 1918. At the end of 1918, European generals entered Istanbul, humiliating the Turks. Ensuring the remodelling of the Empire for the benefits of ethnic and religious minorities until then marginalised, they prepared the partition of Anatolia during the Paris Peace Conference. France guaranteed Armenians and Kurds autonomous regions in the North and South-East³⁰. This decision would result in a reduction of the empire's territory, which was inconceivable for some like Mustafa Kemal. A career soldier who rose through the military hierarchy to become general in the Ottoman army, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was the hero of the battle of the Dardanelles in 1915 and emerged as the leader of the national opposition against the sultan. This opposition refused the clauses of the Sèvres Treaty and the capitulation leading to dismemberment. After 1920, they set up a government to rival that of the sultan. One a recognised and legitimate Ottoman monarchist but under foreign supervision, the other, an illegal government of resistance established in Ankara in April 1920, which identifies itself with the national government, with the Turkish and non-Ottoman nation. Under the presidency of Mustafa Kemal Pasha³¹, the Turkish nationalists refuse disarmament and recognition of the capitulation. Created in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the Republic of Turkey was a challenge and a demonstration.

²⁸Nesim Şeker, "Forced Population Movements in the Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic: An Attempt at Reassessment through Demographic Engineering", *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 16 (2013). <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4396>

²⁹Mantran, Robert, J.-L. Bacque-Grammont, L. Bazin, I. and N. Beldiceanu, P. Dumont, F. Georgeon, A. Raymond, J.-P. Roux, N. Vatin, G. Veinstein, *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman* (Paris: Fayard, 2003)

³⁰Anne-Laure Dupont, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen et Chantal Verdeil, *Le Moyen-Orient par les textes, XIX^e-XXI^e siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, coll. U, 2011)

³¹Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's* (IB Tauris, 2010)

The challenge was the project of creating a new nation on the remains of a vast and complex Ottoman Empire that failed against what would be seen as the “Western” imperialist ratio of power. It was also a demonstration because Atatürk proved the ambition of its “Turkish” inhabitants, a majority of Anatolian people and soldiers who voluntarily gathered and fought for their leader during the First World War and the following War of Independence in order to build their own State while rejecting foreign powers³².

From this point in time onwards, Turkey's borders are all set, except for the Sandjak of Alexandretta region. Nowadays called Hatay, this province was a Syrian territory first under the British, then the French mandate. Previously a part of the Ottoman *vilayet* (province) of Aleppo and after a short “independent” interlude from 1938 to 1939, the region was handed over to the Turkish Republic, causing many internal troubles. Since the annexation of Hatay, Turkey over the years gradually implemented its official institutional and administrative systems to the province. This policy of homogenising the territory was executed by demographic policies such as the relocation of Turks to mixed and ethnically diverse territories³³. This technique, used since the creation of the Republic, profoundly modified the demography of the Hatay region³⁴. Locals witness in 1915 the massive arrival of Armenians as a result of the genocide, then the arrival of Turkish military troops in 1937 which pushed tens of thousands of Arabs and Armenians into exile in Syria. Clearly, in 1918, this territory was mainly home to non-Turkish Ottoman populations, Alawite Arabs, Sunnis and Christians, Kurds, Armenians and Cherkesses³⁵. Later, under subsequent Kemalist governments, nomadic populations of Anatolia (*yörüks*) and Türkmens were invited to settle in

³²Anne-Laure Dupont, “L’empire ottoman au début du XXème siècle”. Lecture at Sorbonne University, Faculté des Sciences Sociales: Contemporary History, November 2015.

³³Nesim Şeker, “Forced Population Movements in the Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic: An Attempt at Reassessment through Demographic Engineering”, *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 16 (2013), 7

³⁴Sarah D. Shields, *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 232-249

³⁵Michel Bruneau, “L’espace-temps des Turcs et de la Turquie, de l’Eurasie à l’Anatolie : essai de modélisation graphique”, *Cybergeo : European Journal of Geography*, Espace, Société, Territoire, document 726 (June 2015), <http://journals.openedition.org/cybergeo/27019>

villages in Hatay in exchange for financial benefits³⁶. In addition to forced displacement and voluntary exile, the Franco-Turkish Franklin-Bouillon treaty signed in October 1921 establishes a forced Turkification of the territory³⁷. As Arabic is the mother tongue of every religious minority in the region, except for Armenians, censorship in schools and institutions resulted in its gradual disappearance among younger generations. Language, the instrument of action and power, is strongly embedded in social life. Bourdieu, in his theory of symbolic power, analyses language as an “invisible power that can only be exercised with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are undergoing or even exercising it”. This helps us understand the implicit relationship the State has with locals. This perspective, which leads to a multi-polar observation of the social and political relations between the two actors that are the State and the local community, allows us to measure the balance in communication. The State establishes cultural violence upon a dominated object – the people -, based on their blind recognition and consensus of the domination³⁸. From Antakya to the Syrian border, the strongest “indigenous” - Alawite – community's belonging to Islam was continuously challenged by Turkish governments. As long as Turkey sees its Muslim minorities as bounded to the nation through their sharing of the same religion, the State will continue its this double-policy of swinging from assimilation to marginalization³⁹. In this regard, those groups intend to demonstrate a dual behaviour: aiming to preserve a specific heritage and social construction, while also presenting themselves as being primarily Muslims. The particular case of the Sandjak of Alexandretta perfectly illustrates the paradox of modern Middle Eastern “nation” States. Hatay was indeed a Syrian territory since antiquity, whose its main cities, respectively Iskenderun (Alexandretta) and Antakya (Antioch), are representative of an ancient

36Avedis K. Sanjian, “The Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay): Its Impact on Turkish-Syrian Relations (1939-1956)”, *Middle East Journal* 10, no. 4 (1956): 379-94

37Basile Khoury, “L’ephemere Sandjak d’Alexandrette. Chronique d’une annexion annoncee”, *Les Carnets de l’Ifpo*. La recherche en train de se faire a l’Institut francais du Proche-Orient (October 9, 2012), <http://ifpo.hypotheses.org/4348>

38Jole Morgante, “La notion de lutte et de pouvoir symbolique dans le champ politique selon Bourdieu. L’intéret d’une édition”, *Altre Modernità*, n. 3 (March 2010), 215-218, <https://doi.org/10.13130/2035-7680/539>

39Soner Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey, Who is a Turk?*, Routledge, New York, 2006

heritage of religious and ethnic diversity. However, the demographics of these regions have gradually changed since the disappearance of the Ottoman imperial framework, by the action of a colonising State⁴⁰.

However, while the central parts of the Hatay including the bigger urban centres have seen a gradual disappearance of pre-Ottoman social structures, southern parts of the region still hold almost the same community structure as the one from before the handover of the Sandjak to Turkey. Besides Catholic and Protestant communities, the number of Greek Orthodoxes and Armenian Christians are still significant. In addition, a few Jewish and Baha'i families stayed in the cities of Antakya and Iskenderun⁴¹. This structure directly results from life patterns in Arab regions of the Ottoman Empire. The background of the Alawite community explains many of their peculiar characteristics. The Alawite community was originally confined to the mountains, but later migrated towards the plateau and the Syrian coastline. Dispersed over the Mediterranean coastline from Mersin to Lebanon, with on one side the sea and on the other plains and mountains, Alawites were very dependent to their natural environment in order to survive several waves of persecution and oppression they experienced from the 10th century CE onwards. Alawites are historically a peasant community, alternating between agriculture and farming independently or in the service of lords. While oral traditions commonly report the importance in number and influence of the Christians of the region, the Alawites arrive and settle during the course of the 18th to the 19th centuries. By working on behalf of Christian and Sunni landowners, they built their past as workers, small rural artisans or peasant farmers. Today, this background of hard work and cohabitation explains a unique evolution of the community, resulting in the relative emancipation and physical freedom of women within this heterodox Muslim community in Southern Hatay compared to other

40Basile Khoury, "L'ephemere Sandjak d'Alexandrette. Chronique d'une annexion annoncee", *Les Carnets de l'Ifpo*. La recherche en train de se faire a l'Institut francais du Proche-Orient (October 9, 2012), <http://ifpo.hypotheses.org/4348>

41Jens Kreinath, "Virtual encounters with Hızır and other Muslim saints Dreaming and healing at local pilgrimage sites in Hatay, Turkey" in *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 2(1):25–66 (Sean Kingston Publishing, 2014), 26

ones in Turkey. Regarding social standards, one can easily notice the lightness of clothes worn by women, both young and old, and the absence of the veil that I link with the collective unconscious memory. Having experienced poverty and need at the time, work was set up as a family activity and not reserved for the man in particular. Thus, women and children are integral parts of this family business.

“*Alawiyya*” derives from Ali bin Abi Tālib, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad. Primarily defined as a “branch of extreme Shi‘ism” (*ghulūw, ghulāt*)⁴², otherwise known as Nusayris, they are commonly perceived as heretics in the Muslim World. Apart from their celebration of the Eids, and '*ashūra*, they also celebrate Persian (*Nawrūz*), Christian (Epiphany, Pentecost, etc.) and Jewish festivals⁴³. Rituals are mainly concentrated around the worship of historically pre-Islamic sacred sites, highlighting the syncretic character and the pagan influences in their belief. Based on a spiritual and “inner” interpretation of the Qur'ān corresponding to the secret meaning (*bātin*), their presence in that particular area, with mountains as a natural defense, is coherent with an esoteric and hidden practice of Islam, repudiated by others. Of course, faith in Islam is based on the practice of its five pillars, which introduces the major events and duties in the life of the faithful Muslim. Yet contrary to what is prescribed by orthopraxy, most of the Nusayris do not follow these meaningful obligations. There are a number of examples that articulate the relationship of the Nusayris with Islam. These examples provide a comprehensive overview that includes all aspects of the locality (history, culture, religion, power, economy, etc.). Firstly, fasting during Ramadan is rarely seen, not to say never. In fact, among those asked only a few testify that a grandparent in the whole extended family did so, and this person could be qualified as *cahdin*⁴⁴,

42Halm, H., “Nuṣayriyya”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 22 May 2018. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0876

43The Oxford Dictionary of Islam, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0044>

44Şaban Öztürk, “3.1 Cahd-İkrar - الجُحْدُ وَالْاِقْرَارُ ” in *Nahiv Terimlerinin Doğuşu ve Gelişimi (Hicrî İlk İki Asır)*, FSMVÜ Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Temel İslam Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2016

meaning his “conversion” to a kind of inner Sunnism. Yet the *Eid al-Kabir* (or *Eid al-Adha*, biggest Islamic holiday) seems to equal to their holy day of *Ghadir Humm*, known as the day when Muhammad designated Ali as its successor, thus linking Shiis' legitimacy to be the “rightful” branch. Another demonstrative example is the great pilgrimage, or *Hajj*, which is not a common practice. Instead, Alawites have their own mausoleums and pilgrimage sites where they practice grave visitation – or grave worshipping - from which they have never turned nor moved away from. Some reasons as to why the locals would not undertake the *Hajj* were supposedly related to economic and geographical situations. Another one would be that the Gulf countries are not a destination sought by Alawites because they are not recognised as Muslims and considered as heretics in the countries whose constitution includes Sunni Islam as a founding principle (*shari'a*). But it seems that spiritual reasons are the most eloquent. The existence of local ancestral pilgrimage sites justifies the lack of attention paid to the outside world. For the Alawites living in Turkey, the site of predilection is the one commonly called Hazreti Hızır Makamı (see Illustrations 7 to 11 in Chapter 3), a small tomb-like shrine built around a stone known to have been the meeting point between the messenger Moses and the prophet Hızır (al-Khidr)⁴⁵, both mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Bible⁴⁶. Consequently, different religious habits (celebrations, clothing habits, etc.) are representative of the evolution in a specific sense of contemporary local practice. Indeed, if Alawites of Turkey today do not give importance to certain Islamic customs, it is both the result of national policies within the framework of their assimilation in a “secular country” and the cohabitation in a multi-confessional environment. This situation leads to a local syncretic practice of religion and social normativity, going against the Islamic standards as described in the Sunna for example.

⁴⁵Al-Rabghūzī, *The Stories of the Prophets, Qisas al-Anbiyā' An Eastern Turkish Version*, Volume II, Translated by Boeschoten, O'Kane and Vandamme, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1995, pp. 375-381, 460-463.

⁴⁶Wensinck, A.J., “al-Khādir (al-Khidr)”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 25 April 2019 <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0483>

The abundance of Hızır dedicated sites in the region shows the importance of the figure. Of the roughly 200 Alawite pilgrimage sites in Hatay, about 50 are dedicated to Hızır in general, and are named “Hazreti Hızır Aleyhisselam”⁴⁷. These places are called *ziyaret*, from the Arabic root *ziyāra* (a visit), more specifically in the sense of a piously motivated pilgrimage, making the pilgrimage itself etymologically the definition of the site. Its primary function is to mark a specific place. Its location can be one of the spot acknowledged as being on Hızır's passing (or resting) route, a journey which approximately follows the itinerary of the Orontes River. We can also trace the use of the word *ziyāra* to the oneiric scope of their creation. Therefore, its location can also mark the spot where someone had an apparition of a mystical or sacred character in a dream, thus deciding to assign a little office in tribute to this episode. Indeed, the local interpretations of his legend justify the creation of shrines at pilgrimage sites, which are often referred to as stations (Arabic: *maqām*; Turkish: *makam*), because the places of veneration are wherever Musa and Hızır slept⁴⁸. Richard McGregor writes about these grave visitations comparing them to the *hajj*: “the *hajj* shares many features with local and regional pilgrimage practices: experiences of liminality and sacred space, a social leveling and formation of community among fellow travellers, and a display of piety through rituals such as circumambulation. Pilgrims link their activities to the calendar of holidays and mix with crowds of fellow devotees, all the while sharing the goal of physically encountering the shrine—touching it with the hands, kissing it, gazing upon it, and, often, reciting supplications (*du‘ā*) and asking for intercession”⁴⁹. However, the details brought to the story of Hızır placing him in the Hıdırbey Mountains or Defne are only found in the local interpretations and do not exist in the original Sura al-Kahf (Qur‘ān, 18:60). These places highlight the connection

47Jens Kreinath, “Virtual encounters with Hızır and other Muslim saints Dreaming and healing at local pilgrimage sites in Hatay, Turkey” in *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 2(1):25–66 (Sean Kingston Publishing, 2014), 38

48*Ibid.*

49McGregor, Richard J., “Grave visitation/worship”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, Edited by: Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson. Consulted online on 25 April 2019 <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27519>

between the Hızır-Musa legend and the broader Alawite belief⁵⁰, giving meaning to the religious traditions in Hatay pilgrimage sites. “One Alawi sheikh in Antakya stressed that the mystical meaning of this legend actually refers, once again, to the notions of the visible or esoteric (*zāhir*) and the invisible or esoteric (*bātin*), which play an important role in Alawite traditions”⁵¹.

A simple trip in the outskirts of Antakya, along the small roads as well as in the mountains, offers a sight of many of these small square chambers which are all the more remarkable because of their immaculate whiteness in the density of the flora. The *ziyaret* perfectly embodies the logic of the rural environment. The green, perennial constituent color of the building alongside white, allows it to blend into its environment by referring directly to the surrounding nature and helps perceive its true essence. Intimately linked to Hızır's life (literally “The Green One”), but also to the geography of the place, the *ziyaret* is both discreet and noticeable. In the natural and rural environments in question, *ziyarets* are therefore easily and remotely identifiable; visitors cannot miss it, passers-by have a safe place, and it can even be, for locals, a reference point in orientation. Studying *ziyarets* in urban space provides keys to the role they can play in the constitution of urban identities and the various forms of collective memory. These *ziyarets* are the relics of a common, unifying past for the cohabiting communities. Today, they represent much more than a place of worship in that they embody the degree of tolerance and shifting of the entire community in its general ideological line. Their existence as well as their continuity can be interpreted as the marker of the constant solidarity in areas that are not yet urbanised. Kreinath notes that “anthropologists of the Middle East widely acknowledge that the veneration of saints played a major role in the formation and transmission of local traditions of Islam, and pertain to the diversity of local cultures and religions despite the fact that it is recurrently contested by more common forms of mainstream Islam”⁵², a Statement that

⁵⁰Jens Kreinath, “Virtual encounters with Hızır and other Muslim saints Dreaming and healing at local pilgrimage sites in Hatay, Turkey” in *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 2(1):25–66 (Sean Kingston Publishing, 2014), 35

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²Jens Kreinath, “Virtual encounters with Hızır and other Muslim saints Dreaming and healing at local pilgrimage sites

confirms the presence of *ziyarets* as a guarantee for the diversity and tolerance in the region. Contested it is, however: the status of these *ziyarets* has been, and still is, subject to debate in religious circles. For example, the worship that accompanies the act of visiting is imbued with superstitious practices, a principle banned by the prophet in the Qur'ān (7:131) and the Sunna⁵³.

Additionally, the nature of these sites poses a problem of terminology from an academic point of view. Although they have the same function and serve the same purpose, not all *ziyarets* respond to the same model. The different “formats” that can embody this sacred site are diverse and make its definition and nomenclature even more complex; thus, the use of terms referring to related building types (mosque, lodge, office, library, or graveyard) can indicate a “shrine”. Despite the shifting terminology, some key terms are identifiable, such as *qubba* (dome typically marking a venerated grave), *mashhad* (place of “witness”), *turba* (mausoleum), *makam*⁵⁴. The anthropological analysis resulting from Pierre Bourdieu's *La maison ou le monde renversé* concerning the structure of a Kabyle house shows, through the symbolic interpretation of the purpose and disposition of each element, that organisation plays a fundamental role in the place's function and the beliefs that are associated with it. To some extent, this interpretation⁵⁵ might be relevant to apply in the case of *ziyarets*. The *ziyaret* is a place where practices and functions are rituals, thus symbolic by essence. Although *ziyarets* are not necessarily built on a single “model” nor are they places of domestic life, they are communal places; sometimes a stone's throw from the family home, they welcome an array of social gatherings, from the bliss of family picnics to the sadness of funerals. In the end, the *ziyaret* primarily serves as a refuge for intercession. It conveys wellness and integrity to the

in Hatay, Turkey” in *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 2(1):25–66 (Sean Kingston Publishing, 2014), 26

⁵³Qur'ān (2:22; 14:30; 34; 109) and in the Sunna: “Whoever dies claiming that Allah has a rival, will enter Hell”, see al-Bukharī (4497); Muslim (92).

⁵⁴McGregor, Richard J., “Grave visitation/worship”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, Edited by: Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson. Consulted online on 25 April 2019 <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27519>

⁵⁵Pierre Bourdieu, “La maison ou le monde renversé” in *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (Paris: Poche, 2000), Chapter 2: 61-82

assistance seeking believer. Among the most renowned of these thaumaturgical sites are the supra-religious ones as they bring together a wide spectrum of beliefs and believers.

Through this overview of Hatay's historical and religious landscape, the reader is now aware of the historical context in which locals are perceived and evolve. Hatay's original background, both in terms of politics, affiliation and as homeland to diverse communities, sets the ground to explain its particularity in the eye of the Turkish State. This chapter therefore introduced the first keys that will help evaluate the nature of the relationship between locals and their cult sites by describing their practices and beliefs. Locals' practices and life habits are entirely attached to their geographical space. Although they are here – and in a lot of literature – discussed as timeless, these cultural features are not immutable. Indeed, they are changing along with the society they are part of, that is the Turkish society.

II. AKP, policies, and projects

The AKP stands out in Turkish recent politics for its dynamism. The popularity it has gained allows the government to act on a wider scale of daily personal and public lives. This influence is distinguished on the material level, as shown by the massive construction of mosques, and the increased importance of the Diyanet within the State institutions. This chapter aims to illustrate, through an overview of AKP's domestic and international policies, how the projects and policies put in place by the party intend to establish a common orthodox ideology. To justify my argument, I will rely on certain administrative and territorial reorganization projects in Antakya. Their goal is to integrate the city into the new Turkish model of “AKP's Islam”, supposedly by valuing and preserving the cultural characteristics of the region. However, there is an important gap between the vision and representation of Hatay by the government and the actual cultural background of the region. This gap, coupled with State processes and mechanisms, ultimately leads to the assimilation of local populations into a broader “Turkish” framework. Combining institutional policies and targeted actions at the local level, the government relies on using all pieces in hand in an attempt to leave a lasting imprint on the concerned community identity.

The AK Parti has distinguished itself, for about twenty years, by its ease in the ability to combine Western and Eastern codes in its political approach. If, in the beginning, the party tried to base its model on European governance, it quickly changed perspective. The AKP leaders now form a very closed decision-making circle and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan surrounds himself with family members. His son-in-law, son, and daughter, in addition to recurring names make the power structure essentially oligarchic in nature. This leaders has usually been able to adapt to situations conditioned by the outside world, earning them even greater “recognition” from its voters. This established image of an exemplary party has only fostered the development of devotion for its leader, which polarises even more an already fractured society. Much more than a political figure,

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is a personal role model for many Turks to follow. This, to his eyes, confirms the value of the electoral base. In many subjects, we have seen him stand for a very liberal and progressive vision of Turkey while at the same time supporting the communitarian character of religious ideology based on a common past. This dimension is illustrated by the abundance of projects expressing the conception of an AKP Islamism. Erdoğan's control of over 90 percent of media⁵⁶ only gives more weight to the symbolic significance of his speech, which becomes a resource as an analytical tool. The rise of a religious discourse through the embracing of moral values and the emphasis on a national Islam was enough, without any change in the Constitution, to transform social mores using homogenising pressure. But when the AKP lost votes in the following years and particularly from 2015 onwards, it is through reforms of the system and of the Constitution that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan secured his power: a referendum, with a dubious percentage of 51% “yes” votes, led to the inauguration of the president system in which he, as a president, cumulated all State powers (judiciary, legislative and executive). Proximity and, later, supremacy of the President over his Prime Minister undoubtedly allows questionable decisions to be taken, serving purely personal financial interests.

In the public sphere, where Islamization is both a tool and a goal of government policy (implicit and explicit in the AKP's programme), the increasing number of mosques and the importance given to them testifies to the territorial appropriation to Islam and the Turkish State sovereignty as well as to Turkic ethnicity. First of all, considering only the religious aspect, restoration of mosques and other religious sites affiliated with Islam serves the utility of believers, which also might allow their growth. If we add this effort to that of massive construction across the country, whose impact is much more significant, the prospect of establishing the mosque as a recurring figure emerges. During the inauguration ceremony of the controversial Presidential Palace's mosque in 2015, Erdoğan declared: “Wherever there is a dome or minaret, we know that it

⁵⁶Soner Cagaptay, “Why Erdogan Will Win in Istanbul, and What This Means for Turkish Democracy”, *The Washington Institute*, May 7, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/why-erdogan-will-win-in-istanbul-and-what-this-means-for-turkish-democracy>

is the homeland of Muslims” thus emphasising the religious majority among the population in order to establish his control and politically intimidating the “others”. A similar example concerns the recently finished Çamlıca Mosque in Istanbul. Planned to be the largest in Turkey, this project costed nearly 43 million euros⁵⁷. The gigantic Ottoman-inspired mosque, with a capacity of accommodating up to 50,000 faithful⁵⁸ over 15,000 square meters, is located on one of the largest hills in Istanbul famous for its woods. From an architectural and environmental point of view, it has been seen by opponents as harmful. The site was launched despite many architects, urban planners and ecologists claiming the illegality of the project through a complaint challenging the building permit under the Natural Heritage Protection Act. With his great ambitions, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stands out as the president of controversial investments and enormous projects (for example, the New Istanbul airport) defined by the idea of “Grand Projet Inutiles et Imposés” (GPII⁵⁹, or “Unnecessary Imposed Mega Projects”) where new constructions, particularly mosques and malls, are imposed on the population by the government.

This process illustrates the State's strategies to carry out its goals, whatever the cost and regardless of the obstacles. If the authorities claim that the mosque was financed by donations from the faithful, they keep all books secret. Hoping that no one is able to see the negative consequences so that we think there aren't any, is part of this voluntary strategy of “eyes, mouth, and ears shut”. However, the frenetic construction of mosques is considered by the opposition as part of the system that allows Erdoğan to allocate huge amounts of public money to its affiliates in the construction sector. If “*laiklik*” is a founding term in the Turkish Constitution, AKP's practices regarding religion and its affiliates in the related industry are very ambiguous. As Ahmet Insel analyses *secularity* in

⁵⁷Nare Hakikat, “Le nouveau palais présidentiel d'Erdoğan «le grand»”, *Le Figaro*, last modified October 29, 2014 <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2014/10/29/01003-20141029ARTFIG00306-le-nouveau-palais-presidentiel-d-erdogan-le-grand.php>

⁵⁸“Istanbul : la plus grande mosquée en Turquie”, *TRT Français*, <http://www.trt.net.tr/francais/culture-divertissement/2015/03/27/istanbul-la-plus-grande-mosquee-en-turquie-1-415683>

⁵⁹Clément Mabi, “Les grands projets inutiles, signes d’une démocratie malade”, *Reporterre*, December 4, 2014. <https://reporterre.net/Les-grands-projets-inutiles-signes>

Turkey, he demonstrates how it is based on the control of cults, and not on their separation⁶⁰. Inspired by the Civil Law of Fribourg from 1925 but also the 3rd Republic, the Turkish one advocates a secularity fighting religion. It tends to erase it from public space and restrain it to the religious one because considered personal⁶¹. A State-owned structure in order to frame and supervise religion is established, dominating it: cults are nationalised, not separated from the State. Imams are civil servants. Therefore, their formation and salary, as well as the construction and reparation of mosques are all directly financed by the taxes on the entire population regardless of their religion. Besides, the Diyanet (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, Presidency of Religious Affairs) which organises and finances the Sunni Muslim cult is under the direct supervision of the President. Consequently, when conservatives are in power, it is easier in such a governmental system to switch from a secular State to a “unofficial” Islamic constitutionalism⁶². This progressive transition from one to the other is a goal, and the strength, of President Erdoğan.

Regarding Diyanet's importance during AKP mandates, the department clearly shows tremendous growth. Firstly, an increase in Diyanet's personnel and resources are noticed during the AKP's governance. Sources reveal that most legal appeals challenging the construction of mosques in the country are not successful, while according to the Gatestone Institute, it is extremely difficult to obtain permission to build new Christian churches⁶³. Such projects are therefore part of the President's ideological discourse aimed at redesigning Turkey's landscape - both physically and politically. From 2007 to 2017, almost 10,000 mosques have been built⁶⁴, which is much higher

⁶⁰Ahmet Insel, Chapter 3: “Turquie : Un nationalisme religieux compatible avec la laïcité alla turca” in Olivier Da Lage (dir.), *L'essor des nationalismes religieux* (Demopolis, 2018). Notes from the conference-debate in the presence of the authors for the release and presentation of the book, November 6, 2018, at Galerie Chappe, Paris.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²Cem Tecimer, “Rethinking Turkish Secularism: Towards “Unofficial” Islamic Constitutionalism?”, *Verfassungsblog*, September 26, 2017. <https://verfassungsblog.de/rethinking-turkish-secularism-towards-unofficial-islamic->

⁶³Uzay Bulut, “Turkey: Building Mosques, Erasing Christianity”, *Gatestone Institute*, October 2, 2018. <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/13063/turkey-mosques-christianity>

⁶⁴T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı, *İstatistiksel Tablolar* (31.12.2017 İtibariyle), <https://stratejigelistirme.diyamet.gov.tr/sayfa/57/istatistikler>

than needed in terms of population density. The census of these mosques shows that they no longer have anything to do with religion, but they are part of authority and politics as one opponent denounced. Secondly, the Law 6002 replacing 1965's Law 633 in 2010 grants more authority to Diyanet; “among various reforms to the structure and management of the Diyanet, Law 6002 emphasises higher levels of education in Diyanet personnel, and places ownership of all new mosques under the ownership of the Diyanet, although mosques constructed before the enactment of the law will remain under the ownership of their respective foundations⁶⁵”. Since before Diyanet did not own mosques and only provided staff, this reform “obviously reduces the autonomy of local mosque foundations and gives the Diyanet more opportunities to control flows of money at the local level”.

	Cami sayısı Number of mosques
2007	79,096
2008	80,053
2009	80,636
2010	81,984
2011	82,693
2012	84,684
2013	85,412
2014	86,101
2015	86,762
2016	87,381
2017	88,021

Figure 1

	Personel sayısı Number of personnel
2007	84,195
2008	83,033
2009	81,851
2010	84,157
2011	98,555
2012	105,472
2013	121,845
2014	119,743
2015	117,378
2016	112,725
2017	109,332

Figure 2

The Çamlıca Mosque is also evidence of another aspect of AKP's - more precisely President Erdoğan's – ideology, that of the place given to Ottomanism and to sultanic revivals, which he openly propagates: “These palaces, like this mosque, recall the greatness of our people, it is a good thing”, thus linking Islam as inherent to Turkish citizenship throughout Ottoman history. Atatürk's decision to move the capital to Ankara symbolised a rupture in the Islamic and Ottoman State vision, a rupture Erdoğan seems to be trying to repair. Indeed, Çamlıca Mosque with its six

⁶⁵Samuel W. Watters, “Developments in AKP Policy Toward Religion and Homogeneity”, Special Issue Böckenförde Beyond Germany in *German Law Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 02 (2018). https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56330ad3e4b0733dcc0c8495/t/5aec808388251b8a935e0fea/1525448840942/09_Vol_19_No_02_Watters.pdf

“sultanic” minarets is the first Muslim house of worship formally sponsored by a Turkish president in Istanbul since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire a century ago⁶⁶. “President Erdoğan’s patronage of the Çamlıca Mosque in the former Ottoman royal capital, already dubbed the “Erdoğan” Mosque, indicates his embrace of an imperial drive to make Turks great again—as Muslims”, says Cagaptay. Realistically, Erdoğan draws inspiration from both the ideological and cultural heritage left by the Ottoman Empire, while not applying any of its political conceptions.

Despite the shift of the State ideology epicenter to Islam, the place given to Anatolia and Turkishness in the AKP's rhetoric, as in State Kemalism before, remains still important. Both complete each other in the national political background. The AK Parti's success, especially during the 2002 and 2007 elections, could not have happened without the support of that same Anatolian bourgeoisie that helped its creation from the beginning. Their encouraging presence during the first mandate influenced the business groups towards Islamic values, which were a huge asset for Turkey regarding neighboring Arab and Muslim countries' positive opinions. Although Erdoğan had distinguished himself during his earlier career by a radical Islamist and anti-Westernist discourse, he presented himself as a liberalist just at a time when the “West” was looking for “moderate” partners in the Islamic world. During this period, Turkey made a big deal of the negotiations for its accession to the European Union. The AKP and its supporters demonstrated a strong Europeanist ideology that superficially helped boost its image internationally⁶⁷. However, despite the ideological and geographical proximity, the trade agreements with EU countries were not evolving. When it appeared the idea was utopic and seemed like a waste of time, a total change occurred, revealing an other obsession: the focus on anti-Western economic and political models leading towards a communitarian perspective centered on the universal aspects embodied by Islam, and the more particular ones of ethnic and linguistic similarities inside the Turkic world. This detachment with

⁶⁶Soner Cagaptay, “Making Turkey Great Again”, Washington Institute, in *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, vol.43:1 (Winter 2019), 170

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

the historical powers, allies, and neighbours did not shock public opinion, which remained nevertheless favorable to Erdoğan and strengthened the image of his party as “independent” from foreign influence.

In *Making Turkey Great Again*, Soner Cagaptay gives insights into Erdoğan's attempt - proven unsuccessful - to bring Turkey to the level of a strong and independent power. Turkey's intervention in the affairs of its southern neighbour, Syria, did not bring huge benefits as Erdoğan made the choice of unconditional support for the armed rebels (mainly the shrunken and transformed Free Syrian Army and its lobby based in Istanbul) and Islamist militias. This choice is fraught with consequences and has led to isolation on many levels. Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United States are exasperated by President Erdoğan's actions and diplomatic errors, while Western Europe reflects, after all, the strong rejection sentiment sent by the local power and opinion⁶⁸. Over the last few years, the AKP has achieved the profiling of Turkey as a successful State and society in its democratic success, admired by many of the Arab and Muslim countries in the region – at least until 2016. This idea was expressed between 2009 and 2014 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu in his creed “zero problems with neighbors”. This principle expresses “the creation of ideological support for Turkey within the Middle East”⁶⁹ with the ambition of greater geo-economic relationships. Today, Turkey is no longer seen as simply a less developed country (LEDC). While Erdoğan has managed to change global perceptions upon Turkey, it was also necessary to change Turkish citizens' perceptions towards their own country as well. The evolution of this vision is encouraged by the development of inland infrastructures as a political instrument⁷⁰ for geo-strategic interests in Central Asia. Laws to facilitate mobility and

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, “Erdoğan’s rejection of Turkey’s role as a docile player in the Western-led state system is a break with recent Turkish history”, 171

⁶⁹Andre Bank and Roy Karadag, “The Political Economy of Regional Power: Turkey under the AKP”, *German Institute of Global and Area studies (GIGA) Working Paper*, No. 204 (September 2012)

⁷⁰Alexander Sekhniashvili, “Authoritarian Infrastructure Complex: The Turkish Tale” in *New Perspectives in Foreign Policy*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Issue 14 (Fall 2017). <https://www.csis.org/nfp/authoritarian-infrastructure-complex-turkish-tale>

business with Post-Soviet countries are set up, following the ideal of an ethnic-based Turkic “alliance” with “brother-States”⁷¹: removal of visas⁷², creation of broad scholarship programmes for Azeris, Uzbeks, etc. The diplomatic rupture that occurred from 2015 with Russia only intensified this perspective, pushing Turkey to withdraw into itself. One of the major consequences was the reduction of foreign tourists, while the sector represents an important part of the State budget and the country was ranked 6th most popular touristic destination in the world⁷³. To make up for this loss, one option was to enhance domestic tourism through, on the one hand, emptied leisure sites and seaside resorts, and on the other hand, cultural and historical tourism. The AKP and its supreme leader are unconditionally factors of polarization in a society constantly driven to evolve towards a specific ideal. Establishing a new common model that one might call “AKP's Islam” through official narratives and public policies leads to an even more subtle process of inclusion. To whom is destined this new conception of Islam? What is its purpose? Knowing that the electorate is undoubtedly a priority for the AKP, what strategies are implemented in order to integrate non-Sunni citizen?

Sociologically, the AKP is the incarnation of a rising Anatolian Turkish elite in the latter half of the 20th century that revolves around entrepreneurs gathered in organizations such as the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association (MÜSIAD). AKP, in its race to raise traditional values and Islam to social standards, must convince its society. For this, excluding as much as including certain groups that can be considered by the mass as marginal or heterodox is a necessity, even though the majority group continues to act in the scheme of fear from the minorities

⁷¹Paulo Duarte, “Turkey vis-à-vis Central Asia: A Geostrategic Assessment”, *Alternatives, Turkish Journal of International Relations*. <https://dergipark.org.tr/download/article-file/19342>

⁷²Gulnoza Saidazimova, “Central Asia: Turkey Lifts Visa Requirement For Post-Soviet States”, *RadioFreeEurope*, July 31, 2007. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1077906.html>

⁷³“The number of Russian tourists increased by 444% after the recovery of bilateral relations, resulting in Russia becoming the top tourism market for Turkey once again” after 2016, a year of “devastating” huge losses on both visitor numbers and income”. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Turkey

(*syndrome de Sèvres*⁷⁴). Since its creation until now, the Republic tends to demonise and exclude from political and civic life ethnic minorities and far-left groups. Of course, the Turkish Alevi's -the largest religious minority in Turkey- disenfranchisement has much older historical roots than the AKP. Under Sunni Ottoman rule, they were denounced as “heretics” of dubious loyalty and faced waves of persecution even during the Republic. In 2002, with AKP's accession to power, Alevi's were among those most apprehensive as not convinced of the supposed “democratic turn”. Besides, their relationship with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who as mayor of Istanbul had attempted to bulldoze a newly built *cemevi* located next to the shrine of Karacaahmet, one of the few remaining Alevi-Bektashi sacred sites in Istanbul⁷⁵, was already damaged. Although the AKP initiated an “Alevi opening” (*Alevi açılımı*) in 2007 to address their grievances, the State has continued to ignore or reject their demands. Furthermore, reforms such as the lifting of restrictions on the headscarf – first in university campuses in 2010⁷⁶, then in State offices since 2013⁷⁷, and finally in the military in 2017⁷⁸ - extending its use to all realms of public life only benefit members of the Sunni majority, while the minorities continue to be denied State recognition and remain marginalised.

The State has never regarded the Alevi's - in the broad sense - as model Turkish citizens but usually as intruders subject to assimilation. Erdoğan's specific determination to be popular among everyone raises the challenge of integrating the “others” in an official Islamic narrative and public policies. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan thus openly included ethnic and religious minorities into his

national speeches and official narratives. Although they address the existence of diversity, these

⁷⁴Dorothee Schmid, “Turquie : le syndrome de Sèvres, ou la guerre qui n'en finit pas”, *Politique étrangère* (Spring 2014), 199-213. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-etrangere-2014-1-page-199.htm>

⁷⁵Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, “The AKP, sectarianism, and the Alevi's struggle for equal rights in Turkey”, *National Identities*, 20:1 (2018), 53-67

⁷⁶Agence France-Presse in Istanbul, “Turkey lifts military ban on Islamic headscarf”, *The Guardian*, February 22, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/22/turkey-lifts-military-ban-on-islamic-headscarf>

⁷⁷Sebnem Arsu and Dan Bilefsky, “Turkey Lifts Longtime Ban on Head Scarves in State Offices”, *The New York Times*, October 8, 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/09/world/europe/turkey-lifts-ban-on-head-scarves-in-state-offices.html>

⁷⁸“Turkey reverses female army officers' headscarf ban”, *BBC*, February 22, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39053064>

speeches are not exactly meliorative and they were proven fruitless. When minorities are not discussed in the same theme and lexical field as the war against terrorism, they remain an abstract concept that only leads to passive allocutions⁷⁹. This so-called rapprochement is explained by the will to overcome minorities' reluctance to vote for the AK Party, especially during the electoral campaign period.

Erdoğan continued his *açılım* strategy by establishing a new outlook towards Kurdish “issues”, leading to an opening process in the period from 2013 to 2015. In April 2013, the AKP government was on the verge of reaching a historic peace agreement with the PKK when, following hostilities and attacks against the army, the government decided to launch an offensive in cities that would be the bases of “terrorist groups” as well as against anyone suspected of supporting their cause. Besides destroying an irreplaceable archeological heritage in cities like Cizre and Diyarbakir, the authorities left the cities in ruins⁸⁰. This discourse of an internal enemy has been implemented as a national fantasy and been used strategically from time to time; “the challenge for government is, in some cases, to orient fears, if not to generate them”⁸¹. Marking the start of an abusive and arbitrary repression against all opponents to the official ideology, journalists, doctors, lawyers, activists, politicians, artists are permanently pursued since then. The volatility of the president's decisions finally causes him to be heavily criticised, especially from abroad. This last point highlights the failure of his double-approach. The cultural differences between the ethnically Turkish citizen and the Turkish citizen from ethnic minorities puts in perspective the existence of a Turkish “nation” rather than a Turkish “society”. This problematic relationship between identity and citizenship is at the heart of existing tensions and fundamentally linked to the conception and theorisation of the Turkish nation. Created by the Europeans, the concept of Nation-States requires

⁷⁹“Erdoğan Alevi vatandaşlara seslendi” , *Sabah*, November 12, 2013, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/11/12/erdogan-alevi-vatandaslara-seslendi>

⁸⁰Laura Maï Gaveriaux, “La silencieuse destruction des villes kurdes en Turquie”, *Orient XXI*, Avril 6, 2106, <https://orientxxi.info/lu-vu-entendu/la-silencieuse-destruction-des-villes-kurdes-en-turquie.1277>

⁸¹Roger Sue, *Gouverner par la peur* (Fayard, Transversales, 2007), 95

common ground aspects in order to establish what brings the nation together and makes it an entity. Since it does not have the same referential, the constant comparative relationship between Turkey and the European States, in this context, leads to a problem of self-definition. If Turkey, unlike other Muslim countries such as Algeria or Lebanon, does not have the complex of the colonised (*complexe du colonisé*) but that of the lost empire, it surely prevents it from understanding the claims of minorities. Turkish society very clearly demonstrates an example of cultural resistance in both directions. Each individual can feel completely in line with the generalised view of what a Turk should be. But the extreme opposite, that is, feeling as a foreigner in its own country, is emphasised even more by the promotion of Turkish identity above all. The highlighting of internal enemies' existence - sometimes even produced by the State itself, such as the Kurdish “issue” - is referred to as a problem of “state survival”⁸². Homogeneity is a nationalist myth maintained by the State⁸³.

The largest local Muslim community in Antakya and its surroundings is the Alawite community, which has “in common [with Turkish Alevis] to have been persecuted over time by the Sunnis. This persecution probably explains their attachment and then their fidelity to any force that opposes Sunni power. As a result, Alevis and Alawites support secular regimes that limit Sunni control over the country”⁸⁴. Hence the need for the President to strengthen his control over them. With the purpose of broadening and deepening its electoral base, he has on several occasions mentioned this group in his speeches with Islam as a unifying element. For some theologians and historians, Alevism is a pure Turkish Islam descending from the first (shamanist) Turks. Although orthodoxy is the norm to be followed, the Turkish State has recently chosen to see this heterodoxy

82Chris Den Hond and Verda Kimyonok, interview with Ahmet Insel, “Élections municipales en Turquie. Un scrutin périlleux pour Erdoğan”, *Orient XXI*, March 20, 2019. <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/elections-municipales-en-turquie-erdogan-en-danger.2976>

83Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006)

84Bayram Balci, “*Le facteur religieux dans la politique Syrienne de Recep Tayyip Erdogan depuis le soulèvement populaire contre le régime de Bachar al-Assad*”, Sciences Po., CERI CNRS https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr/ceri/files/art_bb_0.pdf

as a Turkish characteristic on its own, described as popular Turkish Islam (*Türk Halk İslamı*). By reviving a kind of supra-religious Turkist ideology, Erdoğan thus revived the citizens' affiliation to Turkish identity first and foremost. This common aspect is used according to the needs: with such a discourse, as many communities as possible are brought under the unifying umbrella of the general branch of Alevism in order to widen and reach a larger audience. As a result of another stratagem directed at homogenising the national population, Alawites and Alevis are both named “Alevis” in Turkish, often seen as one entity and intentionally mixed up by the State, spreading incorrect information and denying, therefore, two different identities. The term becomes a catch-all without any proper definition and that is the goal, as Reyhan Erdoğan Başaran (2018) states: “heterodox Islam” was originated to assimilate Alevis to the Turkish nation. I argue here that this position held by Köprülü and Mélikoff was also promoted by the Turkish State that situated Alevis in line with the Turkish national identity, conceiving of Alevis as integral to the Turkish nation, and associating their religiosity with Sunni Islam”⁸⁵. In the end, this integration process allows more flexibility for the AKP. Some of the measures taken concerning the regions where these minorities previously described are located may be perceived as aid. What on one hand conveys the impression of an authentic State effort of support is, on the other hand, a better way of absorbing these groups.

As a result of these two trends – support and inclusion - merging, the AKP witnesses the Sunni population growing from year to year, in hand with an exposure of orthodox and more “pious” faith. Yet this goes along with the revival of the Sunni Muslim religious identity in an anachronistic reference to the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the rapprochement made with regional neighbours often presented as a “brotherhood”⁸⁶ is even more pertinent in the context of this culturally “Arab” city that is Antakya. Cultural features can be used as a basis for the acculturation of Syrian refugees in the region. They help identifying recurring motives in the

⁸⁵Reyhan Erdoğan Başaran, “Comparing Scholarship: The Assessment of the Contemporary Works that Links Alevis with either Shi'ism or Sunnism”, in *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Cilt: 5, S:9 (2018/2), 315-338

⁸⁶Huseyin Emre Ceyhun, “Turkey in the Middle East: Findings from the Arab Barometer”, Boğaziçi University, Working Paper 02 (2018)

processes used by the State, to highlight a timeless ideology aimed at the expansion of Islam in the daily lives of the Turkish population. The Syrian war gives Turkey the opportunity to be generous and cooperative in welcoming the largest number of refugees on its territory, mainly hosted along the southern border. In Antakya, however, the flow of Syrian refugees seems to facilitate the promotion of the official Sunni majoritarian ideology by reversing the balance of power within local society, from multi-religious to Sunni⁸⁷. On the spot, many local inhabitants complain of a change of landscape incarnated by black 'abayas and long beards. In the city center, more and more shops displaying Arabic writings only are opening. Although one might say the Arabic language was widely known in the region, the situation is more conflictual than friendly: Syrians are seen as strangers and invaders by this fragile and just recently Turkified community, after having undergone decades of Turco-assimilationist policies. Very simply, the Syrian reminds the local of his abandoned roots just as much as his docility towards the Turkish government. This double loss is the cause of a strong resentment in the local community. Once again, this process can be interpreted as a new demographic policy implemented by the Turkish State. For example, the use of refugee populations in electoral periods have been pointed out by the opposition and international agencies⁸⁸. The diversity and progressivism that characterises Hatay culturally and politically, in contrast with Anatolia or constitutionally Muslim countries, is gradually being reduced and silenced through this social pressure.

In addition to demographic policies the AKP government uses administrative measures and urban renovation as ways of imposing their dominant Sunni-Islamic ideology on competing sections of society, in this case the multicultural region of the Hatay. Policies that are more open to marginalised populations are put in place since the accession of the AKP to the Turkish Republic, aiming to standardize the territory besides other political interests.

⁸⁷Roderick Parkes, "Turkey's refugee politics", *Issue Alert*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, 44 (October 2015), https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Alert_44_Turkey_migration.pdf

⁸⁸ Hossam Al-Jablawi, "Naturalized Syrians a Flashpoint for Turkish Parties", *Atlantic Council*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/naturalized-syrians-a-flashpoint-for-turkish-parties>

The use of administrative reforms and urban modifications highlights another strong pattern mentioned by Deliancourt, *metropolisation*⁸⁹. These reforms of territorial reorganisation are gradually pushing towards a change in already fragile social balances, in order to facilitate the emergence of a loyalist political structure in Hatay. Many examples around the country reveal identical patterns. Enacted on November 11, 2012 by the National Assembly, Law 6360 foresees the creation of thirteen new metropolitan municipalities⁹⁰ (*Büyükşehir Belediyesi*). It represents the return of central power to the regional and departmental levels because it gives the President of the metropolitan municipality a right to veto and modify the decisions of the metropolitan and district municipal councils (which are elected by direct suffrage). This centralising law thus reduces the influence of local authorities compared to direct representatives of the government. Politically, the decision to reform the status of some cities and their surrounding countryside illustrates the AKP's continuous effort to establish and extend its influence over the country. This same process happened in Hatay. As a result, from 2014, Antakya - the capital of the province - had its official ancient name changed to the one of the province, *Hatay Büyükşehir Belediyesi*. In addition to recalling once again the Ottoman structure (a territory divided in *vilayets*, which used to take the name of the main city), the sole use of the name of Hatay - exclusively Turkish - demonstrates a policy that aims to link the region more directly to the Turkish nation. It is indeed Atatürk himself who named this province after the Hittite principalities that were allegedly born there⁹¹, while Antakya refers to centuries of diverse cultural history, under successive powers since the Roman Empire. Antakya's mutation into the administrative terminology of *Büyükşehir* (metropolis) therefore guarantees more stability and control over the Municipality Council since the party succeeded. On one hand, certain aspects of the past are highlighted, while others are neglected. On the other hand, using the

⁸⁹Florence Deliancourt, "Les minorités d'Antioche sur l'Oronte : Typologie d'un nouveau rapport de force", Note franco-turque in *Institut Français des Recherches Internationales* (IFRI), Programme Turquie Contemporaine (October 2015), 21-32

⁹⁰Tekirdag, Balikesir, Manisa, Aydin, Denizli, Mugla, Trabzon, Hatay, Sanliurfa, Kahramanmaras, Mardin, and Van.

⁹¹"Hatay'ın İsim Hikayesi", T.C. Hatay Valiliği, <http://www.hatay.gov.tr/isim-hikayesi>

administrative organisation of the area as a tool to modify and homogenize the social order, these initiatives did indeed result in more votes for the party during the 2014 and 2015 elections⁹². Despite the initial lack of voting for the AKP amongst Hatay's local communities, the government was thus able to establish its influence in a more lasting way.

But these initiatives inevitably also marginalised some communities. Alawites in general do not benefit from municipal services and aid as other groups because of a lack of relations with national authorities. A French Institute of International Research's (IFRI) report clearly points at these differences in treatment: renovations and projects develop more easily and quickly in Sunni neighborhoods. For example, Alawi populated neighborhoods received a connection to the gas network only three years later than Sunni neighborhoods. In addition, they lack access to public transports. In conclusion, “despite claims by the AKP that reforms will address the needs of religious minorities, at best only superficial changes are made, and even then such changes are rare. Actual demands are met with failed discussions and empty promises”⁹³. In the end, the metropolisation process of the AKP uses the development of the city and its surroundings as a pretext in order to ensure its evolution towards a specific supervised situation. Metropolisation thus ultimately leads to the (re-)making of Antakya.

Timur Warner Hammond's dissertation on the making of Istanbul's Eyüp district a Muslim place “shows that the form of the built environment and the meanings it carries are not rooted and unchanging but the outcome of debates and contests between unequally positioned individuals and groups”⁹⁴. His analysis is helpful to understand “how, why, and with what consequences” the recent modifications and constructions of new buildings related to Islam in Istanbul's Eyüp district affect the evolution of its population's (religious) behaviour as well as their connection to the space. By *92Ibid, 27-29*

⁹³Samuel W. Watters, “Developments in AKP Policy Toward Religion and Homogeneity”, Special Issue Böckenförde Beyond Germany in *German Law Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 02 (2018), 353

⁹⁴Timur Warner Hammond, “Mediums of Belief: Muslim Place Making in 20th Century Turkey” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2016)

placing Antakya's religious landscape in a new relationship to the modern metropolitan city, these processes and (renovation) projects are helping to create a new image of urban Islam⁹⁵. The Deliancourt report reveals two strong processes of political manoeuvring that involves the appropriation of local initiatives by the State. The first that we have already dealt with, metropolisation, comprises the organisation of the political hierarchy on the territory and its implications. However, the concept of urbanity and urbanisation is also part of this process, sometimes more subtly but also more directly in relationship with the inhabitants. These two processes appear to reach a common objective, that of the rehabilitation and the rebranding of Antakya as an emblem but also a part of Turkey's heritage and history.

Hatay, and especially Antakya, is traditionally described as a “mosaic”, just like the main artefacts of its cultural heritage displayed in the former Mosaic Museum of Antakya, nowadays the Archaeological Museum of Antakya. The museum was officially reopened during a ceremony hosted by the Prime Minister Davutoğlu and Ömer Çelik, the Minister of Culture and Tourism from 2013 until 2015, on the 28th of December 2014⁹⁶. Originally located in the centre of the city, it was relocated to its outskirts, closer to another of Antakya's treasures, the Church of Saint Peter. This transfer was undoubtedly caused by the Museum's need for much more exhibition space, but was also aimed at facilitating the creation of a what I would call a “Sanayi Turizm Bölgesi”⁹⁷. Such a zone would expand the “active” zones of the city, but also lighten the pressure on the central ones. Once there, one would only have to drive or walk a few minutes in order to stay in another of the numerous projects in that same area: the former Hilton Otel – now Museum Otel Antakya. This

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 3

⁹⁶“Hatay Arkeoloji Müzesi Açıldı”, Duyurular, Kültür Varlıkları ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü, T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2014, <http://www.kulturvarliklari.gov.tr/TR-120432/hatay-arkeoloji-muzesi-acildi.html>

⁹⁷Originally “Organize Sanayi Bölgesi”, meaning Organised Industrial Zone (OIZ), investor-friendly venues for foreign investors and local actors whereby they can benefit from a pre-installed infrastructure and public structures, i.e. water source, power plants, IT network and natural gas. Article 3(b) of the Law No:4562 on OIZ provides a multifaceted definition, of which: “To prevent unplanned industrialization and environmental problems, to guide urbanization, to utilize resources rationally, to benefit from information and informatics technologies, and to ensure that the types of industries are placed and developed within the framework of a certain plan”. <http://www.guzeloglu.legal/en/news-insights/insight-on-turkish-legal-practice-of-organized-industrial-zones-123.html>

huge investment aims to “increase hotel bed capacity in Hatay, one of the most brilliant cities of the future of tourism” according to its owner Asfuroğlu⁹⁸. However, each meter excavated since 2009 revealed artefacts dating back to the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman periods, causing numerous delays. In the face of these developments, the project had to be redesigned in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the High Council of Monuments, before the construction could be resumed. The opening of the hotel that was expected in April 2019, however, did not yet occur.

This type of urban development leads to yet another process described by Deliancourt as museification. Antioch is for the AKP government a political asset in its international ambitions because it embodies the image of a tolerant, open, and safe Turkey which cherishes diversity⁹⁹. It is in their interest to portray the city as a prime example of coexistence¹⁰⁰. Because of its former status of capital of the Church of the East, Antakya is of great significance in Christianity. The authorities therefore focus on the religious features of the city in order to develop attractiveness for Western tourists. Amongst the most impressive Christian monuments in Antakya is the Saint Pierre Kilisesi (Saint Peter's Church)ⁱ which is known as the place where Jesus's disciples were given the name “Christians” for the first time (Acts, 11:19-26). It has thus the reputation of being the first church in Christianity, a prestige confirmed by its recognition as a place of pilgrimage by Pope Paul VI in 1983¹⁰¹. The church, located two kilometres north of the city, is a natural cave, on the skirts of the mountain above it. The case-church only holds a stone altar and the remains of a mosaic from the 4th or 5th century. After a series of ownership changes (confiscated by the Mamluks, then Ottoman,

98Jale Özgentürk, “Hilton 'Müze'den çıktı”, *Hürriyet*, January 27, 2019. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/jale-ozgenturk/hilton-muzeden-cikti-41095906>

99Florence Deliancourt, “Les minorités d'Antioche sur l'Oronte : Typologie d'un nouveau rapport de force”, Note franco-turque in *Institut Français des Reherches Internationales* (IFRI), Programme Turquie Contemporaine (October 2015), 21-32

100“Ben, Sen Yok! Biz varız! İlk Küresel Şehir, Hatay”, T.C. Hatay Valiliği, <http://www.hatay.gov.tr/ben-sen-yok-biz-variz>

101“St. Paul in Antakya”, *Pilgrimages Turkey*, <http://www.pilgrimageturkey.com/st-paul-in-antakya.php>

property of the French consul in Aleppo who offered it to the Catholic Church), it now belongs to the Turkish State, which has collected entry fees since 2005¹⁰². Shared symbol of the religions of the Book, it reflects Hatay's image in general: Muslims sometimes pray there, alongside fervent Christians and curious tourists. "According to numerous testimonies collected in the field, the government has often seized religious places to convert them into mosques or take advantage of their attractiveness to divert them into a museum, as was the case with the cave of Saint Peter"¹⁰³. Due to renovation, this important pilgrimage site was kept closed from September 2012 to June/July 2016. It seemed an eternity for locals: according to some, the site was even removed from guide books with the beginning of the war in Syria. And during this long period, the two main issues treated were the elimination of the dangerous rock pieces at the top of the church, and the creation of a parking¹⁰⁴, which can be considered as superficial modifications - or at least not as restaurative works in heritage and conservation terms.

While museification leads to a well-controlled environment, other places which could not so easily be controlled were shut down using security concerns as a justification. Two events allow the implementation of this lever used by the State: firstly the war in Syria and the terrorist attacks linked to it, secondly the coup d'état and the repression policy that went with it. Syria has long been the primary area of action of ISIS (Islamic State). Turkey's interest in it ultimately made it a privileged target. This explains the numerous deadly terrorist attacks that targeted cities in the region (car bombings in Reyhanli in 2013¹⁰⁵, and again in 2019¹⁰⁶) as well as other cities along the

102Florence Deliancourt, "Les minorités d'Antioche sur l'Oronte : Typologie d'un nouveau rapport de force", Note franco-turque in *Institut Français des Recherches Internationales* (IFRI), Programme Turquie Contemporaine (October 2015), 23

103*Ibid.*

104"St. Pierre Kilisesi Yenileniyor", *Iskenderun Gazetesi*, May 3, 2013. <https://www.iskenderungazetesi.com/st-pierre-kilisesi-yenileniyor/>

105"Blasts kill dozens in Turkish town Reyhanli on Syria Border", *BBC News*, May 11, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22494128>

106"Car bomb blast kills three in Turkey's Reyhanli near Syria", *Al Jazeera*, July 5, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/car-bomb-blast-kills-turkey-reyhanli-syria-190705112343232.html>

border (rocket fires in 2016¹⁰⁷, a car bomb in 2019 in Kilis¹⁰⁸; a suicide attack towards a Kurdish cultural center in Suruç on July 25, 2015¹⁰⁹). These events resulted in the closure of many “at-risk” places of worship for fear of terrorist attacks. The Orthodox Church of Antakya has since been closed to visitors, as has the synagogue. After the failed “coup” on the night of 15th July 2016, the *olağanüstü hal* (state of emergency) was declared, renewed seven times until the 18th of July 2018. This decision resulted in numerous violations of human rights and cultural heritage all over the country, bringing the European Parliament to denounce the “lack of respect for freedom of religion, discrimination against religious minorities, including Christians and Alevis”, pushing for “enabling religious communities to obtain legal personality”¹¹⁰. An example is the appropriation by the State of many places of worship belonging to the numerous Christian communities in the tense South-Eastern provinces¹¹¹. These measures go hand in hand with cases of “deliberate destruction of cultural heritage”¹¹², with the World Heritage Site of Diyarbakir (old city of Sur)¹¹³ or the construction of the Ilisu dam project. Beyond these attempts by the government to erase traces of a rich past, both approaches seen in Antakya – museification and closure leading to appropriation – have the same character of reducing these active religious sites to passive cultural heritage, through inaccessibility on the one hand, and oblivion on the other.

107Selin Girit, “Syria conflict: Kilis, the Turkish town enduring IS bombardment”, *BBC News*, May 9, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36245505>

108“Car bomb hits Kilis border gate between Turkey, Syria”, *Daily Sabah*, February 12, 2019, <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2019/02/12/car-bomb-hits-kilis-border-gate-between-turkey-syria>

109Seyhmus Cakan, “Suspected ISIS bombing kills 30 in Turkish border town”, *The Daily Star*, July 20, 2015, <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Jul-20/307427-explosion-hits-southeastern-turkish-town-of-suruc-near-syria-border-some-dead-and-wounded-security.ashx>

110European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2019 on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey (2018/2150(INI)) – P8_TA-PROV(2019)0200 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0200_EN.pdf

111“Turkey seizes six churches as state property in volatile southeast”, *World Watch Monitor*, April 6, 2016. <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/04/turkey-seizes-six-churches-as-state-property-in-volatile-southeast/>

112European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2019 on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey (2018/2150(INI)) – P8_TA-PROV(2019)0200 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0200_EN.pdf

113Ercan Ayboğa, “SUR: The Turkish state’s systematic destruction and commercialization of a World Heritage Site”, *Komun Academy*, March 25, 2019. <https://komun-academy.com/2019/03/25/sur-the-turkish-states-systematic-destruction-and-commercialization-of-a-unesco-world-heritage-site/>

Because of the designation of the entire area bordering Syria as formally not recommended to travel to by European governments, Hatay's southern areas including Antakya are in the middle of this “red” zone, and the region lost a lot of its attractiveness for visitors. It was precisely from this moment that the State intensified its efforts to present an emblematic image of peace and stability. During the Mediterranean Culinary Days¹¹⁴, organised by the Regional Governorship in the first week of September 2014 (in which I participated), I witnessed how local chefs were able to show the region's cultural assets, illustrating the different influences both in cooking and other forms of heritage, such as crafts, and music. One of the main goals was clearly to rehabilitate Hatay in people's minds. This work of emphasising an image of peace is carried out in other ways too: symbols are displayed at the entrance and across the city (sculpture of white doves, images of laurels, etc.), and official platforms and programmes are created by the government. However, the government also took over promising local initiatives. “Hatay is celebrated for maintaining the peaceful cohabitation of numerous civilizations, both contemporarily and historically, as currently demonstrated by the Turkish Government launch of the 2005 Meeting of Civilizations in Antakya, as well as their financial and administrative support for the interreligious Antakya”¹¹⁵. This refers to the Choir of Civilizations initiated in 2005 as a small solidarity project by Sister Barbara, a German Catholic who had lived in Antakya for fifteen years¹¹⁶. In 2007, she was set aside from the project and the governor of Hatay appointed a coordinator from the AKP, foreign to the city. It was then transformed into a marketing mission leading the singers to a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. This political appropriation of a local initiative illustrates a two-fold approach¹¹⁷. By giving more

¹¹⁴“Mediterranean culinary days celebrated in Hatay”, Anadolu Agency Hatay, *Daily Sabah Food*, September 5, 2014. <https://www.dailysabah.com/food/2014/09/05/mediterranean-culinary-days-celebrated-in-hatay>

¹¹⁵Jens Kreinath, “Virtual encounters with Hızır and other Muslim saints Dreaming and healing at local pilgrimage sites in Hatay, Turkey” in *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 2(1):25–66 (Sean Kingston Publishing, 2014), 27

¹¹⁶Florence Deliancourt, “Les minorités d’Antioche sur l’Oronte : Typologie d’un nouveau rapport de force”, Note franco-turque in *Institut Français des Recherches Internationales* (IFRI), Programme Turquie Contemporaine (October 2015), 23

¹¹⁷Emiliano Alessandri, Ian Lesser and Kadri Tastam, “EU-Turkey Relations: Steering in Stormy Seas” in *Turkey, Europe, and Global Issues*, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, No.31 (2018)

visibility and help, the State creates a new public profile that subsequently ends all independence of the local project (and thus neutralises any potential unwished elements).

This pattern is found in all domains of culture and usually follows a destabilising or threatening political event for those in power. After the Gezi protests, the government immediately cracked down on Turkish civil society. A 2014 CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, the main opposition party of the AKP) report on the Turkish government's Culture and Art policies called "Oppression and Censorship" accused the AKP of "preventing any kind of cultural and artistic studies that do not comply with their own political and cultural value"¹¹⁸ after the submission of a new law by the AKP to the Turkish Parliament. This law intended to create a new authority, TÜSAK¹¹⁹ (*Türkiye Sanat Kurumu*, Turkey's Art Authority), under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Under the guise of independence and support for all branches of art and a restructuring of the existing art institutions, it tried to exterminate all existing (public, municipal, independent) art institutions¹²⁰. Ferhan Şensoy, a prominent playwright and comedian, expressed the following: "If the conclusions of the final report are examined, it can easily be understood that the State Theaters are intended to be closed down under the name of privatization within five years. This is a blow. Who wants to buy a privatised State Theater? With this initiative, the State, which is responsible of bringing art to society, plans to destroy art with the hand of the government"¹²¹. TÜSAK is a clear indication of the government's intention to place culture and arts under its own supervision, instead of defending "that the support given to art and artists should not cause State patronage and should allow the artist to produce freely"¹²². By conducting public aid to some, and preventing aid for the

118Ercan Karakaş, "CHP Report on the Turkish Government's Culture and Arts Policies - 2014 : Oppression and Censorship"

119"TÜSAK Kanun Tasarısı Taslağı", Duyurular, T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2014. <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/TR-151761/tusak-kanun-tasarisi-taslagi.html>

120Turgay Oğuz, "TÜSAK geri döndü", *Aydınlık*, March 19, 2017. <https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/kultur-sanat/2017-mart/tusak-geri-dondu>

121*Ibid.*

122Ercan Karakaş, "CHP Report on the Turkish Government's Culture and Arts Policies - 2014 : Oppression and

others, the government shows an urge to control, even though the draft law was ultimately dropped.

Amidst promises of a gradual transformation, “the AKP bases its message on compatibility in principle between human rights, the rule of law, democracy and Islamism”¹²³, with at its core the figure of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as a spiritual leader. But while Turkey has deviated from UE standards, it “embarked on a path of renationalisation of not just their foreign policies but also their political cultures more broadly”¹²⁴. In some instances, this has included growing ambivalence toward democratic and constitutional principles, one of them being secularity. The non-neutrality of the public space (media, institutions, politics) proves its role in spreading a Sunni and Islamic model in society. The degree of State involvement in such a matter underlines the symbolic value that AKP attaches to it, and by extension, to its public. Nevertheless, in the end, the lasting success of an example of Islamist cultural politics is arguable. The aforementioned assemblage in appearance has failed due to the violation of the most basic human rights, and the controversial use of constitutional ambiguousness for an arbitrary power. In a country that openly adopts Sunnism as a State religion and where it is by far the majority, the urban renovation processes in a “borderline” area seem to express the manifestation of an organised creation of a fake display. The recognition by the State of a particular site is made through a certain interpretation, if not the creation of a link that correlates with the official writing of a national history aiming to integrate all identities in order to erase undesired specificities¹²⁵. I, therefore, suggest that the AKP uses and offensively runs these recurring processes consciously. Consequently, its restoration activities have not necessarily maintained a link with the historical and religious charge embodied by the site. In the next chapter, I

Censorship”

123Anne-Clémentine Larroque, *Géopolitique des islamismes* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2014), 88

124Emiliano Alessandri, Ian Lesser and Kadri Tastam, “EU-Turkey Relations: Steering in Stormy Seas” in *Turkey, Europe, and Global Issues*, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, No.31 (2018), 8

125S. Ulas Bayraktar, Elise Massicard, *Decentralisation in Turkey*, Focales, Agence Française de Développement (2012), 16: “*The history of each province was written in accordance with the nationalist historiography. Local history was not taught, or taught only through the role played by a given town in the war of liberation. Sub-national territorial entities were legitimate only in an apolitical and somewhat folkloric view.*”

will try to show through my case studies that the restored subject in question essentially becomes a functional building, a building that becomes a static symbol (of something defined by the State) but no longer has any functioning symbolic nature for the local population.

III. Renovations in urban and rural environments: the case studies of Habib-i Neccār Camii, Hazreti Hızır Makamı and Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim türbesi

In this chapter, I will firstly focus on the *visible* and *invisible* architectural Islamic keys and codes linked to urban space in the city. This analysis subtly communicates Antakya's (and its surroundings') internal organization. Embedded with cultural mixity, it still maintains strong ties with a generations-old of collective memory. The presence of unorthodox communities relatively escaping the control of the government problematises the taking in charge of their matters by “control operation” of the State. This is precisely what the AKP government tries to reverse. Through the recognition and integration of standing mainstream religious structures, the State already has been initiating this process. The second phase consists now in progressively transforming these other, non-mainstream studied cult sites. In order to deal with the renovations of the references that are Habib-i Neccār Camii and Hazreti Hızır Makamı for the locals, I will divide their description in two parts corresponding to their locations representing two different systems. On one hand, Antakya as an urban environment and, on the other hand, Samandağ's (and Harbiye's) setting as a rural one. The religious and cultural gap between the authorities and the local population of Hatay is fundamental to understand the political dynamics at work. As official representatives, the governor and his council are the State's antennas in a given province. They are the ones adapting and applying the decisions taken at the highest level. Moreover, in the same way, they can also independently initiate certain projects on their own, on a smaller scale. Concurrently, the municipality's, as well as the civil society's wishes would correspond to a genuine local perspective. Sometimes, these two forces accordingly aim to achieve a common objective, although they occasionally collide and conflict. I suggest that the discourse carried by the officials is key to creating consensus between the locals' and the State's wishes. Addressing both scales will allow me to explain if, why and how Habib-i Neccār Camii's and Hazreti Hızır Türbesi's renovations are representative of the societal transformations wanted by the government. Several questions then

arise: How did the local structures evolve? What does it demonstrate of the relationship between the State and the minorities? What are the consequences? I first argue that these sites are places that represent and support the particular group identity found in South Hatay. Thus, by overseeing the renovations of these two emblematic sites, the State tries to mark and assert its sovereignty on its territory in order to prove its legitimacy on it. In a region like Hatay - and many others along the Syrian border distinguished by their cultural singularities (linguistic, ethnic, confessional, etc.) - this act is presented as more than necessary.

Islam's fundamental sources of practice – Qur'ān and Sunna – agrees that figural imagery are contrary to faith, Man being unworthy of seeing God. Through many ways, it is made clear that sight is a corrupted sense associated with negative connotations. This principle is illustrated in the mosque's space, while the opposite is observed in churches. If the elongated nave of the Church allows everyone to watch the performance at the altar during ceremonies, the one of the mosque, opaque and protective, arranged on the width in front of the qibla wall, does only indicate the small *mihrāb* niche in direction of the Ka'ba in Mecca. “Highest place in a mosque”¹²⁶, the *mihrāb* (and therefore the qibla) is originally the only requirement in the creation of a dedicated space for religious practice because it entirely qualifies the mosque as a place of prayer. The rest is supposedly a shelter around it for its visitors or an ostentatious display of wealth and power. This notion of shelter connects architecture to a particular religious understanding of space, sacred and individuality incarnated in the *sutra* (a veil or covering, protection, shelter), in Islamic prayer “a technical term for any object placed by the worshipper some distance before him, in front of which no person should pass while the prayer is being performed”¹²⁷. Beyond the simple prayer mat to which the definition can refer, the term can also be applied to different levels of *sitr*, (the hidden

¹²⁶Fehérvári, G., “Mihrāb”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 05 February 2019 <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0733> First published online: 2012

¹²⁷“Sutra”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Glossary and Index of Terms*, Edited by: P.J. Bearman, Th. Banquis, C.E. Bowworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs Bowworth. Consulted online on 25 January 2019 <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/10.1163/1573-3912_ei2glos_SIM_gi_04540>

material). On a larger scale, the mosque itself is one of its more general materializations. With the purpose of subtracting the believer from the material world through a sacred, pure and intimate perimeter, it defines perfectly the place of worship. The mosque is, therefore, a veil for and from the exterior. For example, the inclusion of the outer walls of the mosque which shields the main building from the urban network creates a zone of transition (*ziyāda*)¹²⁸. This principle of concealment so prevalent in Islamic philosophy is reflected in the architectural and urban principles of the old city of Antakya (Illustration 1).



Illustration 1: Streets of the old Antakya.

Source: Hürriyet.

Once the bridge over the Orontes river is crossed from north-west, one comes face-to-face with the Ulu Camii (Great Mosque, Illustration 2), supposedly founded in 1271 by the Mamlouk Sultan Baybars after the 1268 siege of Antioch¹²⁹. Despite its position at the edge of the

¹²⁸Bruno Nassim Abouddrar, “Chapitre 5 : Le voile au risque des images” in *Comment le voile est devenu musulman* (Paris: Flammarion, 2014), 180-187

¹²⁹“Doğal, Kültürel ve Tarihi Turizm Değerler”, Hatay İl Kültür ve Turizm Müdürlüğü, T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, <http://www.hataykulturturizm.gov.tr/TR-205529/dogal-kulturel-ve-tarihi-turizm-degerler.html>

concentrated conurbation, this mosque is blending into the architecture of the buildings of the city. Only a small porch topped by a plaque indicates the entrance to a cramped and elongated inner courtyard which allow the inner structure by adapting it to the outer ones. Others, for example the Ahmediye Camii, or the Zülfikar Camii, located in the very centre of the covered souk (*Kapalı Çarşı*) are quite representative of architectural concealment. In these sinuous, narrow and winding alleys, both are made totally invisible by the labyrinthine urban plan and the dense coverage of the market. In these examples, it is impossible for one to determine the presence, as well as the shape of the mosque from an the outside: it is hidden, but also masked. Antakya defies the conventional by its discreetness.



Illustration 2: Ulu Camii Mosque.

Photography: Luc Wouters.



Illustration 3: Antakya's old city centre from a bird's-eye view.

A couple of meters from the entrance of Habib-i Neccār, another specific feature of the city can be observed, though not easily. On a small junction are situated a synagogue (Antakya Musevi Havrasi), the Sarimiye Camii Mosque and the Catholic Church of Antakya (Illustration 3). Although the minaret is obvious because overlooking the street, only two stars of David are represented in relief on the wall of the synagogue and the church is completely hidden. Only some details lead to point at the presence of a church here. The access to a wooden door is made through two tiny disorientating alleys, opening on to a large inner courtyard surprising the visitor by its spaciousness. The symbolic importance of this place, this junction, and this street is illustrated in the unique view offered by the higher platform from which the bell is rung. Extending over the fruit trees between the bell and the Sarimiye minaret towards the mountain ranges surrounding the city, this view has become one of the recurring iconic images of Antakya¹³⁰ (see Illustration 4). If the three places of worship of the main monotheistic religions are kept so discreet within the city, then

¹³⁰“Ezan, Çan, Hazzan”, T.C. Hatay Valiliği, <http://www.hatay.gov.tr/ezan-can-hazzan>

the predominance of this principle of integration into the urban fabric is a founding characteristic of the city of Antioch as well as its internal social functioning. This essential observation will then make it possible to compare on two levels the new developments and renovations in the city over the last decade. If the veil and visibility - that is, what is given to be visible or invisible - are governed by the same norms of a given community then it is significant of the social and cultural practices of that community. Observation of such features gives the restorer control over this generalised and subconscious social agreement through the action of enhancing any trait, component, or style in a restoration. This action thus illustrates more than just an aesthetic or utilitarian architectural will. It is the result of a process that expresses an ideology, and will have thus much more symbolic and individual impacts.



Illustration 4: View of the Sarımiyye Camii Mosque and the mountains surrounding Antakya from the Catholic Church.

Source: Turkish Airlines

Antakya

The present Habib-i Neccār Mosque was most probably built on what were the ruins of a central church in the Christian city of Antioch. It is located on the South West-North East pillar axis (*via*) that existed since the creation of the city itself and linked one extremity to the other. The mosque's location still has the same importance if not more, nowadays overlooking the old covered market, at a crossroads. Today, the entrance to the protected mosque complex (*külliyeye*), in the meaning of the institutional complex centered around the mosque (or the *vakf*, foundation), is made through a *taçkapı*, a portal crowned by a dome carved in the stoneⁱⁱ. The 17th century polygonal minaret is located in-between the entrance gate and the tomb where according to tradition the bodies of certain important people are resting (Illustration 5). Below ground level, this tomb has a remarkable and original architecture since it goes down on 4 meters - two floors - under the ground. After the first staircase, one finds a room with the sarcophagi of two saints, supposedly Yahya (John the Baptist) and Yunus (Paul the Apostle, according to the information plaque)ⁱⁱⁱ. On the floor beneath, Aziz Neccār (Saint Neccār)^{iv} lays alongside Sem'un Safa (a Hebrew prophet) on his left. Square-shaped, the tomb has Arabic inscriptions on its outside but also recent poems and odes to these figures that appear in surāt Yā Sin (Qur'ān, 36:13-27) along with references to the Qur'ānic verses mentioning Moses' adventures meeting Hızır^v. These sarcophagi, certainly very old, are however more likely to be the tombs of important people among the first Christians in the city¹³¹. In the 7th century, in other words, right after the hegira and the revelation, the first Islamic conquests beyond Arabia were led by Umar b. Al-Khattāb¹³², the second khalif amongst the *rāshidūn*, who approaches the Levantine territories and expanded Muslim territories towards the Byzantine Empire. In 638 CE, the city is under Muslim control of a conqueror called Abu Ubayda al-Jerrāh¹³³.

¹³¹Jørgen Christensen-Ernst, *Ancient Antioch: The Mosque of Habib-i Neccar (Habib al-Najjār)*, 3

¹³²Thierry Bianquis, Pierre Guichard and Mathieu Tillier, *Les débuts du monde musulman (VIIe-Xe siècle). De Muhammad aux dynasties autonomes* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), 79-103. Umar b. Al-Khattāb “reined” from 634 until 644.

¹³³Mine Temiz, “Külliyesi ve Özellikleri” in *Habib-i Neccār Hz. Tanıtım Dergisi*, Sayı : 1 (2013)

The Muslim occupation of the city forced a significant number of its inhabitants to leave and escape foreign yoke, but their place was quickly taken over by the newcomers and their buildings, which gradually added to the urban landscape in order to raise the profile of Islam in the city.



Illustration 5: View of Habib-i Neccār Mosque from the inside.

Source: <https://www.instazu.com/media/1917598495028704812>

Among these first buildings was the Habib-i Neccār Mosque, originally built in year 12 of hegira according to the Aleppo's Vilayet official yearbook (*Salnāme*) of the 19th century¹³⁴. The annex buildings added to the core of the Habib-i Neccār Mosque which constitute the complete complex now, however, were built after having adapted the site of the old church during the transformation. Under the protection of *Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü* (General Directorate of Foundations) the mosque is identified nowadays in the inventory of Turkey's Culture Portal as having been erected in 1285¹³⁵. The requirements brought by the mosque's Islamic function are such that the qibla must be oriented towards Mecca. To achieve this, the direction of the old street axis

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

¹³⁵“Habib-i Neccar Camii – Hatay”, Kültür Envanteri Anıt, Türkiye Kültür Portalı, <https://www.kulturportali.gov.tr/turkiye/hatay/kulturenvanteri/habib-i-neccar-camii>

had to be slightly deviated; a change which is barely visible from a bird's-eye view (see Illustration 3)¹³⁶. In the end, the southern and eastern walls overlooking the roads are not parallel to these roads while the other two, back-to-back with their direct neighboring buildings, align perfectly thanks to an irregular inner courtyard (see Figure 3). This allows the architecture of the building to be positioned as it should be according to Islamic standards. The changes of the building observed over time reflect the succession of religious and political eras. This succession also resonates in the historiography of the city. As an example, the name of the main axis and its surrounding district nowadays refers to the Turkish annexation of Hatay in 1939 as *Kurtuluş Caddesi*, meaning “Avenue of salvation” or “liberation”^{vi}.

One of the many challenges raised by the present-day mosque is its architectural history. No reliable sources enlighten us as to who the architects were, in what order the other buildings were built, or what the church or even the mosque originally looked like. The tomb would presumably have been among the first parts of the complex, being the common ground despite the evident transformation, as well as the prayer hall. From this observation, it appears Habib-i Neccār Mosque's combination of two primary buildings (mosque and tomb) with a *medrese* later on reflects two different functions juxtaposed on one site rather than one “whole”. Regarding Habib-i Neccār complex especially, Başak İpekoglu's work (1993) is of great help in order to understand the true nature of the site. A *külliyeye* literally designates this whole - from the Arabic word *kul* - traditional complex of buildings for benevolent services for the community including a *medrese*, a *hammam*, etc. which is particularly characteristic of the Seljuk and Ottoman architectural legacies¹³⁷. Yet the Habib-i Neccār complex does not fit in this institutionalised designation and architectural formation of the classical concept. Adopting Başak İpekoglu's terminology about the Anatolian Seljuk period “buildings with combined functions”¹³⁸ reveals to be more accurate. This definition comprises only

¹³⁶*Ibid.*

¹³⁷“Külliyeye”, Ottoman Architecture, Islamic Arts, Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/art/kulliyeye>

¹³⁸Başak İpekoglu, “Terminology relating to buildings that have combined functions in Anatolian Seljuk architecture”,

those that bring together the functions of mosque, medrese, and tomb (or *türbe*), and are located in the cities. She concludes: “In this study, we have accepted that the buildings and the building groups under study are the initial experiments and trials of the later külliye's, that are constructed in a socially and economically more developed Ottoman society. These groups are the characteristic designs of a certain period and their preservation is important as they symbolize the principle thought of that period from the point of architectural history”. The Habib-i Neccār complex is known to have been destroyed and rebuilt a number of times, leaving room for new interpretations of its function each time. When looking at Habib-i Neccār complex, we look at a transformed church, an early Islamic Middle-Age organizational complex, and at an Ottoman work of art. Indeed, as Minna Rozen and Benjamin Arbel¹³⁹ theorize, reconstruction and restoration (following natural disasters but also for reasons of usability) is an opportunity to analyse how a government's system functioned at the time in question, placing it in a broader historical and political context. They say: “Fires, like other catastrophes such as war, plague, floods, and earthquakes, offer the historian not only a dramatic setting for a historical narrative but also an opportunity to investigate aspects of material life, demographic patterns, level of institutional organization, mentalities and many other aspects of human existence in the past”¹⁴⁰. Such an anthropologic analysis is essential in order to successfully link political actions with society and arts.

This background sets a certain common ground from which we understand the historical and religious charge of these places and therefore the influence they exert on the locals. As I have shown, this influence is used and redirected by the State over the people. Between these three actors (State, sites, and locals), an immaterial exchange takes place. The sites embody the city's and its surroundings' cultural identity through space and time factors, forming a coherent, unified entity in

METU JFA, (13:1-2, 1993), 53-65

139Minna Rozen and Benjamin Arbel, “Great fire in the metropolis, The case of the Istanbul conflagration of 1569 and its description by Marcantonio Barbaro”, in D. Wasserstein and A. Ayalon (Ed.), *Mamluks and Ottomans*, (Routledge, 2006), 135

140*Ibid.*

the minds of locals. This “aura” is used by the State in its interest, gradually destroying the intimate relationship that the locals carry towards this place. Habib-i Neccār is, moreover, located at the crossroads of the historic Jewish, Christian and Muslim districts, as can be seen on doors and houses. Measuring this multicultural context allows us to understand that Habib-i Neccār “stands as symbol of solidarity and indulges in interreligion”^{vii}, and recalls its significance on multiple scales. It suggests that this mosque is as much a part of the national history as it is personal history to the locals who do not identify as Turk. At the same time, this characteristic seems to be the reason for the AK Party to reduce the mosque's syncretic aspect. Indeed, its use by non-Sunnis and its less articulated Sunni environment alone justifies for the AKP their attempt to change the status of the complex into something more explicitly linked to Sunni Islam and thus the new Turkish AKP State. This reveals the goal mentioned earlier, to gather and create a sense of concern around a single aspect of the mosque's nature, Sunnism – in other words, to homogenize.

But Habib-i Neccār also carries another strong symbolic for the Sunni-islamic State: it is known as the first mosque built in Anatolia. Anatolia is for the Turkish Republic its heart, associated with revolutionary memory, novelty, and victory. These very same features are incarnated in the person of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Founder of the Republic, he renegotiated the treaties imposed by imperialistic powers, which was an act nationally perceived as a pride. As the only one able to oppose equally and obtain his demands, both against foreign powers and internal specificities (foreign presence: Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, etc.) with the signature of the Lausanne Treaty, he becomes the figure of a new and strong power¹⁴¹. Secondly, establishing Ankara as the new capital characterises the city as an emblem. Atatürk geographically signaled a rupture with the former Ottoman sultanate based in Istanbul. This choice illustrates the consequences of a thought process taking root in the Young Turk government and resulting in total ideological change – from Islamic to secular - while the capital, and therefore the country itself, looked towards the interior of

¹⁴¹Anne-Laure Dupont, “L’empire ottoman au début du XXème siècle”. Lecture at Sorbonne University, Faculté des Sciences Sociales: Contemporary History, November 2015.

the Turkish nation instead of the Mediterranean. Anatolia's huge symbolic is implied in the heart of the Turkish national discourse (as created by the Kemalists, but used by every other later political force in Turkey), and Erdoğan knows how to combine both ideological sides – left and right wings - amongst the population by reusing and reinterpreting these historical references with contemporary challenges and ambitions. On one hand, this rhetoric helps him in obtaining the vote of political sides. Through galvanization and reference to the defeating of foreign powers by a national hero (a *ghazi*), the AKP uses the Kemalist's (anti-Western) ideologists' thoughts. Enhancing the reputation of the ghazi is a strategic decision made by the party. As the particular historical feature of a conquering war hero protecting the Fatherland against the West is emphasised, his fight against the sultanate is forgotten. On the other hand, he finds legitimacy by making references to Islamic social and cultural codes, especially Sunni. Thus, if this mosque is part of the Anatolian geographical space, it is through insisting on that point that the State attaches and roots its territorial legitimacy. The Habib-i Neccār Mosque thus embodies the Islamic and Turkish presence in a geographical area considered to be the limit between Anatolia and the Bilād al-Shām, where the religious majority changed through history. As Antakya and its surroundings were - and still are – a very mixed area, it seems that restoration of the Habib-i Neccār complex intended to link the complex to official power and to mark the Sunni-islamic State's belonging and control over the historical and cultural aspects of the site.

The 2007 commemorative plaque refers to a first restoration carried out during the AKP government in 2006, under the direction of the Waqf General Directorate^{viii}. However, it was only during the second renovation project, led in 2014-2015¹⁴², that the site was extensively renovated. An analysis of the discourse around the mosque itself and its restoration perfectly reveals the image conveyed by the authorities among the Turkish population. Indeed, the emphasis is placed on two aspects that inscribe the place in national space and time, in addition to its function for the Muslim

142“Habib-i Neccar Camisi'nde turizme yönelik restorasyon”, *TRT Haber*, December 12, 2014, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/kultur-sanat/habib-i-neccar-camisinde-turizme-yonelik-restorasyon-156759.html>

community. On a website called *Emlak Kulisi*, an article states for example: “Habib-i Neccār Mosque, which is one of the most important religious centres in Hatay and which has a great reputation throughout the country as the first mosque in Anatolia, is being rebuilt for tourism”¹⁴³. Reminding of the importance of the place in such a narrative both legitimises the decision to renovate it, but also makes it possible to carry it out in a one-way process that focuses on the uniquely Sunni-Islamic aspect of the mosque and not on its complete more complex and diverse heritage.

This transformation process sometimes involves more superficial rather than substantive work, aiming to create a new “face”, despite the use of relevant techniques and materials. For example, on the *şadirvan* fountain dating from the 19th century, the taps were replaced by Ottoman-inspired brass taps, based on 19th-century Ottoman models. Although using artisanal materials and matching them to the construction period implies considerable benefits such as greater proximity between the visitor and the site, this is not the case for the facade or any surface (walls, floors, ceiling, see Illustration 6). A specific signature practice of Sunnitization is attached to it, which seems to be the signature of the sanitization of architecture and site. The “clean and straight” character of the renovation under the AKP governments is an omnipresent pattern. The main tool of this practice is paving stone and cobblestone. Particularly smooth, straight and white, this material seems to be the most effective way to give a uniform appearance to any reworked site. It contributes to the process by wiping out the historical steps - and therefore the pieces of evidence of local history – of its long and diverse building history. Fostering, even promoting the telling of one story rather than another is ultimately the simplest and most discreet way to limit the cultural load of any place in the mindset of the local community, as well as its role as heritage within the local community.

¹⁴³“Hatay’ın en önemli dini merkezleri arasında yer alan ve Anadolu’daki ilk cami olarak yurt genelinde büyük bir üne sahip olan Habib-i Neccar Camii’nin yeniden turizme kazandırılıyor”, *Emlak Kulisi*, June 9, 2015, <https://emlakkulisi.com/hatay-habib-i-neccar-camii-restore-ediliyor/382718>



Illustration 6: View of Habib-i Neccâr from the inside, with the şadirvan at the extremity.

Source: Verda Kimyonok.

The urban planning of the city by the State, especially surrounding a religious cult site, reveals the outlook it has upon the affected community. In the Ottoman Empire, before the *Tanzimat* leading to the recognition of certain religious communities under the term *millet*, social (non-economic) interactions between them and Sunni Muslims existed minimally, limiting the possibility for minorities to grow or gain visibility. In parallel, many of the renovation companies in Turkey seem to be of great interest to the surroundings of the sites in question. Today, architectural plans reveal it when looking at Habib-i Neccâr, but very old cases do not illustrate the content any less well and prove that it is a state practice. This policy, which combines the definition of renewal with that of destruction, is recurring within the system through constructions or renovations undertaken by the authorities, of eminently Muslim buildings in Jewish or Christian historic neighbourhoods. In 1660, the consequence of one of the biggest fires in Istanbul was the disappearance of many synagogues and churches whose locations were assigned to Valid Turhan Sultan, and the expansion of the Eminönü Yeni Valid Mosque complex. Thus, Kenan Yıldız writes:

“the area where the mosque was built is located in a Jewish quarter and almost all the houses and rooms in this neighborhood belong to Muslim foundations. For this reason, it is one of the important findings of this study that the accusatory comments that the Jews were removed or expelled by the State from this region should be changed in the way that Muslim foundations were actually taken or expelled from this region”¹⁴⁴. Here, in the Habib-i Neccār renovation plans, old adjacent habitation buildings are included (in bold black, Figure 3), as well as the grey scratched area, which represent the new *Kültür konakları* (sort of townhouse) that we can see on the 3D plans (Illustration 7), a project brought and brood by especially by the AKP and its President, as demonstrated with their “presence” for the opening¹⁴⁵.

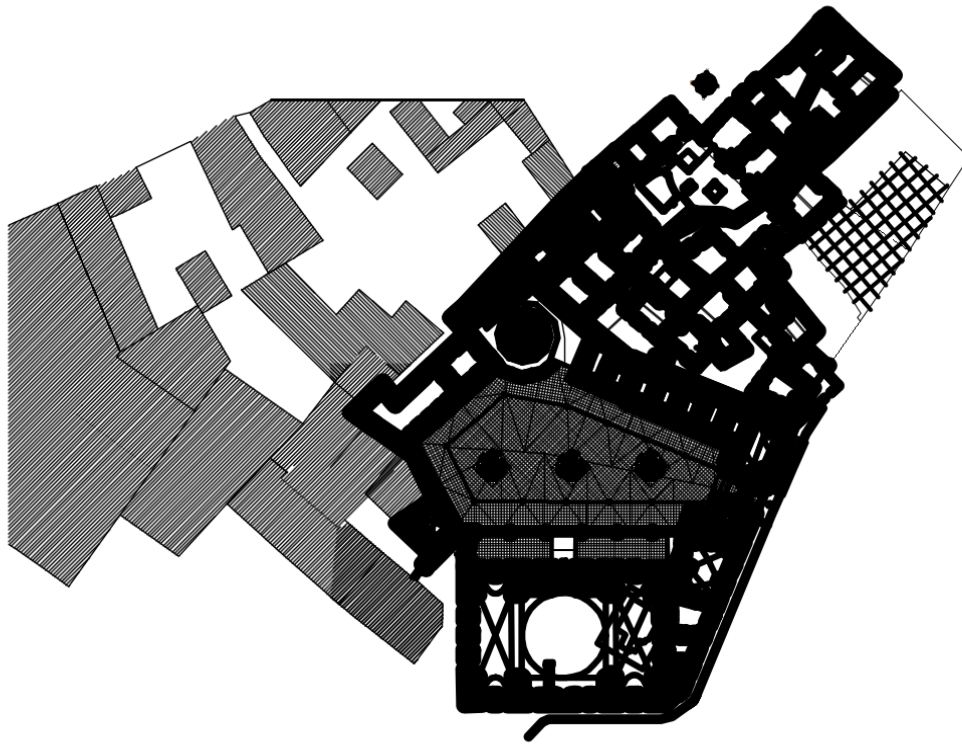


Figure 3: Plan of the renovations, which are not limited at the mosque but covers the whole complex and the surrounding buildings.

¹⁴⁴Kenan Yıldız, “1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili” (PhD diss., İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, 2002), 239 : “Burada dikkati çeken husus şudur ki, caminin yapıldığı alan bir Yahudi mahallesi içerisinde yer almakta ve bu mahalledeki hemen tüm ev ve odalar Müslüman vakıflarına ait bulunmaktadır. Bu sebeple, Yahudilerin devlet tarafından bu bölgeden çıkarıldığı ya da sürüldüğü şeklindeki suçlayıcı yorumların, esasında Müslüman vakıflarının bu bölgeden çıkarıldığı veya sürüldüğü şeklinde değiştirilmesi gerektiği sonucu bu çalışmanın ortaya koyduğu önemli tespitlerden bir tanesidir”.

¹⁴⁵“Habib-i Neccar Kültür Konakları açıldı”, HaberTürk, Mai 8, 2018, <https://www.haberturk.com/hatay-haberleri/60677866-habib-i-neccar-kultur-konaklari-acildi>



Illustration 7: Habib-i Neccar renovation project. On the left are the new konaks.

Source: Cihan Haber Ajansi.

Historically, the discourse of the majority on minorities is a language of exclusion introducing pejorative terms. It is a narrative that refers to the lexical field of “dirt”, “impurity”, and “chaos”. This language opposes the image of Islam, which is represented within institutions under the label of “order” and “purity”. This narrative of purity is still found today in mentalities under the disguise of cleanliness and is used in the argument to legitimize the need for renovation. In 2016, the Istanbul Mufti's office (İstanbul Müftülüğü linked to the Diyanet) spoke, in an introductory text explaining the history of the Yeni Mosque in Eminönü on their official website¹⁴⁶, of the neighborhood as “a dirty Jew and Christian neighborhood” (*Pis bir Yahudi ve Hristiyan mahallesi'ne düzeltme*, “Sanitization of a filthy Jewish and Christian neighborhood”)¹⁴⁷. Although this polemical phrase provoked reactions and was headlined in many articles, little critical reaction was observed among the representatives of the AKP, who only declared that the text would be corrected as soon as possible. That says a lot about the references of the party and its members. In this narrative, it is necessary to remedy uncleanliness by “renovation”, in other words by sanitization. Thus, all projects targeting studied sites - places of historical worship and symbolic value within local communities - also include the renovation of the entire surrounding area. By including the site in question in a larger urban ensemble, it loses its historical context, but it is also deprived of any physical and symbolic relationship with nature because green spaces are not the

¹⁴⁶Istanbul Müftülüğü, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, <https://istanbul.diyamet.gov.tr/Sayfalar/home.aspx>

¹⁴⁷“Pis bir Yahudi ve Hristiyan mahallesi'ne düzeltme”, December 7, 2016, <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2016/gundem/pis-bir-yahudi-ve-hristiyan-mahallesine-duzeltme-1551505/>

priority of this system, as the government's Gezi project¹⁴⁸ showed us.

Countryside

The Shrine of Hızır, located in the small city of Samandağ on the beach (*Deniz*) facing the Syrian coast at the exit of the city, is caught between sea and mountains. It is on this very long sandy beach that one finds Hazreti Hızır Makamı, which shelters the rock (see Illustration 7) where according to the story, Hızır (*Khidr*), a man who is believed to be the source of divine wisdom, and Moses (*Musa*), prophet of the Old Testament, met¹⁴⁹. As told in the chapter “Account of the Loftiness of the ranks of Moses and Khidr” of an Eastern Turkish version¹⁵⁰ of the *Qisas al-Anbiyā'* (Stories of the Prophets), the journey Moses undertakes to find Khidr (Hızır) and learn from his knowledge is full of challenges. Moses (and his valet Joshua) begins his search by finding a fountain where he “cleansed himself”. In order not to starve, he catches two fishes and puts them aside. However, as a drop from the fountain touches them, they return to life and to water. This source is believed to be the nowadays *Ab-ı Hayat çeşmesi* located in Hıdırbey (on the mountains above Samandağ) where one also finds the enormous *Musa Ağacı* (Moses' Tree^{ix}). He meets Khidr there, teaching him that he has to live by God's will and can not take a life as he pleases before he leads him on a symbolic apprenticeship through lands and seas. Water stands therefore for purity and a symbol of life which either resuscitates or grants immortality. It simply is the vital ingredient to all kinds of life (human, animal, vegetal) and therefore is at the Origin of all. The figure of Khidr makes it even more symbolic given what are his powers, stated in the chapter “Concerning Khidr and Elijah” (*Ilyās*, another Prophet): “[they] have drunk of the Water of Life. Until the Day of Judgment they will not die. Khidr roams the sea, and Elijah roams the plains. They show the way to

148Ayşem Mert, “The trees in Gezi Park: environmental policy as the focus of democratic protests”, *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* (2016)

149Nagel, T., “Kısaş al-Anbiyā'”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4401>

150Al-Rabghūzī, *The Stories of the Prophets, An Eastern Version*, Vol. II (1995), 375-381

those who are lost”¹⁵¹. The fact that Samandağ was the place where the Orontes River spilled into the sea strengthened the fact that *Mecma’ül-Bahrain* (a mystical concept in Islamic cities referring to the place where the two seas meet, traditionally known as the place where Moses and Khidr met) was the alleged place¹⁵². The sacredness (*harām*) of this rock explains the tradition of circumambulation (*tawāf*) that is associated with it. The visitor “begins by kissing the stone or touching it, or at least making a gesture towards it, having the shrine on his left and ending at the starting point”. Such practices (as well as the popular use of the word *türbe* referring to the site, although it is not a tomb) can be considered as evidence of the kind of belief and custom practiced in rural regions, sometimes qualified as an “unorthodox” belief. By nature, the Hazreti Hızır Makamı here studied is a product of “popular” practices related to religious beliefs. Such sites testify to a practice for the least local and common among a part of the population. This pilgrimage site probably looked like a simple limewashed rock protected by a thin wooden fence from the late Ottoman period (Illustration 8 and 9, respectively end of 19th century and probably around the 1930's). Over the course of time, a dome was made on top of it, characterising the sacredness of the place (Illustration 10, certainly dating back to the 1960's). The previous fence is replaced by a cement mid-wall, preventing from entering inside or touching the stone itself. Since the previous renovation, the site has been considerably enlarged and inspires more clearly the local style, but also the more formal style of a religious place of worship: local by its colours and design (use of white marble, green wrought iron), formal because of the addition of a crescent and a star on top as well as inscriptions referring to the religious function of the place (Illustration 11).

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 460-463

¹⁵²“Hz. Hızır Türbesi restore ediliyor”, *Hatay Vatan*, July 12, 2013, <https://www.hatayvatan.com/hz-hizir-turbesi-restore-ediliyor.html>

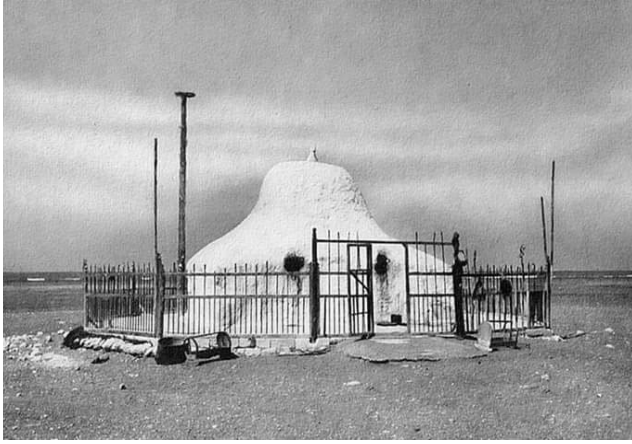


Illustration 8: The rock where Hızır and Musa supposedly met.

Source: Doguakdeniz Gazetesi

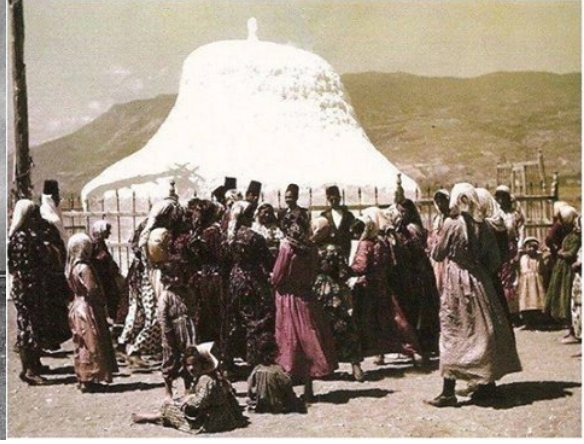


Illustration 9: Pilgrims around the rock.

Source: Samandag TV



Illustration 10: Later, a dome overhanging it was built.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/SAMANDAĞ-45977151951/>



Illustration 11: The Hazreti Hızır Makamı, in more recent years (probably early 2000's).

Source: Geziendo.com



Illustration 12: The Hazreti Hızır Makamı after the latest renovations.

Source: <https://www.instazu.com/media/1781194103642180093>

Today, the shrine serves as a point of reference for the beginning of an active commercial path hosting cafes, restaurants and leisure parks for children (*Deniz Sitesi*, see Illustration 13). This seaside, formerly the antique port of Antioch on the Orontes, is about 3 to 5 km away from the centre of Samandağ, which has become over time a small and peaceful town, surrounded by small villages that each have their own stories (tales and specificities) in the local founding myths. The site, which is of great importance for the Muslim and Christian population, attracts a large influx of visitors every year, especially for Hıdrellez. From the combination of the names “Hızır” and “İlyās” (protectors of earth and water as well as helpers of individuals, families and communities and thus related to our site), that day marks the beginning of Spring as the awakening of nature¹⁵³. Usually celebrated on the eve of May 6th, it was inscribed on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on behalf of Turkey and Macedonia in 2017¹⁵⁴.



Illustration 13: The Deniz Sitesi and the Hızır site before the broader renovations.

Source: <http://ozenliforum.com/archive/index.php/thread-2877-3.html>

¹⁵³Boratav, P.N., “Kıdır-İlyās”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4285>. First published online: 2012

¹⁵⁴“Spring Celebration: Hıdrellez (Multinational)”, UNESCO Somut Olmayan Kültürel Miras Listesi, T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, <https://aregem.ktb.gov.tr/TR-196388/spring-celebration-hidrellez-multinational---2017.html>

The Hz. Hızır Shrine is communal property. Anyone is entitled to present their projects and visions of the site. Any proposal then has to be further accepted by the municipality in order to evaluate the impact on the public grounds and area around it. If the municipality accepts the proposal work can begin. The last renovation of the shrine took place in 2013. According to *Hatay Vatan*, a local newspaper, the project was based on the proposal of an anonymous “businessman philanthropist” who wanted to renovate the shrine. At the same time, Samandağ Town Hall decided to integrate it into a larger project that included the redesign of the entire surrounding square¹⁵⁵ (Illustrations 14 and 15). In an article by another local newspaper, *Hatay Gazetesi*, a short description of the project then in progress is given: “The tiling on the floor at the beginning of the park would delimitate the boundaries of the walking line. Recreation areas will be created [...], creating different spaces in the park”. The project would not damage the environmental ecosystem by leaving the texture of the sea and sand undisturbed¹⁵⁶. The purpose is to create a greener but also wide enough resting area in the most touristic part of the city, which is a religious place.

A first point should be highlighted in the factors of realization of this project. After reminding the status and importance for the locals of this meeting point of two eminent characters, the *Hatay Gazetesi* article ends with a reference to the cultural value of the shrine: “it is described as a project that will become the center of attention for the guests coming from outside”¹⁵⁷. If the satisfaction of the inhabitants of Samandağ is repeatedly mentioned, the global cultural significance of this place is not commonly put forward. In accordance with the UNESCO Convention on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage (*kültürel miras*), each State Party shall prepare and update its own inventory of cultural heritage on its territory in order to protect it. This national inventory is based

155“Hz. Hızır Türbesi restore ediliyor”, *Hatay Vatan*, July 12, 2013, <https://www.hatayvatan.com/hz-hizir-turbesi-restore-ediliyor.html> : “The infrastructure works of the giant project Deniz Sitesi Hz. Hızır makamı, which was developed in cooperation with Samandağ Municipality, District Governorate and Doğaka, are to continue uninterruptedly. Mayor Mithat Nehir takes daily reports and follows up the works of the park”.

156“Hızır Makamına yakışır proje”, *Hatay Gazetesi*, <http://www.hataygazetesi.com/haberDetay-1107-hz-hizir-makamina-yakisir-proje>

157*Ibid.*

SAMANDAĞ BELEDİYESİ DENİZ MEVKİİ PARK VE MEYDAN DÜZENLEMESİ PROJESİ



Illustration 14: A representation of the renovation project. The Hızır site, between a square and a parking.

Source: Hatay Gazetesi.



Illustration 15: A representation of the renovation project, with its green areas and playgrounds.

Source: Hatay Mahalli Haber.

on the provincial inventories, and inventories in provinces are carried out under the coordination of Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate¹⁵⁸. The Hz. Hızır Shrine is nowhere cited in this list, contrarily to Antique remains (the Vespasian-Titus Tunnel on the temporary list in 2014¹⁵⁹). Not recognised as cultural heritage, it bears, therefore, no official cultural value. By creating an attractive standardised space around the shrine, it appears that the project aims to extend its influence to all visitor profiles, instead of the traditional inter-community network exclusively. The central space is designed to “perform various activities, especially artistic ones, that will create vitality on the streets during festive period and festivals, demonstrations that will attract the interest of tourists and make a square where promoters of original products will be realized”¹⁶⁰. The ambition to promote local specialties and practices seems to be one of the challenges of this project through the valorisation of one of the town's major assets.

If not cultural, tourism in Turkey is mainly religious. Islamic references that were inexistent, or at least not this evidently put in the spotlight, through the Qur'ān and Arabic formulations, emphasize this tendency. If the previous plaque only states “Hz. Hızır Aleyhüssalam” (Illustration 16), the newest one shows the Basmala (or *Bismillāh*, “In the name of God”), a phrase recited before each *sūra* (chapter) of the Qur'ān (see Illustration 12). Besides the inscription in grey marble on the right side of the entry which refers to the *sūra al-Fātiha* and mentions the *sūra al-Kahf* (Qur'ān 60-82, see Illustration 17), the base of the rock inside is completely paved in marble. On one side are engraved extracts of that same *sūrah* which narrates the meeting of Hızır and Musa both in Turkish and Arabic (Illustration 18). In fact, these little changes show a process of adjusting the site to make it more acceptable for an orthodox public. Adding such Qur'ānic texts and linking

158“Somut Olmayan Kültürel Miras Envanter Çalışmaları”, Araştırma ve Eğitim Genel Müdürlüğü, T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, <https://aregem.ktb.gov.tr/TR-50839/somut-olmayan-kulturel-miras-envanter-calismalari.html>

159“Dünya Miras Geçici Listesi”, Kültür Varlıkları Ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü, T.C. Kültür Ve Turizm Bakanlığı, <https://kvmmgm.ktb.gov.tr/TR-44395/dunya-miras-gecici-listesi.html>

160“Hızır Makamına yakışır proje”, *Hatay Gazetesi*, <http://www.hataygazetesi.com/haberDetay-1107-hz-hizir-makamina-yakisir-proje>

the site more to Islamic traditions without any allusion to the others (in the Torah, or the Old Testament) ultimately suggests the growing influence of a Sunni-Muslim narrative even in the countryside, where cohabitation has always been the norm.



Illustration 16: Previous plaque at the entrance of the shrine.

Source: Turbeler.org

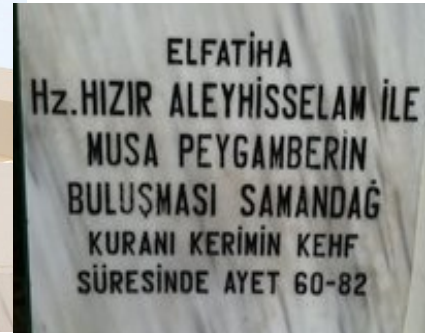


Illustration 17: Marble inscription at the entrance.



Illustration 18: View from inside the shrine after recent renovation.

Source: Turbeler.org

Religious tourism is also generated and encouraged by State propaganda, as suggested by one page of the Hatay region's official site dedicated to it¹⁶¹. This goal is clearly displayed in *Hatay Gazetesi's* previously cited article: the Hz. Hızır shrine was expected to reopen simultaneously with a “meaningful ceremony” for Hıdırellez¹⁶². Besides, the hope that “every year, the guests who visit

¹⁶¹“İnanç Turizmi”, T.C. Hatay Valiliği, <http://www.hatay.gov.tr/inanc-turizmi>

¹⁶²“Hızır Makamına yakışır proje”, *Hatay Gazetesi*, <http://www.hataygazetesi.com/haberDetay-1107-hz-hizir-makamina-yakisir-proje>

Hızır Türbesi from outside the city and from abroad will make a great contribution to the religious tourism of Samandağ and will increase the service quality of the shops and business owners in the Deniz site [the commercial street]” is emphasised by the creation of more accessible space. With greater ease of access to a privileged place, urbanisation aims to create a larger and more visible human flow. The consequences of this attractiveness are external to the place studied - the increase in traffic - but also internal in that it influences the work, daily life, and mentality of the local people. Indeed, reorganization benefits tourism, as illustrated by the former Barikan Otel, between the *ziyaret* and the beach, a hotel that has long served as a landmark before being destroyed at the end of 2014 in preparation for the reorganisation¹⁶³. Such major projects, in rural agglomerations and small towns, mark a rupture in the traditional way of perceiving one's environment.

An example of what a mild conflict between official institutions and local authorities can be is reflected in the renovation project of Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim. This pilgrimage site particularly is dedicated to a mystical healer lies South of Antakya, in Harbiye, a district of Defne. As all the others, its renewal is primarily based on offerings and donations made by visitors. Kreinath notes that “some of the renovations are funded by donors who had a life-changing experience, or were healed, due to a visit to these sites, as in the case of the Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim site”¹⁶⁴, citing interviews he made in 2010. This reference is confirmed by a brief interview I made with the caretaker of the place (see Interview annex), where he cites such miracles. Testimonies of the elderly tell the green and natural environment that the Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim türbesi used to blossom in, associated with healthy, curative and medicinal factors. Overlooking the small tomb of the famous healer, a wooded hill is housing several small *ziyarets* where locals come to rest, gather, and

¹⁶³Ferit Sağaltıcı, “Barikan Kıyı Kenar Cizgisinde olduğu için yıkılıyor”, Archives of *Ayna Gazetesi*, November 8, 2014

¹⁶⁴Jens Kreinath, “Virtual encounters with Hızır and other Muslim saints Dreaming and healing at local pilgrimage sites in Hatay, Turkey” in *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 2(1):25–66 (Sean Kingston Publishing, 2014), 39

pray. As one arrives towards the site today, it is through congested streets that one manages to park and no more trees surround the site. For a few years now, the only environment around the tomb have been smooth and tiled surfaces (Illustration 19).

In 2017 starts a new project. Defne's town hall decides to undertake the renovation of the cult site in order to enlarge the space to “live” (Illustration 23). Indeed, the popularity of Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim even took it to the newspaper, but the narrowness of the living space and the lack of accommodation facilities pushed the town hall to carry out a substantial project, planning “luxury” accommodation for visitors (Illustration 24). The interviewee did not hide his deception, stating that the locals already wanted to create a larger site in order to provide for all needs: for families who come to stay a few days, ritual celebrations, to rest, etc. The site is under the protection of Hatay's Foundations District Directorate (*Hatay Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü*)¹⁶⁵ and, for some reason, the High Council of Monuments did not authorize their project (see Interview annex^x). Finally, the natural environment of the place disappeared completely to give way to superficial “rock” houses surrounding the türbe, and still not enough place for people to stay. A closer analysis of the changes inside the türbe would highlight some new aspects, added only recently to the site. The first illustration of the tomb taken between 2011 and 2016 shows a sober, neutral room with the sarcophagus at the centre (Illustration 20). The second, however, presents Arabic extracts from the Qur'ān all over its four walls (including the *shahada*, proving the obedience to no other God than that of Islam) but also calligraphies reminding the names of Muhammad and Allāh (Illustration 22). These details suggest the affiliation of Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim to Islamic culture and practices only, an affirmation that could not have been made so easily before due to the regular visit of members of many other religious communities as well as to the traditional practices of the local group memory. Clearly, this display is the result of two parallel trends: the transition from local community practice

¹⁶⁵Rana Can, Lema Çapar Abacı, Selim Kadioğlu, “Öldükten Sonra Da Şifa Dağıtan Bir Tıp Adami: Şeyh Yusuf El Hekim A Physician Practice Medicine Aft His Death: Şeyh Yusuf El Hekim”, *Lokman Hekim Journal*, 1 (1): 29-32, (2011)



Illustration 19: Entrance of the Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim tomb before the latest renovations.

Source: https://www.facebook.com/pg/HATAYHAYRANLARI/photos/?ref=page_internal



Illustration 20: Tomb of Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim.

Source: Jens Kreinath.



Illustration 21: Entrance of Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim after renovations (2018).
Photography: Verda Kimyonok.



Illustration 22: Tomb of Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim nowadays.

Source: https://www.facebook.com/pg/HATAYHAYRANLARI/photos/?ref=page_internal

and identity from an active to a passive mindset, and the growing influence of a discourse legitimising Sunnity among diversity. Even locally, mass – and more subtle - instruments affect all societies, even the ones considered “different” from the mainstream national population. These local mindsets seem to be perceived as “outdated” in a Turkey that is increasingly asserting itself as progressivist and constructing its heritage within a predominant Islamic context. These communities of Antakya and its surroundings appear to be, at least, receptive to the State's official Sunni-Islamic narratives.



Illustration 24: The new accommodations around the tomb of Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim.

Photography: Verda Kimyonok



Illustration 23: The tomb of Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim from the exterior.

Photography: Verda Kimyonok

The place of worship, with its function as well as the architecture, is more than just an immutable building; it appeals to all our senses as it must remind us of our mortality through what makes us human. The renovation of these cult sites consequently represent a source of understanding for ideologies, politics, and society. At the same time, by the nature of the studied object, this analysis is essentially linked to the thinking of local practice and group identity in religious behaviour. In this sense, the one who decides for restoration is the one who leads that behaviour. Thomas Mitchell's schema of the ideology of heritage refers to two distinct scales: the distant (institutions, government, State) and the near (people, citizens)¹⁶⁶. Between these two, midway, is the architect or the elite; he is responsible for the connection between both as a cement. The architectural renovations of popular religious sites are, here, used as a pretext to influence their environment in a literal and figurative sense. In all these projects, the surrounding area is entirely reorganised additionally to the site as the center of interest. Regarding expressively the Sunni character of this influence, my study cases show that a pattern of embedding the site in an Islamic setting exists. The visibility of Qur'ānic references inside and outside of the sites, the inclusion of their story to the national narrative, and the erasing of their noticeable past by the standard “clean”

¹⁶⁶Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of experts: Egypt, techno-politics, modernity* (University of California Press, 2002), Chapter 6.1

surfacing are processes that are fundamental features of Sunnitization. Through the description of the studied sites before the renovations, their realisation and, at last, my interpretation, I recorded these changes by stages. “The elements of the official narrative are selected by the State, which chooses the issues to be remembered and those to be forgotten in constructing the kind of society that the State foresees. In the same manner, the collective memories of different communities play an important role in forming their group identities”¹⁶⁷ writes Esra Demirci Akyol. Targeting these groups is therefore the most efficient action, and the consequences of renovating Habib-i Neccār, Hz. Hızır Makamı or Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim türbesi are representative of the community's evolution.

¹⁶⁷Esra Demirci Akyol, *The Role of Memory in the Historiography of Hatay: Strategies of Identity Formation through Memory and History*, VDM Verlag Dr. Muller (Germany, 2009)

Conclusion

I argue here that Turkey is composed of societies and not *a* nation, because of its political and geographical formation in national history. The communities of South-Hatay represent one society, described in the national context as “heterodox” and “marginal” because remote from the centre geographically, culturally, and politically. Yet these societies tend progressively to become one nation, responding to the ideological ambitions of the government in power, the AKP. For Turkey to become a proper nation-State that associates the political entity to the cultural entity of a nation, it has to construct its own national culture and therefore create a narrative with internal coherence and no discontinuities. In other words, “using a codified past which is revived through present action aimed at an expected future” where “the projection into the past [for the political community] may help make the present seem natural, disguising some of the arbitrariness, injustice, and coercion on which it depends”¹⁶⁸. Therefore, the nation continuously builds its own story and components¹⁶⁹. And for it to pursue its direction, that is the providence of security for its people, the AKP uses identity divisions in Turkey. They have become tools for the power to galvanize and bring the crowds together behind the President.

These renovations totally affect the *property* in question, which means the identity space. This determination to standardize goes hand in hand with the desire for control. Both gradually lead to identity assimilation. Based on the principle theorised by Bourdieu concerning identity and representation, the struggle of ethnic and regional identity is a struggle of *property* linked to the origins and *place* of origin¹⁷⁰. The sudden and intensive intervention of the State's hand in the surroundings of Antakya (Samandağ in particular, but all the villages that are not well-integrated)

¹⁶⁸Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of experts: Egypt, techno-politics, modernity* (University of California Press, 2002), Chapter 6.1

¹⁶⁹Elias Sanbar, “Out of Place, Out of Time” in Giovanni Levi & Jacques Revel, *Political Uses of the Past : The Recent Mediterranean Experiences*, Routledge, 2014

¹⁷⁰Pierre Bourdieu, Chapter II: “Identité et représentation” in *Langage et pouvoir symbolique* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 283-286

can therefore truly be experienced as the profanation of a place kept relatively until then unaltered from public marks of appropriation by the current government in Samandağ, and by the AKP in Antakya. For this reason, these projects are very representative of the city and their transformation. However, this struggle does not exist in this case. If there is truly a group mentality linked to the collective memory, it does not in any way lead to any claims against the authorities. These three emblematic sites in the region surrounding Antakya that are the Habib-i Neccār Camii, Hz. Hızır Makamı and Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim highlight government policies and ideals regarding the restoration of cultural sites. Their intensity and manner vary accordingly to the influence exerted on them. The existence of a historical link with national history, no matter how true, makes it official to acknowledge a site like Habib-i Neccār. From this point on, the influence that institutions can exert on this place, which is claimed as a national heritage, is more important.

Although these “renovations” help towards standardization of Sunni Islam as a national religion through quantitative and qualitative processes, the AKP's policies were proven relatively successful. It seems that the Turkish State is blind to the nuances between restoration and renovation, using either term alternatively for *reorganisation*. This policy is characterised by the constant recourse to replacement and destruction, justified by the need to “improve”, “rearrange”, “optimise”. These key words reveal a communication strategy aiming to get these projects accepted in an unfriendly environment. These two aspects combined illustrate the efficiency of performative discourse. In the end, the party has shown itself to be new, dynamic and strong, with clear decisions and offensive action towards integration into the national “tissue” and Islamic culture. Through these projects linking urban transformations to emblematic cult sites, the society tends to adapt and change. Locally, it managed in its bet to get closer to and influence the evolution of group mentality in Hatay. And, despite a successful first decade, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been failing in his global domestic and foreign policy in recent years. Although this Sunnitization process is carried on by the State, these evolutions are the result of decades of assimilationist policies leading to a

generalised acceptance of Turkish as being the only official cultural affiliation. Discreet and strategic, the AK Parti subtly anchors itself in the political and physical landscape of Antakya. However, I would argue that if the local community internalises such a vague Islamic narrative, it does not necessary lead them to match in external behavior too. The process is more likely to Sunnitize even more already Sunni individuals.

Bibliography

- Abouddrar, Bruno Nassim, *Comment le voile est devenu musulman*. Paris: Flammarion, 2014.
- Alessandri Emiliano, Lesser Ian and Tastam Kadri, “EU-Turkey Relations: Steering in Stormy Seas” in *Turkey, Europe, and Global Issues*, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, No.31 (2018).
- Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2006.
- Balhan Jean-Marc, “La Turquie et ses minorités”. *Études*, Tome 411 (2009/12), 595-604. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-etudes-2009-12-page-595.htm>
- Bayraktar S. Ulas and Elise Massicard, *Decentralisation in Turkey*. Focales, Agence Française de Développement, 2012. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00800106>
- Bianquis Thierry, Guichard Pierre and Tillier Mathieu, *Les débuts du monde musulman (VIIe-Xe siècle). De Muhammad aux dynasties autonomes*. Presses Universitaire de France, 2012.
- Bourdieu Pierre, *Langage et pouvoir symbolique*. Paris: Seuil, 2001.
- Bourdieu Pierre, “La maison ou le monde renversé” in *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*. Paris: Poche, 2000.
- Bourdieu Pierre, “Sur le pouvoir symbolique”, in *Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*. 32e année, N. 3 (1977).
- Bruneau Michel, “L’espace-temps des Turcs et de la Turquie, de l’Eurasie à l’Anatolie : essai de modélisation graphique”, *Cybergeo : European Journal of Geography*, Espace, Société, Territoire (2015), document 726. <http://journals.openedition.org/cybergeo/27019> ; DOI : 10.4000/cybergeo.27019
- Bank Andre and Karadag Roy, “The Political Economy of Regional Power: Turkey under the AKP”, *German Institute of Global and Area studies (GIGA) Working Paper*, No. 204 (September 2012).
- Cagaptay Soner, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey. Who is a Turk?* New York: Routledge, 2006
- Cagaptay Soner, “Making Turkey Great Again”, *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, vol.43:1 (Winter 2019). <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Cagaptay20190206-FletcherForum.pdf>
- Can Rana, Lema Çapar Abacı, Selim Kadioğlu, “Öldükten Sonra Da Şifa Dağıtan Bir Tip Adami: Şeyh Yusuf El Hekim A Physician Practice Medicine Aftr His Death: Şeyh Yusuf El Hekim”. *Lokman Hekim Journal*, 1 (1): 29-32, (2011)

- Christensen-Ernst Jørgen, “Ancient Antioch: The Mosque of Habib-i Neccar (Habib al-Najjār)”.
- Ceyhun Huseyin Emre, “Turkey in the Middle East: Findings from the Arab Barometer”, Boğaziçi University, Working Paper 02 (2018).
- De Gendt Pascal, “L’AKP et les alévis : de l’ouverture à la stigmatisation”. *Analyses & Etudes Politique internationale*, Service International de Recherche, d’Éducation et d’Action Sociale ASBL (2015).
- Dakhli, Leyla, “Arabisme, nationalisme arabe et identifications transnationales arabes au 20e siècle”, *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’Histoire*, 103(3), 12 (2009). <https://doi.org/10.3917/VING.103.0012>
- Da Lage Olivier (dir.), *L’essor des nationalismes religieux*. Demopolis, 2018.
- Demirci Akyol, Esra, *The Role of Memory in the Historiography of Hatay: Strategies of Identity Formation through Memory and History*. VDM Verlag Dr. Muller, Germany, 2009.
- Deliancourt Florence, “Les minorités d’Antioche sur l’Oronte : Typologie d’un nouveau rapport de force”, Note franco-turque in *Institut Français des Reherches Internationales (IFRI)*, Programme Turquie Contemporaine (October 2015).
- Duarte Paulo, “Turkey vis-à-vis Central Asia: A Geostrategic Assessment”, *Alternatives, Turkish Journal of International Relations*. <https://dergipark.org.tr/download/article-file/19342>
- Dupont Anne-Laure, “L’empire Ottoman au début du XXème siècle”. Lecture, Sorbonne University, Contemporary History, November 2015.
- Dupont Anne-Laure, Mayeur-Jaouen Catherine et Verdeil Chantal, *Le Moyen-Orient par les textes (XIXe-XXIe siècle)*. Paris, Armand Colin, collection U, 2011.
- Durdu Aydın, “Hatay Nusayrîlerinde Eren İnanci ve İnanç Merkezleri” in *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi*, (2010), 54.
- Erdoğan Başaran, Reyhan, “Comparing Scholarship: The Assessment of the Contemporary Works that Links Alevis with either Shi’ism or Sunnism”, in *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Cilt: 5, S:9 (2018/2), 315-338.
- Gilquin, Michel, *D’Antioche à Hatay : l’histoire oubliée du Sandjak d’Alexandrette : nationalisme turc contre nationalisme arabe, la France, arbitre ?* Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000.
- Grehan, James, *Twilight of the Saints. Everyday religion in Ottoman Syria and Palestine*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Hammond, Timur W., “Mediums of Belief: Muslim Place Making in 20th Century Turkey”. PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2016.
- Hayden, Robert M., Aykan Erdemir, Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir, Timothy D. Walker, Devika

- Rangachari, Manuel Aguilar-Moreno, Enrique López-Hurtado, and Milica Bakić-Hayden, *Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites and Spaces*. Taylor and Francis, 2016.
- Hinnebusch Raymond & Özlem Tür, *Turkey-Syria Relations: Between Enmity and Amity*. Ashgate, 2013.
 - Ipekoğlu, Başak, “Terminology relating to buildings that have combined functions in Anatolian Seljuk architecture”, *METU JFA*, 13:1-2 (1993), 53-65.
 - Karakaş, Ercan, “CHP Report on the Turkish Government’s Culture and Arts Policies - 2014 : Oppression and Censorship”.
 - Karakaya-Stump, Ayfer, “The AKP, sectarianism, and the Alevis’ struggle for equal rights in Turkey”, *National Identities*, 20:1 (2018), 53-67, DOI: 10.1080/14608944.2016.1244935
 - Karateke, Hakan T., “Opium for the Subjects? Religiosity as a Legitimizing Factor for the Ottoman Sultan”, Harvard University
 - Khoury, Basile, “L’ephemere Sandjak d’Alexandrette. Chronique d’une annexion annoncee”, *Les Carnets de l’Ifpo*. La recherche en train de se faire a l’Institut francais du Proche-Orient (October 9, 2012). <http://ifpo.hypotheses.org/4348>
 - Kreinath Jens, “Virtual encounters with Hızır and other Muslim saints Dreaming and healing at local pilgrimage sites in Hatay, Turkey” in *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 2(1), Sean Kingston Publishing (2014), 25–66.
 - Larroque Anne-Clémentine, *Géopolitique des islamismes*. Presses Universitaires de France, 2014.
 - Levi Giovanni & Revel Jacques, *Political Uses of the Past : The Recent Mediterranean Experiences*. Routledge, 2014.
 - Magued, Shaimaa, “Turkey’s economic rapprochement towards Syria and the territorial conflict over Hatay”, *Mediterranean Politics* (2017).
 - Mantran, Robert, J.-L. Bacque-Grammont, L. Bazin, I. and N. Beldiceanu, P. Dumont, F. Georgeon, A. Raymond, J.-P. Roux, N. Vatin, G. Veinstein, *Histoire de l’Empire ottoman*. Paris: Fayard, 2003.
 - McGregor, Richard J., “Grave visitation/worship”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, Edited by: Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27519>
 - Mert, Ayşem, “The trees in Gezi Park: environmental policy as the focus of democratic protests”, *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* (2016). DOI: 10.1080/1523908X.2016.1202106
 - Minna Rozen and Benjamin Arbel, “Great fire in the metropolis, The case of the Istanbul conflagration of 1569 and its description by Marcantonio Barbaro”, in D. Wasserstein and

- A. Ayalon (Ed.), *Mamluks and Ottomans*. Routledge, 2006.
- Mitchell Timothy, *Rule of experts: Egypt, techno-politics, modernity*. University of California Press, 2002.
 - Moore Henry, Clement and Springborg, Robert, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*. Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 2010.
 - Morgante Jole, “La notion de lutte et de pouvoir symbolique dans le champ politique selon Bourdieu. L’intérêt d’une édition”. *Altre Modernità*, n. 3 (March 2010), 215-218. <https://doi.org/10.13130/2035-7680/539>
 - Öztürk Şaban, “3.1 Cahd–İkrar - الجُود والاقراء ” in “Nahiv Terimlerinin Doğuşu ve Gelişimi (Hicrî İlk İki Asır)”. Master's thesis, FSMVÜ Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Temel İslam Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı, 2016.
 - Al-Rabghūzī, *The Stories of the Prophets, An Eastern Version*. Vol. II, 1995.
 - Roderick Parkes, “Turkey's refugee politics”, *Issue Alert*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, 44 (October 2015). https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Alert_44_Turkey_migration.pdf
 - Saliou Catherine, “Les sources écrites de l’histoire du paysage urbain d’Antioche et le projet de *Lexicon Topographicum Antiochenum*” in *Les mosaïques romaines d’Antioche*, detailed programme of the symposium Journée d’actualité de la recherche et de la restauration (December 10, Season 2012-2013), Auditorium du Louvre.
 - Sanjian, Avedis K. “The Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay): Its Impact on Turkish-Syrian Relations (1939-1956)”. *Middle East Journal* 10, no. 4 (1956): 379-94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4322848>.
 - Schmid Dorothée, “Turquie : le syndrome de Sèvres, ou la guerre qui n'en finit pas”, *Politique étrangère*, 2014/1 (Spring), 199-213. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-etrangere-2014-1-page-199.htm>
 - Şeker Nesim, “Forced Population Movements in the Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic: An Attempt at Reassessment through Demographic Engineering”. *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 16 (2013). <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4396>
 - Sekhniashvili Alexander, “Authoritarian Infrastructure Complex: The Turkish Tale” in *New Perspectives in Foreign Policy*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Issue 14 (Fall 2017). <https://www.csis.org/npfp/authoritarian-infrastructure-complex-turkish-tale>
 - Shields, Sarah D., *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
 - Snelders, Bas, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction, Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area*. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, Peeters Publishers, 2010.
 - Sue Roger, *Gouverner par la peur*. Fayard, Transversales, 2007.

- Tekdal Fildis, Ayse, “Roots of Alawite-Sunni Rivalry in Syria” in *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, Summer 2012.
- Temiz Mine, “Külliyesi ve Özellikleri” in *Habib-i Neccâr Hz. Tanıtım Dergisi*, Sayı : 1, 2013.
- Terzioğlu, Derin, “How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization : A Historiographical Discussion”, *Turcica*, 44 (2012-2013), 301-338
- Türkoğlu, Ali Ekber, “Geçmişte ve Günümüzde Antakya'da Hıristiyanlık”. Master's thesis, Çukurova Üniversitesi, Adana, 2006.
- Usluoğlu, Tevfik, “Değişim ve Etkileşim Boyutuyla Hatay'da Hıristiyan Kültürü”. Master's thesis, Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi, Antakya, 2009.
- Warhola, James W. and Egemen B. Bezci, “Religion and State in Contemporary Turkey: Recent Developments in Laiklik” in *Journal of Church and State* vol. 52 no. 3 (2010), 427–453, doi:10.1093/jcs/csq052
- Watters, Samuel W., “Developments in AKP Policy Toward Religion and Homogeneity”, Special Issue Böckenförde Beyond Germany in *German Law Journal*, Vol. 19 No. 02 (2018), 353.
- White Jenny, *Muslim Nationalism as part of a category on AKP and Turkey since 2002*. Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Wilson, Jonathan, Russell W. Belk, Gary J. Bamossy, Özlem Sandikci, Hermawan Kartajaya, Rana Sobh, Jonathan Liu and Linda Scott, “Crescent Marketing, Muslim geographies and Brand Islam. Reflections from the JIMA Senior Advisory Board” in *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Volume 4, Issue 1, Emerald Group Publishing Ltd (2013).
- Yıldız, Kenan. “1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili”. PhD diss., İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, 2002.
- Yıldız, Serap, “İlk Çağ'dan Hatay. Başlangıçtan Bizans Dönemine Kadar”. Master's thesis, Gazi Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara, 2004.
- Zürcher, Erik J., *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's*. IB Tauris, 2010.



Saint Peter's Church (grotto).

Source: <http://www.lifestylerabbit.com/2019/04/02/a-quick-guide-to-hatay-the-city-of-tolerance/>



Saint Peter's Church (grotto) after renovation.

Source: <https://www.hatayitani.com/hatay-saint-pierre-kilisesi/>



Entrance portal of the Habib-i Neccār Mosque after renovation.

Photography: Verda Kimyonok.



Tombs of Yahya and Yunus in the Habib-i Neccâr.

Source: Archives of Mustafa Ertürk.



Tombs of Yahya and Yunus in Habib-i Neccâr after renovation.

Source: Mekan360.com



Sarcophagus of Saint Habib-i Neccār before the renovation.

Source: http://www.hatiab.org.tr/hatayda_nereye_gidilir/48-habib_i_neccar_camii



Sarcophagus of Saint Habib-i Neccār after the renovation.

Source: Verda Kimyonok.



At the entrance of the room leading to the tombs, a brief reminder of Habib-i Neccār's story.

Source: Verda Kimyonok.

HABİBÜN NECCAR

Makamını ancak yaratan bilir
Mekânsız yerlerde Hızır'la gelir
Evasin suresinde hikmetin verir
Bağ ismini söyler Habibün Neccar

"Kavariiler kör gözleri silince
Zülcelal onlara şifa verince
"İnanırım sizlere" deyip gelince
Başını yurdular Habibün Neccar

Bir baştan bir başa şehri gezdiler
Hasta olanlara şifa süzdüler
Ölüye kabirde isim yazdılar
Dertlere şifadır Habibün Neccar

İlahi emirle sözlerin "hak"tı
Kasaban bilmedi, özünü yaktı
Öldürmek için hep elleri kalktı
Cennete uçuyor Habibün Neccar

Hızır'la Musa'nın gezdiği şehir
İşte ortasından akıyor nehir
Zalimler Habib'e kıydılar ahir
Cennet-i A'lâ'da Habibün Neccar

Kapı, pencerede oymalı taşlar
Üstünden geçmiyor kanatlı kuşlar
Ruh kıyamda, hükme eğiktir başlar
Ayrı baş bedenden Habibün Neccar

Bu dağlarda taştan taşta atladın
Yaradan adıyla çiçek kokladın
Cümlemizden birer dua bekledin
Okurum ruhuna Habibün Neccar

Kıyamete kadar ismin söylenir
Bu toprakta filiz verir güllenir
İmanlı gönülde adın bellendir
Silinmez ebedi Habibün Neccar

Cehâlet zincirin kırdığı zaman
Şeytanı lâini kovduğu zaman
Fevzi hakikata erdiği zaman
Antakya yurdundur Habibün Neccar,
Mekanın cennettir Habibün Neccar.

14 Ekim 2001

Aşık Fevzi DÖNMEZ

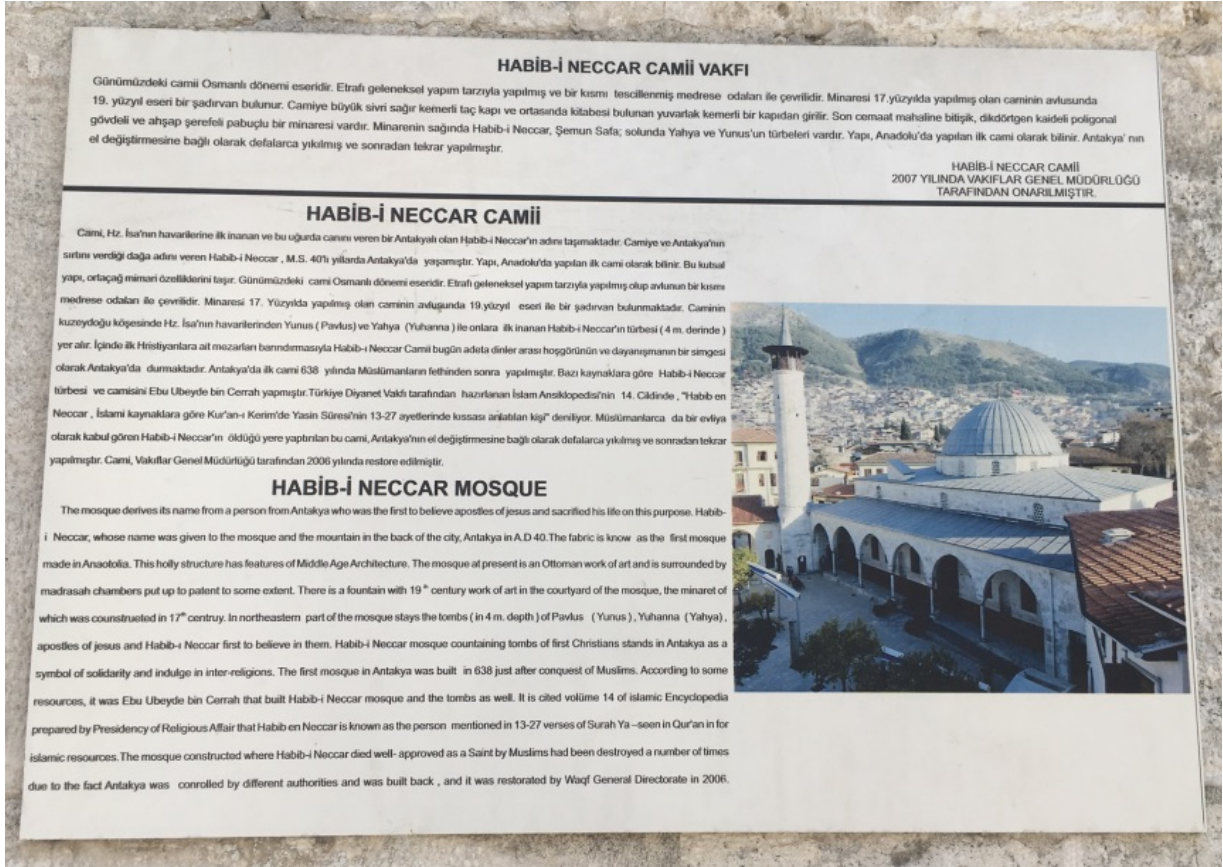
*On the wall of the stairs leading to the tombs, a tribute poem to Habib-i Neccâr written by a local, with references to Hızir and Musa.
Source: Verda Kimyonok.*



"Kurtuluş Caddesi" refers to the arrival of Turkish troops in the city as "liberators" as newspapers' headlines and pictures of the period testify.



Photography of the Turkish army entering Iskenderun.



Informative plaque on the Habib-i Neccar Camii.

Photography: Verda Kimyonok.



Moses' Tree and its source in Hidirbey.

Source: <https://www.samandagtv.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/31-hidirbey-musa-agaci.jpg>

x **Interview** with the local caretaker, 23th September 2018, in Şeyh Yusuf el-Hakim, Harbiye.

- Burası bildiğin gibi değil. Buraya dünya'nın her yerinden insan geliyor. Buranın her zaman tertemiz olması lazım. Burada çalışan dokuz kişiyiz.

- Sabit?

- Sabit. Dokuz kişi burda çalışıyoruz ancak burayı düzene sokabiliyoruz. Dört kişi belediyeden alıyor diğerleri içerideki kasadan. Kasa açıldığında burdaki çalışanlara veriliyor.

- Ne gibi ? Temizlik, güvenlik... ?

- Ne istersen. Yani vatandaşa her konuda yardımcıyız. Mesela adak yapmaya geliyor yardımcı oluyoruz, her şeyden biz sorumluyuz belediye olarak. Burda 18 tane aile kalmış.

- Etraftaki binalarda yeni değilmi ?

- Yeni. Geçen sene yapıldı. Burdaki bina... karşı taraf topraklı. Her taraf taş yapıldı. Yani günden güne güzelleştirmeye çalışıyoruz. Fakat müzenin? İşte Anıtlar kurumu izin vermiyor. Belediyenin amacı başka bir şeydi Anıtlar kurumu izin vermedi. Belediyenin amacı burda bütün evleri yıkıp, yeni baştan lüks bir şekilde yapmaktı. Daha güzel olurdu.

- Ama buranın anlamı lüks olması ile ilgili değil ki.

- Tamam sana göre lüks değil, sen ziyarete gelmişsin. Sana göre yabancı. Gelenlere... Mesela Sultan Ahmete gidiyorsun başka tür yerlere gidiyorsun her taraf pırıl pırıl her taraf... Devlet bakıyor onlara. Şimdi yanlış anlama burda şu anda bin tane ziyaretimiz var, on tane odamız var.

- Kalan varmı yani ?

- Olurmu. Mesela şimdi Mersinden, Adanadan, Tarsustan yüzlerce aile var burda. Gelmişler, adak yapacaklar, 10 tane odamız var.

- Ne kadar kalıyorlar ?

- Maksimum üç gün bırakıyoruz, odayı vermeden önce söylüyoruz.

- İstek yapmaları lazım mı?

- Yani bize geliyorlar, "bize oda lazım" diyorlar, bizde veriyoruz yoksa odamız yok diyoruz... Yoksa biz millete öyle yapmazsak...

- Her şey her yerden geliyor; Mesihî [Hiristiyan]... Yok geliyorlar yani, hiç ummadığın insanlar geliyor. Burada dünya'nın her yerinden insan geliyor. Dünya'nın ha, ma bes [yalnızca] Türkiye'nin [değil].

- Ama herkesin ayrı bi hikayesi var.

- Tabii buraya tekerlekli sandalye ile girip yürüyerek çıkanlar var. Ama hepsi inanca kalmış ha.

- Sorduğumda, "nasıl tanınmış, nasıl yaptılar bu türbeyi" herkes değişik bir hikaye anlatıyor.

- Buranın hikayesi yok... Buranın tarihçesini net biliyor olsak, şuraya bir tablo yapardık milleti bilgilendirirdik. Ama kimse bilmiyor. Haka meykellek [Biri der] "bu 1300 - 1400 arası yıllarda yaşamış". Başka bir hocaya sor meykellek [der] "1700 yıllar arası yaşamış". Aralarındaki farkta yüz – iki yüz sene oynuyor. Beş, on sene oynasa...