PRODUCING SPACE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY IN BANYABASHI MOSQUE, SOFIA, BULGARIA

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YAKUP DENİZ KAHRAMAN

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_____

Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

_____

Prof. Dr. Ayşe Saktanber
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

_____

Inst. Dr. Barış Mücen
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Prof. Dr. Sabine Strasser	(U. Vienna, DSCA)	_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Aydıngün	(METU, SOC)	_____
Inst.Dr. Barış Mücen	(METU, SOC)	_____

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Name, Last name: Yakup Deniz KAHRAMAN

Signature :

ABSTRACT

PRODUCING SPACE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY IN BANYABASHI MOSQUE, SOFIA, BULGARIA

Kahraman, Yakup Deniz
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This thesis aims to explore the role of social practice in the production of space within an anthropological perspective. In particular I drew my empirical data from my fieldwork in the site of Banyabashi Mosque. Banyabashi Mosque is the only active mosque which is located at the very representative, cultural and commercial center of Bulgaria's capital city, Sofia. The historical background of Bulgaria together with its current socio-political situation as the country having the largest historically indigenous Muslim population among the EU member states and its geopolitical location make it an intriguing geography to study the dynamism of Islam in the European context. In regard with this socio-political background this study seeks to understand the transformation of meaning through spatial practice within the perspective of the congregation of the only mosque in Sofia, Bulgaria. It is a cultural and political expression itself as Islam in Bulgaria in its broadest sense is represented as part of daily interactions of everyday urban life. Seeing the built environment as a system of conjoining parts, looking at the spatial practices and the established relations through the site of Banyabashi Mosque this study aspires to provide a perspective on having a better insight on the causal relationships between power, society and culture. In the pursuit to reveal the production and reproduction of power relations, difference, identities and their maintenance this thesis puts Banyabashi Mosque in the center of the study as a meeting point where all those relations manifest themselves through spatial practice and discourse.

Keywords: theory of social space, practice, power relations, Muslim minority, Bulgaria

ÖZ

MEKANI ÜRETMEK: BANYA BAŞI CAMİİ ÖRNEĞİ, SOFYA, BULGARİSTAN

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Bu tez sosyal pratiğin mekan üretimi üzerindeki rolünü antropolojik bir bakış açısıyla incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu tezin yazımında kullanılmış olan etnografik bilgi Banyabaşı Cami'sinde gerçekleştirilmiş olan alan araştırmasına dayanmaktadır. Banyabaşı Camisi Bulgaristan'ın başkenti Sofya şehrinin sembolik, kültürel ve ticari merkezinde bulunan ve başkentte dini faaliyet göstermekte olan tek camidir. Tarihi geçmişi, günümüzde Avrupa Birliği üye devletleri arasında en büyük yerli Müslüman nüfusuna sahip olması ve jeopolitik konumu göz önünde bulundurulduğunda Bulgaristan'ın Avrupa bağlamındaki İslami çalışmalar için son derece uygun bir zemin oluşturduğu görülmektedir. Bu sosyo-politik arka plan ışığında, bu çalışma Bulgaristan'ın başkenti Sofya'daki tek cami olan Banyabaşı Camisi'nin cemaatinin mekansal pratiklerinden yola çıkarak anlam inşası ve dönüşümü süreçlerini irdelemeyi amaçlar. Bu cami Bulgaristan'daki İslam'ın olağan kent hayatında karşılaşılan günlük etkileşimler sonucunda kültürel ve siyasi olarak ifade edildiği temsili bir yapıdır. İnsan eliyle inşa edilmiş mekanların birbirlerine eklemlenen parçalardan oluşan bir sistem olduğu noktasından yola çıkarak bu tezde Banyabaşı Camisi özelinde ortaya çıkan mekansal pratikler ve kurulan ilişkiler üzerinden iktidar, toplum ve kültür üzerine daha derinlemesine bir kavrayış oluşturacak nedensel ilişkilerin açığa çıkarılması arzu edilmiştir. İktidar ilişkileri, farklılık, kimlik ve kimliğin korunması süreçlerinin üretimi ve yeniden üretimini ortaya koyma amacıyla bu tez Banyabaşı Camisini yukarıda adı geçen ilişkilerin

kendilerini mekansal pratik ve söylem ile ortaya koydukları bir çıkış noktası olarak çalışmanın merkezine yerleştirmektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: sosyal mekan teorisi, pratik, iktidar ilişkileri, Müslüman azınlık, Bulgaristan

To my dear Katya, My Grandparents and
the memory of Sakıp Doğruer

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On May 28 and June 12 2011 separately on both occasions without having any verbal warning or a dispute unidentified people physically assaulted two random people who had come to Banyabashi Mosque, the mosque in the city center of Bulgaria's capital Sofia, to perform the Islamic morning prayer.[1] In both assaults the target was a random individual assumed to be a Muslim since he was entering a mosque. No one was able to be found by the police as prospective suspects. However the attacks were believed to be the last of a series of xenophobic attacks of Islamophobic ultra nationalist groups that had been going on for a while. In both of the occasions the assailants chose to take action at the time of the Islamic morning prayer which is as an Islamic religious rule performed slightly before the sun rise. In other words the Islamic morning prayer is performed during the emptiest time of the city streets and also it is the prayer that receives the least crowded congregation in Banyabashi Mosque.

Banyabashi Mosque is a Sunni mosque and every Sunni mosque entails a specific ceremonial ritual routine, the morning prayer being a part of this routine. At every Sunni mosque the morning prayer is being performed right before the sunrise. Thus a Sunni mosque in a city where the Sunni Muslim population is quite low in numbers compared to the whole population of the city is the place to easily distinguish

[1] From the speech of Hayri Emin in theHuman Rights Implementation Meeting of the ODIHR/OSCE, September 26 – October 7, 2011, Warsaw, during the meeting of the State Affairs of the Human Rights in Bulgaria in Relation to the Muslim Minority, 27 September 2011. The document can be accessed in the webpage of OSCE: http://www.osce.org/odihr/82972 (accessed 27 October 2012); "Sofia Mosque Warden Assulted, Beaten – Chief Mufti," Novinite-Sofia News Agency, 12 June 2011.

Muslims from the rest of the pedestrians. Moreover the religious ritual routine that comes with the territory of a Sunni mosque also can be used to know at which times of the day followers of Islamic practice are going to be present at that certain place. Therefore the assailants in those two occasions were present by the mosque before the morning prayer to wait for a Muslim coming to the mosque for the prayer. The emptiness and the calmness of the streets at this hour made it less risky for the aggressor group to be caught in the act by a patrolling police officer or seen by witnesses. At that time the incident on 12th June was the last one in a series of hate crimes against the Muslims which included vandalization of religious buildings and physical assaults that had been going on for the past month at an unusual frequency. Following the last incident the Office of the Chief Mufti (theoretically the spiritual authority over all Muslims in Bulgaria) made a public statement and reproached the Bulgarian state in failing to provide the safety of the Bulgarian Muslim minority. Moreover the statement called upon the Muslims in Bulgaria to organize themselves "in order to protect what the state failed to protect – the honor and dignity of Islam and Muslims."[2]

In this example Banyabashi Mosque has been treated by both parties as a center of cultural expression where Islam in Bulgaria in its broadest sense is represented as part of daily interactions of everyday urban life, thus becoming a socially constructed meaningful place in the center of the city. As Setha Low suggests, the built environment is composed of parts that are conjoining within a system. Through this system we begin to have a better insight on the causal relationships between economy, society and culture (Low, 2000: 36).

Camille Wells, a social historian of architecture, once stated that "most buildings can be understood in terms of power or authority – as efforts to assume, extend, resist, or accommodate it" (as quoted in Hayden, 1997: 30). However, besides being the conveyer of power relations, buildings as the shaping force of the built environment and public space also have an apparent role in producing and reproducing notions

[2] "Muslims Say Bulgaria Plagued with Islamophobia, Vow to Defend Themselves," Novinite-Sofia News Agency, 13 June 2011.

about the ethnicity, as well as race, class and gender. The architectural design for outdoor spaces can be distinctive in a sense that such design traditions or certain buildings are associated with the presence of different ethnic groups. Dolores Hayden draws on her observations on the American urban places when she suggests that looking closer to the built environment gives clues about the kinds of groups appropriating those spaces in their everyday lives. For example according to her a Japanese American neighborhood can be identified with the presence of temples, nurseries and flower markets or in another example laundries, herb shops, seamen's boardinghouses are more likely to be found together in Chinese American neighborhoods and so on (Hayden, 1997: 34). Thus presence of certain type of buildings or even certain designs for gardens, stoops and porches inform the outside world about the people who inhabit or appropriate those spaces. Hayden claims that for instance when one sees a particular religious shrine "a world of shared meanings" expressed "in the language of small semiprivate, semipublic territories" awakes and reminds the person of certain kind of typical behavior that is assumed to be found in such a place (ibid. 35). Thus the landscape is charged with symbols and visual metaphors that have both clear and also subtle impact in spatial practices of everyday life (Merrifield, 1993: 526).

1.1 The Research Question and the Research Interests

In this thesis I aim to explore how meanings are constructed in Banyabashi Mosque, in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria through practice of individuals in space as a medium where social, political and economic relations are mediated. The interaction of individuals via appropriation of a certain shared space makes the socio-political context possible to be observed as it reveals itself in various ways. Thus by putting Banyabashi Mosque in the center of this study as a meeting point through which complicated sets of social and political relations manifest themselves, my intention is to map out the various encounters of its congregation in relation to the mosque's space. Drawing upon the anthropological theories of space and place I intend to illustrate how through practice the spaces are turned into places composing of

meanings, diverse forms of social, political and economic relations and as a sphere of contestation for individuals.

In short, I aim to study the meanings of Banyabashi Mosque and its space through the variety of relationships, perceptions and conflicts that take shape firstly, between its users and secondly, through the meanings that the mosque acquires in the broader social and political context of Sofia and Bulgaria.

The fieldwork for this thesis took place in Banyabashi Mosque which is the only active mosque in Sofia and located right at the representational city center in the political sense. The congregation studied and observed is an ethnically mixed congregation composed of indigenous Muslims of Bulgaria or local Muslims and the Muslim immigrants from various Middle Eastern and African countries. By indigenous Muslims I refer to the ethnic Turks, Pomaks and Muslim Roma who have been natives of the Bulgarian geography for many generations. Although the whole congregation is professing Sunni Islam, there is a difference in the Schools of Law different groups are following. While the local Muslim community and some immigrant groups are from Hanafi School, there are also immigrant groups who are following Shafii School.

During three months of fieldwork I have participated in and observed everyday public practices and relations of the congregation within itself and with the spatial environment. Through this participant observation based methodology I followed answers to three sets of questions.

The first set of questions was the political and social significance of the mosque in regard to its historical background. I intended to follow the image of Banyabashi Mosque in the memories of its past users. Through analysis of a detailed oral history I tried to illustrate different meanings embodied to the mosque and conveyed by it under the communist regime firstly as a religious building and secondly also the only Islamic religious building in the capital of Sofia.

My second set of questions was the daily appropriation of the mosque for religious duties. Those duties can be classified under five categories ; five time daily prayers, the Friday noon prayer, the funeral prayers, the prayers for the religious holidays, and the religious events taking place in the month of Ramadan. The combination of those practices that occur on daily, weekly and annually basis a certain routine is created and maintained for the mosque's congregation. Also the composition of the congregation changes accordingly with each different occasion. Thus through daily participation within the congregation I wanted to understand how through spatial practice the differences and the asymmetrical power relations within the congregation were manifested, maintained and reproduced through sharing the same mosque for performing religious duties.

My last set of questions I followed throughout my fieldwork was the symbolic political meaning of Banyabashi Mosque. As being the only Islamic religious building in the capital of a country where the biggest minority group is the Muslims, Banyabashi Mosque is seen by its local community as symbolizing the existence of Islam and Muslims in Bulgaria. On the search to investigate how being a somehow representational monument manifests itself in practice I arrived to a point only to find out that besides being this representational building Banyabashi Mosque was also a political power center in a political dispute within the Muslim community over the leadership of the Muslim Denomination of Bulgaria. The rivalry between two groups over the leadership of the Muslim Denomination is a two decades old story and it is an almost unsolvable legal dead end. However Banyabashi Mosque has its role in this as a stronghold and a propaganda instrument spatially used by one of the rival groups. Therefore I was also interested in the strategies and the ways the mosque had been appropriated into being a stronghold and an instrument in a political problem and the measures that had to be taken to keep it being this way.

1.2 The Content of the Thesis

In the following pages of the thesis firstly I will introduce the theoretical framework of this study as Chapter 2. I will introduce anthropological theories and discussions

for the main issues that I am going to use as the theoretical perspective on the ethnographic findings. In this respect, I will lay out how space, maintenance of boundaries and identity processes through power relations and networks as a form of political society have been investigated from an anthropological point of view.

In chapter 3 I will outline the designated methodology of the study, starting with the theoretical discussions around two main pillars of the research process: grounded theory and ethnographic research, two methodological approaches assumed by many to be opposing each other towards data collection and analysis. I will give an overview of the theoretical background of the two methods and the ongoing academic debate regarding their concomitant application during research, which I found particularly relevant during my own research experience. Further, the chapter deals with the seeming contradiction between the two methods and tries to provide possible directions towards their reconciliation in a short-term, intensive research experience like the one I carried out. The chapter concludes with an extensive report on the research experience and the actual execution of the designated methodology. Through this I reflect on the issue of the identity of the fieldwork with a particular focus on the issue of insider/outsider, which I had to reconsider many times during my fieldwork.

Chapter 4 presents the historical background of Banyabashi Mosque, aiming to trace how the meanings and the functions associated with the mosque have transformed with the shift in the socio-political context of the country. Firstly, as an Ottoman material heritage, the mosque is discussed in the context of the late 19th century and the nation state agenda, in which the nationality was constructed through the opposition and rejection of the Ottoman past and how exactly Banyabashi Mosque remained the only active mosque in the capital city. Furthermore, through the memories of a key informant – an ethnic Bulgarian Turk, who has been living in Sofia since the first years of socialism – an analysis of how the mosque was used during those years is constructed, discussing the changing and somewhat controversial meanings that were assigned to it. Through his remembering of this past, I trace how Bulgaria's socialist government's policies towards minorities

changed over the years and how those were manifested in the space of the mosque and its appropriation.

Chapter 5 provides a description of how Banyabashi Mosque is being used daily. A brief outline of Banyabashi Mosque's present congregation discusses its inherent diversity and the variety of groups from different ethnic and national origin frequenting the mosque. It furthermore outlines how those different groups negotiate between themselves the space of the mosque and how they participate in its daily workings. The following subchapters describe the mosque's functioning on a cyclic basis: on regular weekdays, on Fridays, during funeral ceremonies, religious holidays, and holy months as each of those presents a different pattern of usage. The chapter concludes through exploring the mosque as a workplace for the Muslim clergy, whose appointment and relationship to the broader Muslim denomination's organization will be elaborated in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 6 addresses the particularities and the problems surrounding the Chief Muftiship, the official leadership institution of the Muslim denomination and its relationship to the mosque. Since 1989 there is an ongoing legal conflict between two rival organizations, each of which claims for itself the right to the Chief Mufti position. In spite of the lengthy legal procedures and the ongoing public debate, as of today a solution has not been found. I will trace and briefly describe the problem of the legitimacy of the official registration of the Chief Muftis with the state authorities and try to explain how it has become an apparently unsolvable legal paradox. Furthermore I will provide a perspective to how this ongoing conflict relates to the space of the mosque, which was over time established as the stronghold of one of the rival parties and as such, is constantly negotiated and reproduced as a representative platform. To clarify how this happens, I will outline the duties and responsibilities involved in the Chief Muftiship and their relationship to the mosque through the education and appointment of clergy workers, through the sermons and through the mosque's appropriation by one of the rival organizations for events, demonstrations, and gatherings.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Concept of Space and Place

The main theoretical issue dealt in this thesis is the production of space as a result of spatial practice of agents which always encompasses social and political relations. Space is a complex concept that has been addressed at philosophical, scientific and social levels. Drawing upon the anthropological theories of space and place I intend to illustrate how through practice the spaces are turned into places composing of meanings, diverse forms of social, political and economic relations and as a sphere of contestation for individuals. Thus as Hilda Kuper clarified the experience of space as explored in anthropological theory should be distinguished from the philosophical or scientific concepts of space (1972: 411). What Kuper indicates by experience of space is the medium where values and meanings are created through facts of social and personal existence, thus going beyond being a feature of the physical (tangible) world (ibid.).

According to Dolores Hayden theories and studies showing the intertwinement of social relations with spatial perception and human attachment to places has started to attract researchers from many fields (1997: 17). Very much expectedly social anthropology is among those fields in its focus on locally lived experience with special attention to the construction processes of space and place (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992: 11). Moreover Deborah Pellow argues that Henri Lefebvre as a distinguished space theoretician is one of the bigger influences for the anthropologists who have started to explore the cultural codes and meanings implicated in the organization of space in society (2003: 161). Lefebvre's Marxist approach to 'deciphering and

reading' space highlights the importance of daily life which opens great possibilities for an ethnographic approach. His emphasis in his theory of space is on the symbolic meaning and significance of particular spaces, virtually how spaces are culturalized, and also how culture is spatialized through practices in the lived space (ibid.). Thus I will firstly introduce Lefebvre's theory of production of social space in order to contextualize the anthropological approaches to studies of space in a more straightforward manner.

2.1.1 A Framework for a Theory of Space: Lefebvre's Production of Space

In his groundbreaking book *The Production of Space* Lefebvre's main argument is that theorizing social space is not independent from theorizing society since society and social space contain each other. A spatial theory is a social theory and vice versa (Swyngedouw, 1992: 317). Lefebvre provides a framework which can be used to develop a more holistic theory of space that brings together the sense of place encountered in cultural landscape studies to the political economy (Hayden, 1997: 18).

Lefebvre according to Swyngedouw argues that the fields of physical space (nature), mental space (the discursive construction of space), and social space (or experienced, lived space) are approached separately in previous conceptualizations of space. As a result of which Lefebvre claims that there is a need for a theoretical unity linking those separated fields (1992: 318). Lefebvre proposes to start from social space as a social product which embraces a multitude of intersections that gives way to construction of meanings which eventually transforms space into place. Thus social space is indeed indistinguishable from mental and physical space (ibid.). In other words starting with theorizing the social space will open the way to come up with a unitary theory of physical, mental and social space.

The very essence of Lefebvre's departure point on the development of his framework is the perspective that "space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations" (1991: 286). This argument is the summary of his understanding of the

complex and contradictory nature of space. Thus according to Lefebvre space is produced and reproduced in a dialectic manner through human intentions (Molotch, 1993: 887). Moreover he argues that if space is to be taken as a productive process then the theorists are also dealing with history (Lefebvre, 1991: 46), since production of social space is not a work of a moment. It is a process which is spread over time whose consequences become inscribed in space. In other words the past leaves its traces (ibid. 37). This is his departure point from which he asserts that social space works as a tool for the analysis of society (ibid. 34). As a result this approach of seeing the space as an ongoing process of production is suggesting a perspective shift in the 'object' of sociological interest from studying things in space to studies of the actual production of space (ibid. 36). Since the study of a spatial object will not tell anything in particular compared to the study of the process of its creation which will lay bare the contradictions of capitalism (Swyngedouw, 1992: 318).

Consequently Lefebvre identifies that space is produced on practical, discursive and symbolic levels. Molotch explains that identification of those moments show "a space is neither only a medium nor a list of ingredients, but an interlinkage of geographic form, built environment, symbolic meanings, and routines of life" (1993: 888). Lefebvre names those moments as "a conceptual triad"; perceived space, conceived space and lived space.

Perceived space or spatial practice embraces production and reproduction which are expressed in daily routines, in the practice of everyday life (Lefebvre, 1991: 33). Spatial practice of a society produces that society's place. In a dialectical interaction as the society masters and appropriates it, it produces it slowly and surely (ibid. 38). It is not a predetermined process, the end result might be developed in unanticipated directions as space constrains and influences those producing it (Molotch, 1993: 887).

Conceived space or representations of space is the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers as of a certain type of artist

with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived (Lefebvre, 1991: 38).

Lived space or representational space embodies complex symbolisms. It is the space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols. Thus this is the space experienced through the complex symbols and images of 'inhabitants' and 'users' (Lefebvre, 1991: 39).

It is the uniting of perceived, conceived and lived space Lefebvre has sought to in conceptualizing space. While these categories constitute a unity, they don't necessarily constitute coherence. Furthermore they are all deeply controversial and thus deeply political (Swyngedouw, 1992, 318). Then Lefebvre argues that this conceptual triad contribute to the production of space in different ways "according to their qualities and attributes, according to the society or mode of production in question, and according to the historical period" (Lefebvre, 1991: 46).

However, he is more concerned with the way this model of conceptual triad will be utilized. He advises that if the triad is treated as an abstract model then it loses all its force. He further warns that if the triad won't be used to grasp the concrete then consequently it will become a severely limited suggestion for a framework for theory of space (ibid. 40). Moreover in a similar line of thought Kirsten Simonsen cautions against getting confused with Lefebvre's suggestions of 'reading' or 'deciphering' space. She maintains that social space cannot be compared to a blank page which a specific message can be inscribed and deciphered. The important essence of Lefebvre's analytic suggestion is to approach space as produced by people in order to be lived again by people with bodies and lives in their own particular context. Thus it is not produced to be read or grasped by researchers or theoreticians (Simonsen, 1992: 81).

To sum up, the ideas Lefebvre's advocating in his famous work *The Production of Space* are primarily based on the premise that humans create the space in which they make their lives (Molotch, 1993: 887). Creation entails a process that assumes an act of creation or an act of production (Swyngedouw, 1992: 318). Therefore Lefebvre

offers a theory that conceptualizes the space as a process, as being produced. As a result of his thoughts about theorizing space, a conceptual triad emerges which suggests that social space incorporates social action, the actions of subjects both individual and collective (Lefebvre, 1991: 33). The social action he refers to is summarily practice, representation and symbolic meaning and the process of space production is constituted by the social action he identifies (Swyngedouw, 1992: 318). Lefebvre suggested a unity theory of space in his inquiry to construct a framework for theorizing the spatial. Having a Marxist background in this project of his the importance of everyday life is very much stressed and as a consequence his understanding of space as a process implies that space "take on meaning through, and permeated by, historically defined social relations (and vice versa)" (Merrifield, 1993: 525). Lefebvre concludes that by looking at the practice of actors in daily life via a spatial theoretical point of view it is possible to make an analysis of a society. Thus his strong emphasis on looking closely at the practices of actors –individual or collective – and daily everyday life offers a wide range of possibilities to follow from an anthropological point of view.

2.1.2 Connecting the Local To the Global Through a Spatial Theoretical Framework

At this point it is important to clarify the terminology I am going to use in the rest of this theoretical framework, especially the difference and interconnection between space and place.

As I reviewed the conceptual triad of Lefebvre, I also noted that although the social actions that constituted the process of spatial production are in unity, they are not necessarily in coherence. Moving from this point of view Andrew Merrifield suggests that while the concepts of the triad - conceived, perceived and lived spaces - are not necessarily coherent, there is a moment all the three line up and form a structured coherence. That moment is when the space turns into place (Merrifield 1993: 525). According to him place is the terrain where basic social practices are lived out, in other words it is where everyday life is situated (ibid. 522). He regards

place as a practical space where spatial contradictions like political conflicts between socio-economic interests and forces express themselves (ibid.). Merrifield continues his argument by emphasizing that life is place-dependent and thus theoretical and political analysis has to start from the place or the actual life for that matter (ibid. 525). The author identifies that it is important to reconcile the way experience is lived out and acted out in place, and how this relates to political and economic developments. He, then, suggests Lefebvre's framework is a useful approach in "interpreting the mode of mediation between space and place which can shed light on the nature of place and how it, in turn, relates to the broader social whole" (Merrifield, 1993: 522).

In conclusion place is where the "'stretched-out' social relations" (Massey, 1994: 22) occur and space is the product of those interrelations which are constituted through interactions "from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny" (Massey, 2005: 9). Thus the project of the space theoreticians has become to connect local to the global through a perspective of space, and in that the framework Lefebvre had mapped out has been a meaningful departure point for the researchers from varying disciplines. One of the more important suggestions of Lefebvre in theorizing space is for the researcher to work with empirical data for developing a theory of space rather than working with his framework as a philosophical one (Lefebvre, 1991: 40).

2.1.3 Spatializing Culture: An Anthropological Approach

According to Simonsen, concept of space in Lefebvre's framework is a product, however it is not a static concept. It should be regarded as a set of relations that intervenes in production itself. Thus space is never a natural given but it is dialecticized in the dual role of both the product and the producer (Simonsen, 1992: 81). Doreen Massey, a feminist geographer studying exclusively on theorizing space, on the other hand endorses the idea of exploring the space as a concept in constant flux. She argues that the space which is open for theoretical scrutiny has to be a space of "loose ends and missing links" (Massey, 2005: 12). It is "neither a container for always-already constituted identities nor a completed closure of

holism" (ibid.). In line with those thoughts the anthropologists Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson furthers the discussion of conceptualization of space to the point to indicate that if the subjects of anthropology have longer stopped being conceived as "automatically and naturally anchored in space" then the anthropologists "will need to pay particular attention to the way spaces and places are made, imagined, contested and enforced" (1992: 18). That's on one hand because both culture and social system are grounded in space and also that people interact within physically defined areas that possess meanings varying from agent to agent (Pellow, 2003: 160).

2.1.3.1 Anthropology of Space and Place

It has been argued that there has been an unexpectedly little scholarly interest about the issue of space in anthropological theory (Kuper, 1972; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Rodman, 1992). Social space as Durkheim recognized is never neutral, never homogenous (Kuper, 1972; 421), however, Gupta and Ferguson states that the experience of space as a socially constructed category is a very well-known argument by anthropologists. They argue that what is more urgent is to "politicize this uncontestable observation," it is important to find answers to how spatial meanings are established through practice (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; 11). Moreover Massey argues that for an understanding of the spatial there needs to be an analysis of the economy and society more generally (Massey, 1994: 22) Meaning making of the spatial is constituted through "interlocking of 'stretched-out' social relations" (ibid.). As social relations include economic and political relations of inequality, they are the possessors of power. Thus Massey argues that when we are looking at the spatial form, we are also looking at an important element in the constitution of power itself (ibid.).

Place as the location where everyday life is situated provides the researcher a suitable ground to explore the establishment of spatial meanings where Gupta and Ferguson suggests hegemonic configurations of power are always implicated (1997: 8).Furthermore they argue that the place making processes can be best understood

through studying locality. They claim that rather than taking the 'local' as given and try to figure out the relation between this fixed 'local' and "something lies beyond it (regional, national, international, global)" it is of more importance to ask "how perceptions of locality and community are discursively and historically constructed" (ibid. 6). Thus the authors suggest that within the historical processes of a socially and spatially interconnected world, the associations of people and place should be problematized as an anthropological inquiry (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997).

2.1.3.2 Practice, Space and Power

Setha Low, an environmental psychologist working on anthropology of space and place, drawing on Lefebvre's objection to the assumptions about the neutrality of space which mask its being a site of social, political, and economic struggle, states that examining spatial forms provides insights into the discourse of power relations and the ongoing site-specific struggles (2000: 50). She further emphasizes that built environment sets the stage for power relationships to be expressed in the everyday life through "a complex culture-making process in which cultural representations are produced, manipulated, and understood by designers, politicians, users, and commentators within changing historical, economic, and sociopolitical contexts" (ibid.).

Bourdieu argues that cultural knowledge and behavior are reinforced and communicated through interdependent interaction of meaning and action, or as he terms it through "practice" (Bourdieu 1977, as cited in Low & Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2003: 10). He states that what's at stake is not trying to identify rules that actors follow but rather explain how people use those conceptual schemes practically and discursively to produce and reproduce culture (ibid.) Thus he suggests in order to achieve this the researcher should explore the practice of actors (ibid.) which constitutes and is constructed by interaction of individuals (Pellow, 2003: 162). Therefore it is the interaction of individuals that construct space socially and for this reason Bourdieu concludes space only acquires meaning through actors' invoking it

in practice (Bourdieu 1977, as cited in Low & Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2003: 10). In short "places come into being through praxis" (Rodman, 1992: 642).

Henrietta Moore adopting Bourdieu's theory of practice in her study among the Endo of Marakwet in Kenya offers a framework bringing the practice into understanding how space acquires meanings. She suggests seeing the organization of space as a context, which is developed through practice and that appears through interaction of individuals (Moore, 1986: 116, as cited in Pellow, 2003: 162). Thus "the organization of space defines relationships in the specific context of a set of interactions and activities" (ibid.).

Bourdieu's theory of practice suggests that actors, men and women, bring their own discursive knowledge and strategic intentions to the interpretation of spatial meanings. Therefore spatial meanings are not fixed in space yet they are rather context-bounded in regard to the kind of social practice that activates them. This gender based practice also constructs a gendered space in Bourdieu's scheme as "it is invested with conceptual and symbolic notions of sexual asymmetry that are themselves tied to social and cosmological structures" (Bourdieu 1977, as cited in Low & Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2003: 10). Furthermore Massey argues that besides spaces and places being themselves gendered, they also reflect and influence the ways in which gender is constructed and perceived (1994: 178). That's why space and place have important roles in the construction of gender relations and in struggles to alter them (ibid.).

In *Women and Space* (1993) Shirley Ardener and others argue that hierarchy of social structural relationships and ideologies are encoded in space and those are expressed through organization, meanings and uses of it (Ardener et al, 1993, cited in Low & Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2003: 10). Moreover those characteristics of social structural relationships like class, ethnicity …etc. may find meaning in space as a result of certain relationships, gender being among those is most often revealed in relations of power where men dominate and women are a "muted" group (ibid.).

Thus exploring the practice of agents reveal power relations through which the researcher will be able to uncover the gender relations and how those are culturally produced and reproduced. Moreover according to Steven Gregory a focus on cultural practices that occur during everyday interactions will reveal how economy of space and its underlying power relations can be challenged or constantly reconfigured (2003: 295).

Finally the use of space also gives way to obscure the power relations (Low & Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2003: 30). Michel Foucault examines the relationship between power and space by looking closely to the relationship between human body, spatial arrangement and architecture. He concludes that through architectural intervention the state has the capacity to spatially canalize the everyday life and movements of the individuals which in turn offers the state control and power over individuals (Foucault 1975, 1984 as cited in Low & Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2003: 30).

2.1.3.3 Space and Identity

In the first chapter of the edited collection of essays *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology* Gupta and Ferguson states that the authors of the essays emphasize that identity neither "grows out" of rooted communities nor is a thing that can be individually or collectively possessed by social actors (1997, 13, emphasis in original). They agree that place making always involves a construction of difference which results in changing conceptions of space and place. And it's argued that this change in the conceptions of space and place is fundamental in the construction of identities. Consequently Gupta and Ferguson along with the contributors of the volume conceptualizes identity as a mobile, often unstable relation of difference (ibid.).

As I discussed earlier in this chapter like Gupta and Ferguson, Anthony Cohen also discusses the ethnography of locality. He describes it as "an account of how people experience and express their difference from others" and "the ways in which people express their attachment to a locality" (1982: 2-3, as cited in Gray, 2003: 225). Thus John Gray explains that this attachment to a certain locality will eventually entail

forming attachments to the socially constructed place(s) of this locality and this will play a role in identity making processes of the people of this locality. He argues that identity making is a cultural process through which people implicate a historical image of themselves as being the people of a certain locality/place (Gray, 2003: 223).

The view of linking certain people/culture with certain localities/places has been discussed by Gupta and Ferguson in further detail. They claim that the transformations in global political economy penetrate into the agents' perceptions of place and slowly transform those conceptions. Thus it is not only the displaced who experience a rupture in her connection between the place and her culture but even people remaining in familiar and ancestral places experience an inescapable change in the nature of their relation to place and find that "the illusion of a natural and essential connection between the place and the culture broken" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992: 10). They further identify that although actual places and localities become more blurred and indeterminate, *ideas* of culturally and ethnically distinct places become even more significant (ibid. emphasis in original). They conclude that this is a strong indication of how Anderson's imagined communities (1983) come to be attached to imagined places.

Nevertheless at this point I would like to turn to the relationship between people and their environment in the identity making processes. James Fernandez takes this relationship between people and their environment as a reciprocal and mutually constituting one (Fernandez 1974, 1977, 1984, 2003, as cited in Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2003: 14). According to his conception of this relationship identity is negotiated through interactions with the environment as people are influenced by their environment that surrounds them (ibid.). Moreover the authors of the same introduction chapter of *Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, Low and Lawrence- Zuñiga conclude that there is an inseparable and reinforcing connection between the meaning of place and identity (2003: 24). In pursuit of the meaning of place, individuals' practices and identity processes they turn to Michel de Certeau's "ways of operating" which constitute the means by which users

reappropriate space which are articulated in the details of everyday life (de Certeau 1984: xiv, as cited in Low and Lawrence- Zuñiga, 2003: 32, emphasis in original).

The relation between the people's way of operating and the identity maintenance had been discussed by Fredrick Barth in 1969 in the pioneering work of edited collection of essays on ethnicity, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Barth principally identifies the approach of exploring the maintenance of ethnic boundaries among poly-ethnic groups which are living intermingled, rather than defining them based on their cultural traits (1969: 14). He claims that belonging to an ethnic group is established not based on a fixed set of cultural features but rather on an ascriptive basis. The emphasis on ascription as the critical feature of ethnic groups, as Barth discusses, provides a new conceptual perspective on studying the continuity of ethnic units as a result of which becomes dependent on the maintenance of a boundary. Cultural features, cultural characteristics of the members or even the organizational form of the group may be transformed. However, regardless of those changes the ethnic units continue to persist. Barth claims that this continuity is maintained through dichotomization between members and outsiders, or as he terms through ascription and self-ascription (ibid.). In addition defined as an ascriptive and exclusive group, diagnostic for group membership becomes only based on socially relevant factors instead of "overt, 'objective' difference which are produced by other factors" (ibid. 15, emphasis in original). Thus Barth's and the authors in the collections claim is that the ethnic boundaries are maintained according to reciprocal ascription discourses and practices in everyday interaction. The dichotomies and differences are acted upon to maintain those boundaries by the members of all ethnic groups in a poly-ethnic society (ibid. 18). This line of thought is in alliance with Gupta and Ferguson's arguments of identity as I reviewed in the beginning of this section. Because taking the emphasis off from the cultural traits and difference and directing it to find out the dynamics and context in the emergence of ethnic distinctions or cultural differences also imply that ethnic identity within groups doesn't exist as a "property" they own but it is rather a boundary among groups during interactions (ibid. 17).

Harald Eidheim as one of the contributors to the volume edited by Barth argues in his essay in the book about the importance of everyday interaction for emergence of identities. He discusses that at different stages of everyday life form distinct spheres of interaction. It is through those distinct spheres of interaction actors manage and maintain their identities which are of constant concern for them (1969: 40). Nonetheless noting the importance of continuous boundary maintenance in the identity building and management activities, I also would like to add Stuart Hall's concept of identity as a "meeting point" which according to Gupta and Ferguson, "constitutes and re-forms the subject in order so as to enable that subject to act" (Hall, cited in Watts 1992, cited in Gupta & Ferguson 1997, 13). Hall's conceiving identity as a "meeting point" provides a move away from the search for an essential temporal stability and continuity of the subject, and directs the question to explaining the temporary identifications as "a point of suture" (ibid.).

In addition to the boundary maintenance which assumes dichotomization processes, seeing the identities as articulations of points of suture will be useful to more easily identify and understand temporal contextual modifications. Andre Gingrich and Gerd Baumann identify three classificatory models, or as they name them "grammars" to study the processes of identification and othering (2004). The grammar that is relevant in this theoretical framework is the model of segmentary fission and fusion. Departing from Evans Pritchard's concept of 'segmentation' (1968) Baumann elaborates on this grammar of segmentary fission and fusion for structuring the decisions of individuals depending on and changing accordingly with the context (2004: 23). Within this grammar the author discusses an identification and othering process in which "identity and difference are not matters of absolute criteria, but rather functions of recognizing the appropriate segmentary level" (ibid.). What segmentary fission and fusion identifies is that firstly defining the society as a pyramid where the Other of a political and social unit may be a foe of the same unit in a context placed at a lower level of segmentation, however may also be an ally again of the same unit in a context placed at a higher level of segmentation. In other words people establish alliances and oppositions in accordance with the level of structural conflict. Thus what Baumann emphasizes with this grammar is that its

contextual awareness especially in positioning people within networks of unequal power relations (ibid. 46) where "people can selve themselves, and can other others according to context, that, according to the structural level of the conflict or contest, coalition or cooperation that is at stake at any one given moment" (ibid. 23).

In conclusion I have outlined my theoretical frame which I had as my theoretical perspective during my research at Banyabashi Mosque and also had used for the analysis of my ethnographic data following the field research. Space is an ongoing process of social production. Since society and space mutually shape each other, conceptualization of social space provides a theoretical tool for the analysis of agents individually or collectively. It is the everyday interaction of actors – individual or collective – that produces and attributes meanings to spatial forms. Thus space is what links geographic form, built environment, symbolic meanings, and routines of life. All those categories are linked through social relations that occur as a result of the spatial practice of individuals. Actors, men and women, bring their own discursive knowledge while creating the spatial meanings which are, therefore, context bounded and dependent on the social practice that initiate them. Thus the practice of individuals is gender based and consequently it constructs a gendered space. Establishment of spatial meanings is constituted through intertwining of the social relations which always include economic and political relations of inequality. Therefore social relations are also bearers of power and when we are looking at the spatial form and the social relations that produce the spatial meaning we are also looking at a significant aspect in the creation of unequal power relations. Space paves the way for power relations to be expressed in the everyday life. Moreover it is during the everyday life experiences the social practices are lived out and that gives us the *place* as the terrain where everyday life is situated. In order to account for how places are made, it is important to focus on the localities. Ethnographies of localities produce accounts of the ways differences are experienced and expressed. Through their experiences people show attachment to localities which in turn gives the researcher the possibility to explore the identity making processes. Place making involves construction of differences, as a result of which perceptions of places change. Any change in the perceptions of place has an essential role in the

construction of identities. The relationship between people and their environment is a reciprocally constituting one, thus interaction of individuals within space both contributes directly to place making processes and also construction of identities. The everyday contact of actors creates spheres of interaction where actors manage and maintain ethnic boundaries through discourses of mutual ascription and practices in everyday interrelations. However seeing identity as a meeting point rather than a dichotomy between the self and the other helps to understand the temporal decisions and provides a contextual awareness. The model of segmentary fission and fusion explains the positioning of people within networks of asymmetrical power relations and shows how people maintain alliances and oppositions depending on the segmentary level of structural conflict. Through this conceptual frame I aim to contribute to the understandings of space production, place making, relations of power and identity articulated through spatial practice through the locally lived experiences of an urban Muslim community in the capital of Bulgaria, a post-socialist and a new EU member country.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

3.1. Data Collection And Analysis Methods

3.1.1 Grounded Theory

The grounded theory approach was developed by sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in the USA in 1967. What grounded theory approach precisely provides to the researcher, according to Charmaz, is a straightforward method for qualitative studies (2001: 224). She states that unlike most of the qualitative works which depend on implicit methods and as a result relying on the researcher's intuition and talent, grounded theory details an explicit set of guidelines and procedures which demystifies the data collection and analysis processes into a more analytic one (ibid.).

The central idea of grounded theory was to advocate a move away from unproductive dependence on pre-existing theory as well as forms of research, descriptive in character, that was not primarily interested in theory development (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983: 166). Thus it has been utilized by researchers in order to firstly generate inductive theory that accounts for a relevant behavioral pattern of the research participants involved (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999: 149). At its core the idea of the grounded theory should be recognized initially as a general stance toward the development of creative thoughts, concepts and theories through a close look into empirical data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983: 166). What Glaser and Strauss encouraged by the approach was not an inflexible set of procedures which could be used as a template for any qualitative research project (ibid.). Thus it

was just almost a natural outcome of the approach to have differing views from different researchers on how to apply the grounded theory. According to Charmaz the main separation was between objectivists and constructivists. She claims that objectivists seeing the researcher as an unbiased observer expect to grasp the data as an external reality awaiting to be revealed (Charmaz, 2003: 313). On the other hand as having their approach built upon constructivism, Charmaz and Mitchell state that constructivist methods emphasize the importance of studying the construction processes of action and meaning. Moreover constructivist methods presume the existence of multiple realities and aim to represent an interpretive understanding of the studied phenomena (2007: 160). Following Charmaz and Mitchell's definition in my usage of grounded theory methods I stand for the constructivist position.

Suddaby argues that the approach proposed by Glaser and Strauss was a practical method for keeping the focus of qualitative research on the interpretive analysis of meaning making processes by social actors. In other words they claimed that by paying attention to the interplay between what was actually going on in a setting and how these daily realities were interpreted by those who participated in them it was possible to develop new theory (2006: 633 – 634). As a result the purpose of the approach is not to come up with truth arguments of reality, yet it is rather to stimulate novel understandings about patterned relationships between social actors in order to study the meanings of events for people (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999: 147). Accordingly that makes grounded theory an analytical approach to guide researchers in their understanding and analysis of complex social processes (Suddaby, 2006: 638). All told what is actually recommended by Glaser and Strauss is development of theory from "data grounded in the daily experiences and activities of the subjects" (Janesick, 1982: 16).

Here I'd like to emphasize the difference in the methods the grounded theory approach recommends and the end product as the result of applying those methods during the collection and analysis of the data. Anthropologists Hammersley and Atkinson suggested an alteration in the terminology of the approach as using the term 'grounded theorizing' rather than the more common 'grounded theory' (1983:

158). They prefer to use the term ‘grounded theorizing’ in order to refer to the methodological activities of data collection and analysis and also in order to distinguish it from the product of these methodological activities; that is the ‘grounded theory’ (1983: 158).

Barrett maintains that grounded theorizing is not a mode of analysis that is restricted to any particular discipline, it is a style of analysis that can be applied in a diversity of fields, including anthropology. He further asserts that grounded theorizing is practically identical with “interpretation”, and is a procedure that extracts the theoretical significance out of data (1996: 213). In other words the approach aims to generate midrange theory through analyzing qualitative data. That analysis works in a way to take the data to a “slightly higher level of abstraction” at each step and finally to construct a theory that outlines more general patterns of conduct (Suddaby, 2006: 636). In Barrett’s words this is called “milking” the data so that the contextual descriptive parts which cannot be used for predictions or explanations will be sifted at each step of analysis (1996: 213). As a result of abstracting to one level higher at each step the researcher arrives to the theory which was grounded in the data and that final product is the grounded theory which is created by using the grounded theorizing methods.

Those methodological activities are composed of two fundamental concepts: “constant comparison” and “theoretical sampling” (Suddaby, 2006: 634). These two concepts help the researcher work the empirical data to more abstract theoretical categories. By applying constant comparative methods and theoretical sampling to the data the researcher can separate the irrelevant descriptive parts of the data from the theoretically significant recurring patterns. Because as mentioned by scholars who write about grounded theory the approach primarily is not interested in the stories of the research participants (Charmaz 2001, Suddaby 2006). While descriptive narratives provide rich accounts, if they cannot be integrated into sets of specified and inter-related concepts from which the researcher can develop explanations and even predictions they are not of interest to the grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2001: 234-235).

Grounded theory approach intends at its simplest constructing theory from the data. In the field a researcher starts with what she sees happening sociologically, and then interprets it. As the researcher takes analytic notes during the research, she starts getting ideas and hunches about the phenomenon under study. This is to one degree or another where the analysis of the data and data collection starts taking place simultaneously. However, this way it is not a systematically explicable activity, it still depends a lot on the researcher's intuition and commitment . That's the point where Glasser and Strauss developed one of the main pillars of grounded theory: constant comparative method. Constant comparison basically refers to the process where the researcher does the collecting and analysis of the data at the same time. Atkinson and Hammersley explains this iterative process of getting ideas and hunches in the way as ideas are used to make sense of the data and then data are used to change the ideas and stimulate new ones (1983: 158). In practice, as the researcher starts collecting the data ideas begin to get shaped accordingly with each new piece of information that is revealed to her. As the researcher goes back to the field with the kind of hypothesis to test it against further data, she meets different angles belonging to the studied phenomenon thus as a result this newer data bears new ideas to be confirmed. This is the iterative method also referred as constant comparison which is at the heart of the grounded theory approach.

Nevertheless, as Atkinson and Hammersley put it, emergence of new ideas is a function of the analytic work the researcher puts in, in other words it does not 'just happen' (1983: 159). Backman and Kyngäs notes that data analysis can be thought as a discussion between the actual data, the created theory (or the ideas), and the researcher. Firstly, as they continue, data needs to be stripped down and recombined in new ways in order for such a discussion can take place. The technique suggests that as the data gets broken down, it will give rise to the codes and then combining those codes under categories and finally the categories and hypothesis must be verified against data again (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999: 149). Charmaz explains coding and categorizing as tools of abstraction. A code is a label that is applied to a certain piece of data and it remains less abstract than a category. A category emerges as relevant codes are brought together. Finally a category is a part of the researcher's

larger theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2001: 234-235). Constant comparison method requires new questions to be perpetually formed and pursued for answers. This continuous shifting back and forth between gathering data and analyzing materials causes change in the focus of the research in unanticipated directions according to what the researcher learns in the field (Barrett 1996, Charmaz 2001).

Posing new questions systematically and breaking down the material will help the emergence of the key concepts. Those key concepts will then point to new directions to be explored. This activity is termed as theoretical sampling. Constant comparison and theoretical sampling are complementary sides of the same methodological approach. As the researcher forms new questions, she also identifies concepts to go back to the field in order to gain in-depth understanding about the issues surrounding those new directions. While identifying the concepts through a constant discussion with the data is called constant comparison, getting deeper information about a concept is termed as the theoretical sampling. Charmaz illustrates this process as the researcher's using the emerging theoretical categories to shape the data collection, so that she "collects new data to check, fill out, and extend theoretical categories" (2001: 223).

However, theoretical sampling requires time which doesn't fit with the objectives of a researcher who has only a limited amount of time. As Backman and Kyngäs explains the process, theoretical sampling refers to a data collection process where the data collection starts by concentrating on observed social matters that appear most interesting and only after this preliminary data collection and analysis, the sampling can be made more selective (1999: 149). Thus they claim that many researchers go for a selective sampling in order to be able to collect quality data within a certain time. In selective sampling subjects are mainly chosen before the beginning of the fieldwork which enables the researcher to be able to make choices based on her interest and the restrictions placed over the research work (ibid.).

In conclusion, a grounded theory seeks to address social processes that composed of meanings. Backman and Kyngäs concludes that the theory is developed through a

close examination of meanings of events for people and this is done on the ground that meanings are shared and "this sharing is accomplished via a common language and socialization" (1999: 147). According to Charmaz by starting with the data from the lived experience the researcher from the beginning aims to construct a sociological reality. She affirms that a theory explains a phenomenon, identifies concepts which categorize the relevant phenomena, analyzes relationships between concepts and key categories and finally provides a framework for making predictions (Charmaz, 2001: 226 – 227). Charmaz and Mitchell writes about what a grounded theory is,

> Understanding social action means generating a systematic interpretation of the variety of rules, norms or conventions that constitute a given cultural setting; it also means gathering data and documenting how those rules are interpreted and acted on in practical, concrete situations. [2007: 170]

3.1.2 Ethnographic Research

Ethnography was the main mode of the methodological framework of this study. A most common definition of ethnography is the process of recording, interpreting and reporting another peoples' way of life (Sluka & Robben, 2007; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2007). All these activities of studying and reporting about the world of people require intimate participation in a community over a long time which is called fieldwork. Through doing fieldwork based on participant observation in the daily lives of the people or the community under study it is possible to develop a descriptive text of a group of people's actual lived experiences on a daily basis (Woodthorpe, 2007: 3). Through an ethnographic fieldwork the researcher focuses on exploring certain practices of a community, neighborhood or group… rather than studying larger samples of people. Thus as Sluka and Robben explains, the most essential feature of ethnographic fieldwork is its strong emphasis on a "deep immersion" into the life of a people. That is because only through such sustained and continuous deep research over a long period of time insights into the processes of continuity and change of a culture can be attained which is unlikely to achieve in any

other way (Sluka & Robben, 2007: 8). This mode of research where the researcher aims to provide a descriptive text of a specific world is called ethnography.

Fieldwork starts from the moment of researcher's gaining access to the field, building rapport, doing participant observation and informal interviews. Barrett calls this process as the funnel approach where the researcher starts at the wide end of a funnel and covers a wide range of ground in an unstructured manner at first (1996: 209). Unstructured observation is one of the key concepts of participant observation technique. It will provide the fieldworker with getting a clearer view about the context of the whole picture, insights into interactions between agents and groups, and also it helps observing what people say they do and what they actually do (Mulhall, 2002: 307). Participant observation as being an ongoing dynamic activity in nature helps to grasp the continually moving and evolving processes. As Janesick rightfully argues participant observation offers information about events that otherwise might not be noticed by the researcher (1982: 22).

Ethnographic research relies on developing descriptions of specific phenomena. In order to produce such descriptive texts the researcher has to get a deeper penetration into the occurring events that she identified as significant. While being able to identify important events and gathering further understanding about them improves by time and experience, for a novice researcher there is the trap which is termed by Lacey as "it's all happening elsewhere" syndrome (1976: 71 quoted in Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 159). Fieldworker might start thinking through such lines which result in her trying to be everywhere at once and not being satisfied with the data she is gathering. While Barrett argues that more data means deeper penetration (1996: 214), in my opinion that is a rather incomplete statement. It is of course true that greater understanding is only possible with gathering more data, yet here the quantity of data is not the sole requirement that makes an intensive account. The danger in this attitude of collecting data almost in a random manner is that while the researcher might collect a great deal of it, if she didn't spend time to take a step back and reflect on the significance of all the new information now revealed to her, it is possible to

finish fieldwork with a pile of unstructured, rather superficial data that cannot be used to compose arguments that are supported with empirical data.

That is one of the shortcomings of the funnel approach. Especially when the limitations on time and funds are considered it is not such a feasible method to take one's time gathering unsystematic data and building rapport little by little. At this point I suggest that ethnographic fieldwork informed by the methods of grounded theory approach will be an effective solution.

3.1.3 Combining Grounded Theory Approach with Ethnographic Research

As explained briefly above ethnography has a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of a particular social phenomenon rather than identifying patterns and generalizing them into concepts and categories. However, grounded theory approach is initially interested in digging out the patterns and developing ideas and constantly putting those ideas to test in order to generate a more widely applicable analytic perspective. Thus, at first glance those two methodological approaches seem to be thoroughly different in nature. Hammersley and Atkinson maintains that the grounded theory approach is not found compatible with ethnography by a significant amount of ethnographers, furthermore what is more striking according to the authors is that "grounded theory has had a very little impact on anthropology, despite the fact that the kinds of thought processes involved in both disciplines are very similar" (2007: 166).

The methods of analysis and data collection developed by grounded theorists are not fully harmonious with the ethnographic methods. For example the firm stress in grounded theory approach on the essentiality of simultaneous data collection and analysis is not easy to sustain in practice if the researcher wills to do an ethnographic study at the same time. Ethnographic fieldwork is a very demanding activity so is data analysis. Therefore it is very difficult to carry out both activities at the same time.

Nonetheless in grounded theory guidelines it is strongly advised to use many data collection methods, including participant observation. That's why it can be confusing at times for a novice researcher to see that ethnographers and grounded theorists are using the same techniques of data collection, yet ethnographers argue that while conducting a fieldwork majorly based on participant observation and interviews it is very difficult to maintain the collection and analysis at the same time (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 159), while grounded theorists are advocating to follow that path and claiming it is doable and they are actually doing research this way. The reason for these seemingly controversial arguments is that while using the same methodological tools ethnographers and grounded theorists ultimately aim to produce different types of texts. Charmaz and Mitchell explain this as ethnography's seeking to provide "a full description of a specific world rather than just a segment of it" (2007: 161). That means with participant observation while it is possible to map out an entirely descriptive account of a certain people, it is also possible to focus on an aspect of the scene, rather than an entire setting. It all depends on the amount of time the researcher decides to put in as a participant observer. In anthropological terms, in order to deliver thick descriptions a great depth of involvement is required from the researcher which can only be achieved with "physical proximity of the fieldworker to the people studied,…, and a high degree of psychological and emotional involvement" (Powdermaker 1966: 287 referenced in Sluka & Robben, 2007: 12).

As a result that is the main reason why those two methods cannot work together to the full extent. Analysis of data can require extended withdrawals from the field in order to process and analyze the data and returning to the field for further data collection only afterwards. On the other hand, for an initially descriptive text, the researcher shouldn't leave the setting for lengthy intervals but carry on with the participant observation for a longer time (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 159). Hammersley and Atkinson call this a trade-off that the researcher is facing. They state that when a proper ethnographic research is combined with data analysis at the same time it is more often than not the researcher is going to be able to identify the missing parts yet what she is also going to face is a lack of time to go back to the

field and better the shortcomings. Consequently what they recommend to the researcher is to decide beforehand on the aims of the research which will determine the proportion to how much analysis can be done besides the activities of main data collection (ibid.)

Charmaz and Mitchell argue that methods of grounded theory consist of "flexible strategies" for data collection and analysis (2007: 160). Thus adjusting those strategies accordingly with the aims of the research in order to combine them with ethnographic inquiry can help the ethnographer to generate an account of a particular setting and circumstances while having a wider analytic perspective than an analytic scrutiny fixed on particularities of the local (ibid). Suddaby states that by using constant comparative method theoretical categories can be achieved from "relatively superficial observations" (2006: 636). However, for ethnographic purposes such highly abstracted theoretical categories may not be of crucial importance. Yet not ending up with data composing of "relatively superficial observations" should be of pivotal priority. Charmaz explains this as via examining the data with a theoretical eye the researcher can develop categories out of actual data which will make the research move beyond description (2001: 233). Such data which is collected with maintaining a certain level of reflexivity rather than a full commitment to data analysis will later on help the ethnographer to develop arguments that can be driven by ethnographic findings.

It has been argued by ethnographers and grounded theorists that in the products of ethnographic research same interactive processes as required by grounded theory approach can be found (Barrett 1996; Charmaz & Mitchell 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). Charmaz and Mitchell maintain that the ethnographic gaze can be always grounded in the local practices of everyday life in particular social settings, yet that doesn't prevent the researcher to have a broader analytic scope. Such an ethnographic approach will offer the researcher a perception to be able to think about how to make sense of local culture and actions in terms that could be related to wider analytic perspectives (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2007: 189). Moreover, they assert that the approaches of both methods can complement each other and as a result they

encourage the use of grounded theory methods alongside with ethnographic ones. They believe that once ethnographers adopted the analytic guidelines of grounded theory into ethnographic methodology, they will be able to conduct the fieldworks in a more efficient manner and also give the ethnographic research a touch of a more generic theoretical direction (2007: 160).

3.1.4 Adjusting Strategies of Grounded Theory Approach into Ethnographic Research

While discussing the use of grounded theory in ethnography Charmaz and Mitchell report that although early works of Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1968) were relied on extensive field research, in time grounded theory and ethnographic methods have developed somewhat differently (2007: 160). However the methodological literature on both of the methods reveal that at the very core those two types of researchers are both in pursuit of meanings and meaning construction (Janesick, 1982; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Jackson, 1983; Backman & Kyngäs, 1999; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2007). Social geographer Jackson states that participant observer studies the symbolic meanings as being constituted in human consciousness with a focus on how those meanings are constructed in particular cultures (1983: 44). While grounded theorists Backman & Kyngäs similarly argues that grounded theory research speaks of social processes and the meanings they are composed of (1999: 147). It is further noted in grounded theory methodology that a constructivist approach to grounded theory emphasizes studying how action and meaning are constructed (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2007: 160), thus making it possible to study the meanings of events for people (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999: 147). Moreover ethnographers Hammersley and Atkinson emphasize the struggling of ethnographers to understand the meanings that are produced as a result of, and that produce, social action. In short seeking of meanings and the ways they are generated are the fundamental aim of both grounded theory and ethnographic research.

Nonetheless combining grounded theoretical methods of data collection and analysis with ethnographic research is not so commonly found in the existing literature of

anthropological methodology. Even some anthropologists go to the extent to argue that apart from the sophisticated terminology introduced by grounded theory methods, there is nothing new to it.

> From the time of Malinowski onwards, anthropologists have proceeded in the same rough fashion: gathering data, getting hunches, checking them out, generating tentative hypotheses, rejecting them as contradictory data emerge, arranging their data into categories, searching for themes and patterns, and conducting comparative research. The difference is the absence of a specialized vocabulary in anthropology. It might be said that anthropologists have always been doing grounded theory (or at least a sensible version of it); they just didn't have a label for it (Barrett, 1996: 215).

While such a claim has some merit to it, its departing point is the assumption of the researcher's long term involvement in the fieldwork. However, for a relatively shorter term fieldwork carried out by an inexperienced researcher the initial conditions differ from the ones around which most of the methodological literature has been constructed. My position in the field was as such. I was inexperienced and it was a relatively short term fieldwork. Throughout the research and the reflection period following the fieldwork I found that the methodological guidelines of both ethnographic research and grounded theory were not entirely applicable to such paradigms and needed some interpretation.

The main problem I identified is that on the quite contrary to what Barrett argues the novice researcher doesn't get to see so clearly how to proceed next with data collection. Moving to a completely new setting, not knowing anyone in the beginning, struggling with access to the field, establishing rapport, identifying key issues and only after those progressing deeper within the research topic are all time requiring stages of a fieldwork research. Thus the most commonly found accounts of ethnographic research methodology are not fully suitable to a participant observation based shorter term field research as such descriptions and discussions almost always assume firstly a long term participation (Vidich 1955; Janesick 1982; Jackson 1983; Barrett, 1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; O'Brien 2010). Even some anthropologists perceive the fieldwork in such a way that it is rather unlikely to be able to conduct a successful research in a period of much shorter time than a year

(Sluka & Robben, 2007). What's more is that the amount of required time for carrying out a better fieldwork is also inversely proportional with the experience the researcher is possessing.

Backman and Kyngäs argues that when grounded theory is read for the first time especially from the new methodological books (i.e. Strauss & Corbin, 1990) which describe the entire analysis process in remarkable detail, it may seem "quite clear and straightforward" (1999, 148). However, as they resume, grounded theory research is a many-faceted process and there are many difficulties involved in which especially need to be carefully thought about by a novice researcher (ibid.). They observe that the critical point for a novice researcher is whether she is following certain methodological books or trying to apply several different instructions and views at the same time. It is maintained that grounded theory approach can be figured out in various different ways and thus this can be confusing for a novice researcher during the complicated and difficult research process (ibid, 152).

During my own field work I kept on reading about grounded theory research and as emphasized by Backman and Kyngäs it seemed like the most senseful approach to qualitative research. Two themes took my attention most back then; going back and forth between the data and analysis and the saturation of the data. I believed I was going back and forth between data and analysis since I was thinking critically about new information I was receiving, being as self-reflexive as possible and bringing new questions to pursue next. Yet the main obstacle I had was my very limited experience in analysis of qualitative data. Thus I couldn't distinguish between an exercise for the mind and actual analysis of data. This turned out to be actually a quite common case among ethnographers. A Ph.D. candidate in social anthropology in Pollard's study on researcher's experiences about doing ethnographic fieldwork explains that the researcher should produce the kind of description during the field which can be used to produce analysis when the major part of the field work is over (2009: 14). Moreover in time I felt nothing new was coming up anymore and I concluded that I must have reached to the saturation point and it was time to

withdraw from the field. What I wasn't aware during the fieldwork was that saturation depended on the level of involvement of the researcher.

During the major part of my field research I used participant observation. At a point during my research where the data I was collecting were only repeating itself I started contemplating about my data collection methods. I knew there was much more to the field yet I couldn't formulate new questions and I was running out of time at the same time. My methodology felt totally random and I thought the reason was my incompetence which led me to feelings of despair and panic. I couldn't think of how I could have adjusted my methodology and created a fresh point of view to the field. All I could do was spending more time in the field and feeling some more important and interesting stuff must have been happening somewhere else that I didn't know where.

Now, I know that this is called unstructured observation and ethnography has a tendency to work primarily with unstructured data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 248). According to Mulhall unstructured observation is the key method for collecting data about matters such as the way people move, dress, interact and use space which will provide the researcher with some information about how particular social settings are constructed (2002: 306). The data accumulated through unstructured participant observation initially may seem quite random and unconnected. I didn't know that was expected and how researches usually began in such an unstructured manner. Thus I panicked and convinced myself it was because of my not working in the field enough. What I needed to do was to go back to my field notes, process my thoughts into analysis and only afterwards return to the field to gather further data which is a short description of the logic grounded theory approach is advocating. Charmaz and Mitchell argue that ethnographic studies carry a potential problem for the researcher to see data "everywhere and nowhere, gathering everything and nothing" (2007: 161). They correctly conclude that the only outcome of such a methodological approach is piles of disconnected data that will most likely produce low-level descriptions (ibid.). They argue that grounded theory strategies foster to increase ethnographers' involvement in their research enquiry, despite however

involved they can be in participating in their research setting (ibid.). Moreover they also stress that through combining grounded theory research methods with ethnographic ones the researcher can overcome firstly “lengthy unfocused forays into the field” and secondly “superficial, random data collection” (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2007: 162).

3.2 The Research Experience

3.2.1 Execution of the Designated Methodology

I entered the field in the summer of 2010, aiming to produce an ethnographic text I was convinced that participant observation was the best way to get deeply immersed within the lived experiences on a daily basis. Furthermore I also arrived to the field with my methodology being informed by Amit’s field construction approach and I was planning to act accordingly. Amit discusses the inevitability of constructing the field in a world with rapidly increasing mobility of people. Knowing that Banyabashi Mosque was located at the very center of a big city I needed to shape my field accordingly with the opportunities that were accessible to me (2000: 13). I was full with eagerness and getting impatient to uncover the 'answers' to what people were doing in the mosque and why. Yet my expectations of data collection and the actuality of it turned out to be entirely different.

The transition from state socialism to liberal democracy was the most recent trauma to affect the Muslim population of Bulgaria, the aftermaths of which are still felt today. While the transition being the most drastic change for religious communities in Bulgaria, nevertheless, for the Muslim community also the fresh EU membership since 2007 and the ramifications of the increased Islamophobia after the attacks of 9/11 had taken their tolls on the lives of this biggest minority group of Bulgaria. Thus my anthropological fieldwork, investigating social structures and meaning creation processes in a community of Muslims living in Sofia was necessarily influenced by the remains of state socialism and also those more recent crucial changes in political life. Deans argues that it is only expected to come across “unstable and distrustful communities and institutions struggling to adjust to the

latest upheavals" which might cause problems for the social researcher (2006: 1). In terms of conducting research in this post-communist, post 9/11 environment I faced certain obstacles. Although I cannot say the community I met was unstable yet it'll be safe to state that while being encouraging towards me to carry out a research, they were quite reluctant about being the providers of the information individually. Most of the time I was advised to go and talk to the representatives of the civil society who were in relevant positions. On the other hand the representatives I met had been going through an unstable time already for a long time and were distrustful towards outsiders in this regard. My attempts and desire on carrying out a research about them were again encouraged, however, the ongoing political conflict within the institution was time and energy consuming for the administrative actors at the time as a result of which they were not able to spare some time for a researcher. Political issues at the field sites are reported by fieldworkers to affect the fieldwork in a way that within such an atmosphere the fieldworker won't be able to have access to certain kinds of data and even more significantly to people who would otherwise participate in the research (Pollard, 2009: 10).). In sum, during my field except few cases where I was told very clearly by some of the members of the community that there wouldn't be any cooperation from their side no matter from whom I got the permission I was supported and encouraged by almost everyone and every institution. However there was a catch; everyone passed the buck to the next person.

The reality of being in the field was something else; I noticed all the planning and predicting I did pre-fieldwork were all naïve delusions of a novice researcher. My field aspirations did not at all prepare me to the intellectually and emotionally most complex three months of my life yet to come. I expected to go out to the field and just collect the data as if it would have been all out there waiting for the researcher, however, I found out that the obstacles were beginning even at the stage of gaining access to the field.

3.2.2. Gaining Access to the Field

When for the first time I told about myself and the study to the caretaker of the mosque he told me he couldn't allow me to carry out any research without me getting permission from the Office of the Chief Mufti. Although it took quite some time I was finally able to meet with the Regional Mufti of Sofia who could give me the permission to conduct this research. At the time I was very glad to be finally able to talk to someone who might have positive influence on breaking the reluctance in the potential informants. Due to this excitement I couldn't foresee there would have been a kind of a negotiation and a personal interview. When the regional mufti of Sofia accepted me in his office, I straightforwardly introduced myself as a researcher MA student from Ankara and started telling him about the study I wanted to conduct. Nonetheless it was too naive of me not to see beforehand that he would have been more willing to hear about who 'really' I had been, appearing out of nowhere than the academic perspective I had. He politely interrupted my pitch for the research which was obviously not what he wanted to know more about me. Then he asked me the questions he wanted to learn more about which I was undoubtedly unprepared for. Thus negotiations with the gatekeepers about the access to the field are on one hand a matter of presentation of the self. Unless the researcher is able to present herself in the 'correct' way, permission may be denied due to the unmet cultural expectations of gatekeepers (Mulhall, 2002:310). Furthermore this process of access involves managing one's identity and projecting a nonthreatening image to the gatekeepers (ibid.).

Entrance to the field for the first time usually entails feelings of fear or a kind of hesitancy for the researcher. Giulanotti claims that gaining access to the lifeworlds of the research subjects may be the most difficult part of a participant observation study (2001: 87). On the other hand according to Mulhall access shouldn't be seen as the straightforward activity of speaking to the person in charge. It is usually a process which requires considerable time and effort to negotiate the researcher's

acceptability by the gatekeepers and participants in research sites. (Mulhall, 2002: 310).

My access to the field was no different than most of the reported accounts. People refused to talk to me, or when they did they didn't stay on topic. Some were suspicious and in a way hostile during the whole research despite the fact that I got admitted by certain gatekeepers. Although I was not entirely an insider in my field, there was still an assumed cultural proximity. Because of my ethnicity as a Turk from Turkey, the assumption of me being a Muslim because of my ethnic background and because of the topic I chose to study, my gender and the same language I shared with the natives of the field helped me to establish a certain level of familiarity and rapport with the participants. As Ergun and Erdemir maintain cultural proximity makes the informants become more eager to share information more easily (2009: 18). In addition to the shared cultural proximity by some of the informants extra prestige was attributed to my professional identity as an academic researcher. The perceptions of the academics' professional identity (ibid.) and also me being from a university that was well-known and respected by some of the informants helped me throughout the process of facilitating trust.

3.2.3 Fieldwork Identities

Participant observation entails having several roles simultaneously all of which include involvement and detachment on different levels – a friend, foreigner, scientist, etc. (Crick, 1982). Thus the texts produced are a result of a particular set of subjective experiences which are intrinsically incomplete and constrained or *partial* (Clifford, 1986: 7). While there are many ethnographies published having the perspective of trying to understand who the studied peoples were for the ethnographer, Tedlock observes that beginning in the 1970s there has been a shift in this point of view to observing the researchers and the communities coparticipation within the ethnographic encounter; in other words who the researcher is also for the studied people (Tedlock, 1991: 77). Such a shift lets the researcher deal with

experiences along with the ethnographic data, reflections on fieldwork participation, and cultural analysis all of which help the narrator to situate herself in the world she is representing (ibid.). A situated narrator will be aware of how her presence may have affected the data (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2007: 177). Self-reflexive field accounts provide a crucial medium for discussion of the issues concerning "epistemological, existential and political" matters (Clifford, 1986: 14).

I entered the field from a background of almost complete impiety. Having been brought up within an environment where I was very much at liberty about issues concerning my faith and religious practices and also with a very limited formal and informal religious education I had never practiced Islam or for that matter any other religion before this project. However, I also didn't have any clear cut position about my religious belief. However, while not being atheists my family's political stance was clearly rooted closer to the secular within "the well-known sociopolitical polarization between secularism and Islam(ism) in contemporary Turkey" (Atay, 2008: 46). This was more or less my position just before the beginning of my fieldwork in a religious community; no history of religious practice, leading a more liberal life than a religious Muslim would have and most importantly while not being aware before the field holding cultural and political preconceptions about 'devout Muslims'.

Since I was utterly inexperienced about the religious practices of the group I was intending to study, I started my field firstly getting familiar with the site through hanging out around the mosque, attending the prayers, and observing what was happening on a daily routine. At the time I wondered whether just hanging around the place and getting familiar with the environment was an active enough process to be called doing research. However by virtue of this approach not only I was able to observe the general accepted behavior so that I wouldn't behave like an entire stranger, also just hanging around the place and watching people helped me to also understand the importance of the physical environment for my site.

By the time I started my fieldwork I preferred to hang around and watch the very basics of religious conduct partly as a consequence of first days' hesitancy and fear, however, it was mostly because of my aspirations to meet the expectations as I presumed of a community of Turks and Muslims holding of a researcher from Turkey nominally coming from a Turkish and Muslim background. Mulhall expresses that "the process of access is most obvious in the way one dresses, speaks, or imparts particular knowledge" (2002: 310). Thus I didn't want to look unfamiliar with my knowledge of the Islamic prayers or 'the way of religious self-conduct'. Ergun and Erdemir note that the web of relationships built in the field are shaped by the perceptions about the researchers (2009: 18). As I discussed in the previous section I wanted to give the 'correct' first impression when I was going to introduce myself in the field. While I never said the opposite I let my informants assume that I was a non-threatening student researcher who was not politically engaged in Islamic movements yet who was just religious enough as part of the traditional Turkish identity[3]. That was not an act I consciously planned beforehand, it just felt like a reasonable decision in order to maintain an innocuous low profile at the beginning of my field.

Surely trying to create a harmless image was not a simple task to achieve. It is not free of uncertainty and dubious behavior. The self-representation of the researcher to the others in the field has usually ethical implications, especially concerning the issues of transparency and sincerity (Graveling, 2009: 6). I tried my best to be as transparent as possible during my fieldwork, however, that was not always possible in some situations.

When I met the Regional Mufti of Sofia for the first time for asking his permission to conduct this research, in the first minutes of our meeting he asked me whether I was married or not and with whom and where I was living in Sofia and how much

[3] I was frequently asked which Islamic brotherhood I belonged to. When I said I wasn't a member of any I was advised not to be shy and secretive about it. As a matter of fact I felt during the fieldwork and even more afterwards that my not belonging to any Islamic brotherhood made a lot of informants lose their interest in me and made me wonder what other kind of data I would have had access to if I had tried to find my ways into the Islamic brotherhoods. Nevertheless while that was a possibility, it was not a probable option for me considering the situation of my private life.

my rent was. At the time of the research I was living with my partner at the city center. Being completely unprepared for questions regarding my private life I panicked and since I was talking to an official religious representative I thought a couple living together without an official marriage would have been an unacceptable piece of information for him to look over easily so I told him I was living on my own. To make things worse the rent of the flat I told him was the half of the actual rent – rather than telling him the actual rent, I told him how much I was paying - which meant that it was a very reasonable rent to pay for a flat just at the city center. While he had already lost his interest in me after hearing that I didn't belong to any Islamic brotherhoods that information got his attention and started asking a lot of questions about the flat which after I'd have left Sofia he wanted to rent for the students studying under the administration and financial support of the Office of the Chief Mufti. He asked me so many questions one after another that I was afraid he was going to ask to see the flat in person which would have turned out as a very unpleasant situation for me to deal with. Although he didn't ask to see the flat in person, whenever we ran into each other he reminded me of his wish to rent the flat. My feelings of discomfort because of not being honest with him and also my fear caused by the possibility that he could anytime ask to see the flat even maybe together with other officials from the Office caused me anxiety all throughout the field and directly affected my data collection process. Since after seeing his determination about the flat and his being comfortable about asking questions so easily about private life I couldn't help being intimidated by his presence and became more reluctant to show up in the Office of the Chief Mufti because of the fear of running into him and even more him mentioning about the flat to the others present who might have become as interested as him.

That sounds like too far a stretch at the moment and even unnecessarily paranoid. Yet emotions are a fundamental part of the ethnographic encounter and our conduct of the field, the way we understand the reality are very much informed by the feelings we are carrying within ourselves (Woodthorpe, 2007: 8). Crick discusses how it is inevitable for the research experience not to be accompanied with feelings of anxiety and how those feelings affect the attitudes and behaviors of the researcher

which unavoidably affect the generation of the ethnographic data (1982: 23). Although I believe it was the right thing to do for a healthier conduct of the field research to represent myself with adjustments about my private life, I was not prepared for the feelings of guilt and estrangement that came along with it. As a result I ended up distancing myself from certain members of the community I was studying and lost the opportunity to have access to valuable data if I had been able to control my feelings otherwise.

As my field progressed slowly I started contemplating about my religiosity. I was attending prayers as a big part of my participant observation based methodology. In the beginning I was quite frustrated since I was imitating people around me and worrying whether that hadn't been too obvious not to notice. I felt quite deceitful and disrespectful towards the people who were actually praying. Thus I wondered if I had needed some experience in Islamic religious practice in order to be a participant observer within a religious community and spent some time learning the basic rules of ablution and prayers. Furthermore I reorganized my life according to what I believed as necessary. That included abstaining from alcohol in public places and also avoiding going to places such as bars or night clubs. Those measures I took were not too much obliged on me. Sofia was a big city and the possibility for me to run into an informant during my extra-fieldwork activities was somewhat little. Thus that was not an act to build trust and confidence in me. It was rather important for me to keep a certain level of respect for my host community. I may not have been entirely transparent about my personal matters yet at least keeping up with the local behavioral standards in public was the minimum I could have done. Moreover, the impressions which participants hold of the researcher have a pivotal influence on the character of the data the researcher will be able to collect (Vidich, 1955: 354). Therefore besides the obvious disrespect on moral grounds, also for pragmatic reasons even the possibility was quite small, being seen by an informant wouldn't have been good for the research.

In this section so far I discussed my position as an ethnographer during my fieldwork. Besides my personal background and take on the topic and my feelings

and their consequences entailing my participation, further I would like to discuss the insider/outsider issue which I think had a direct influence on how I perceived my field and was perceived throughout the field.

The dichotomy of insider/outsider discussions agree on a ground that insiders have easier access to certain types of information, especially in the area of daily routines (Tedlock, 1991: 80), however, outsiders enjoy the inherent advantage of being able to question everything without taking things for granted and seeing through a perspective that is difficult for an insider to gain (Graveling, 2009: 8). While those definitions work for drawing a rough sketch of the meanings more or less encompassing by this dichotomy, it's been argued against such a fixity of the distinction between insider/outsider relationship (Narayan, 1993; Atay, 2002; Ergun & Erdemir, 2009; Graveling, 2009; Pemunta, 2009).

Narayan proposes that it'd be more profitable for the methodological discussions to think of each anthropologist "in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations" (1993: 671). Such a perspective will necessarily entail a thorough examination of the ways in which the ethnographer is situated in relation to the people she studies (ibid.: 678). Acknowledging this perspective is to admit the limits of one's scope as a positioned researcher with situated knowledges (ibid.: 679). In other words everyone is an insider or an outsider on different levels. Even if the researcher is a 'native' who was born and raised in the same site as she is conducting fieldwork, she can only be an insider to a certain degree. Knowledge is relational and relative to one's position within the social structure of a given community, or within the fields of power relations (Pemunta, 2009: 1)

On the other hand Vidich claims that the participant observer goes through a continuous redefinition of her position (1955: 360) while attempting to create an identity for herself (Crick, 1982: 25). However, we shouldn't forget that the role of the researcher is mutually constructed together by the researcher and her respondents in the field. Class, nationality, race and ethnicity, religious background, age, gender,

marital status and profession are only some of the factors that play a significant role in the negotiation of the researcher's insiderness or outsiderness (Ergun & Erdemir, 2009: 19) or how much the people under study are going to involve the researcher in their activities and position her within their world (Graveling, 2009:2).

In this regard, while I considered myself as an outsider, having cultural, social and linguistic affinities provided me with a partial insiderness status (Ergun & Erdemir, 2009: 21), which might have eventually helped me establish rapport faster and easier compared to a foreign researcher. Meanings attributed to Turkishness based on an imagined shared ancestry between the indigenous Turks of Bulgarian geography and the Turks of Turkey, plus the reciprocal comprehensibility of the Turkish we've been speaking strengthened the opinions of a collective identity between me and my research subjects. However, I was not granted the status of insiderness about the issue of belonging to an Islamic brotherhood. Because of my not belonging to any I repeatedly witnessed potential informants lose interest in me. While because of my interest in a study of the practices of a religious group and also my being from a place where it was not such an out of ordinary practice to be part of a religious network the piece of information about me whether I was a follower of such an organization or not was part of the insider/outsider identity negotiation process. I was sharing a common religious identity with my research subjects, however, I failed to have this dimension to my religious identity which would have given me more shared space with some of the informants and access to different type of data. Nevertheless it ended with me being seen an outsider to those circles.

At first it is through the shared categories of identity which the researcher have in common with the study group that help the group grant an appropriate position to the researcher. As I discussed above this is a progress that requires constant negotiation, the research subjects use the information provided to them by the researcher herself in order to negotiate on an opinion about her. Yet it may sound as if it is only with the informants the negotiation process takes place. Just on the contrary the researcher is not a naïve curious scientist possessing a neutral eye. The researcher on the other

hand deals with the preconceptions and the cultural baggage she brings with herself to the field.

In my case those were my deep-rooted convictions and stereotypes about religion in Turkey. Atay's observations of himself as a field worker among a religious Muslim community more than two decades ago are still valid today as the foundation of my own opinionated beliefs. He states that these convictions are endorsed by the "positivist-modernist ideology of the republican period". Via the guidance of Turkish laicist ideology religion is denied any social legitimacy or a social phenomenon that might be "a socio-psychological response to serious ontological concerns of individuals" (Atay, 2002: 50). Political debates and public discussions over religion exclusively focused on the political use of religion (ibid.), especially the ones that had found place for themselves in main stream media. The laicist discourses are shaped around the threat of this "medieval backwardness" that aims to weaken and eventually destroy the secular regime (ibid.).

When I visited my field for the first time it was a crowded Friday prayer and it was a little before the commence of the praying where a preacher was preaching in Turkish about matters of Islam. He was a middle aged man, his whole face covered with the kind of beard Muslim man has and wearing a black salwar talking about an issue that was so far from me. Already agitated by the looks of the preacher I was, I attended the first prayer of my life on a warm summer day with a crowded congregation in a relatively small mosque. After the prayer the congregation started congratulating each other and I noticed a meaningful number of people were greeting each other with a particular way of greeting which I know from Turkey as how ultranationalists used to do. Later on that week I found a news blog about the Muslims in Bulgaria that was named after this same ultranationalist group I was familiar from living in Turkey. All those together upset me quite a bit, nevertheless I thought I had no other choice but to accept thus I carried on with my field. However, I had put on a lot of thought on the fact that my opinions and feelings belonged to a completely different context. My thoughts and experiences had been formed as a result of the relationship between the Turkish state and the religion in a country where the religion of the

majority is Islam. Therefore it was an entirely illegitimate perspective to look at the practices of a religious minority. Thus unless I had endeavored to change my point of view and tried seeing the congregation and my research respondents in their own context as a minority group, it would have been a major failure. By the halfway through my field I noticed that my feelings were mostly altered. Surely I didn't become a devout Muslim, or a supporter for groups with racist tendencies. Yet I was not as antagonistic as before. I had stopped being terrified by all those images and started to see them as relevant to my ethnographic findings.

To conclude this section, the insiderness or outsiderness are "largely determined by context-dependent insider/outsider positions among the peoples studied" (Ergun & Erdemir, 2009: 34). It is possible to find yourself more of an insider on a foreign land or an outsider in one's own land (ibid.). My take from my fieldwork experience is that I left the field with religion having become a big deal and almost normal part of my daily life whereas I had started with feelings of agitation and frustration. Therefore it can be claimed that just like anything else identities and more importantly emotions are not natural possessions, but built and crafted within discourse (Atay, 2002: 62).

3.3 Techniques Used in the Field

Participant observation was the main methodological technique I used for this research. Along with participant observation I also used informal and semi-structured interviews. The informal interviews occurred whenever the participant subjects initiated conversations among themselves or with me about the research topics I was interested in. At those times I was having the chance to put out some questions by joining those daily conversations. O'Brien talks about the importance of chatting in creating rapport and gaining insight (2010: 11). However in this particular fieldwork chatting was a very important source of information. The reason for this was that my research subjects were quite reluctant about providing information individually thus on rare occasions I was able to convince someone for a one to one interview. I have

only three semi-structured formal interviews where I was given permission to prepare and ask questions one by one.

If I leave aside the hardness in getting interviews, I was not satisfied with my own performance during those interviews, either. The answers to the questions I was preparing at home and also follow-ups during the interviews were giving me a very strong feeling that I was not able to transfer what I had in mind to the interviewee and as a result the answers were either thin or different than what I wanted to hear about. It was like the questions were not meaningful enough for the person and thus causing hard times forming meaningful answers. On the other hand during the informal interviews this was not the case at all since people who were getting involved in those conversations or discussions were already talking about the parts of the matters that were personally significant to them. While during a one-to-one interview I was having difficult times hitting at the right spot to bring out the personally relevant stuff which they would like to comment on. The questions I was looking for answers to had a political aspect to them which was one of the causes of the reluctance I was facing. Although talking about the very same issues was quite a common topic of daily conversations even with me joining the discussion, when I asked questions about them during the interviews they were causing a noticeable tension. On this issue Charmaz and Mitchell note down that it's possible that an interviewee wouldn't regard the ethnographer as the most significant audience during an interview but rather giving 'public' opinions that will be recorded to be made public afterwards no matter what kind of assurances of confidentiality the ethnographer gives (2007: 178).[4]

Apart from the hesitations there was something else which was also the reason that was keeping me getting deeper that at the time of the field work I failed to identify. As I started my field unconsciously with unstructured participant observation in

[4]After learning who I was a potential informant refused unconditionally to be part of this research on similar grounds. He told me that he and I could have even become friends and he would have talked to me as such while I would have been writing those things down with the intention of publicizing his opinions.

order to get the general atmosphere of the field and let the field show me the main issues to explore further, I failed to evaluate the moment to stop with this technique and revise the methodology to apply next. I was seeing I lacked depth in my data and couldn't figure out why thus I made a rational deduction and decided to spend even more time in the field. Such situations are rightfully observed in methodological literature that "simply working in the field does not in and of itself constitute ethnographic research" (Janesick, 1982: 22).

It is true that my data had come to a saturation point for a long time, however, it was not the time to end the field, it was the time to withdraw a couple of weeks and make a rough analysis of the data in order to dig out the important stuff that might have gone unnoticed among a big amount of unconnected, randomly collected ethnographic data. Truth is it was too late for that as well since it was a three-month long fieldwork. Thus aside from the political sensitivity of the questions I was asking, I wasn't preparing my questions in the light of my collected data which caused vagueness both for me as the interviewer and to the interviewees. By not having put out at least some amount of rough analysis I prevented myself from having a clearer idea about my research which especially revealed itself almost tangibly during the interviews.

After a while unstructured observation can give the researcher a feeling of randomness, as a matter of fact I started doubting whether there had been any methodology I was applying. If the unstructured participant observation is lengthened more than it should be then this is the result the researcher might face. In fact that feeling of randomness and seeing a temporary saturation in the field notes can be used as the check point where the researcher should then finish with the unstructured data collection. At that very point the data that can be collected through this approach is exhausted and nothing new is coming up thus it is time to have a short withdrawal from the field for analysis. Analyzing the saturated data is going to bring new questions, aspects that have gone missing and then it is time to go back with more specific questions.

Finally I would like to add that I can't imagine being able to convince myself back then about the need to do so. One can get to feel so cornered and so clueless that the anxiety might block the researcher's rational thinking abilities. Thus it comes to a point where the execution of the methodology becomes the combination of the assessment of professional techniques and the researcher's agency's reaction to the new field life and how well she is coping with it.

3.4 Conclusion

To conclude, throughout this chapter I outlined, described and reflected on the methodology involved in my research. Moreover, as I elaborated above, its execution turned into a complex, reflective and ultimately, exhausting experience, affecting and informing my thoughts and work process during and after the field. Therefore a significant part of the chapter deals with my reflections and observations on making sense of and applying the designated methodology under the given circumstances, which I believe, are ones often faced by novice researchers: time and financial constraints, lack of experience, uninformed expectations and increased emotional vulnerability. In short, ongoing methodological concerns had become an important and difficult part of my work, as I was to face over and over the actual usage of the methods which was a complex and confusing process. I was forced to deepen my knowledge and understanding not only of the methodology I was using, but also of the many accounts and perspectives of its application in a variety of fields and situations.

In particular, I have devoted a considerable part of this chapter to outlining and reflecting on grounded theory and ethnography, which were the two main pillars of my research. Moreover, as they seemingly present the researcher with two completely opposing approaches, I have tried to provide an account of their reconciliation in theory and practice. I have further outlined the data collection and analysis processes in detail, as well as reflected on the limitations and problems presented in their execution. Finally, I have discussed my involvement in the field as

a researcher and reflected on the challenges and questions I was faced with during the different stages of the work.

CHAPTER 4

SPACE AND HISTORY: BANYABASHI MOSQUE THROUGH THE LAST CENTURY

According to the date plate at the entrance of Banyabashi Mosque it was built in the year 974 according to the Islamic calendar, or 1566 or 1567 according to the Gregorian calendar. The architect of the mosque is the distinguished Ottoman architect Sinan. Banyabashi Mosque is the only active mosque in Sofia, still functioning as a religious temple for the Muslims. Yet according to official reports inventorying the Ottoman waqf (Muslim charitable foundation) properties within the newly independent Bulgaria's territory there used to be 44 mosques until the beginning of the country wide modernization policies following the Russo-Ottoman War where the Ottoman material culture were either converted or demolished (Koyunlu, 2009: 209).

Those mosques along with other waqf properties such as madrassas, public baths, dervish lodges don't exist in contemporary Sofia anymore. Historical resources tell us that the Ottoman waqf property were the first preferences to be discarded by the autonomous Bulgarian state in times of need during the Russo-Turkish war in 1877 and 1878, and as a result in those days some of them were converted into public facilities such as hospitals, storages for ammunition, prisons and so on (Koyuncu, 2009: 212). In addition in the following years there were more conversions and this time also demolition of those Ottoman waqf properties. According to Stoicheva within the first decades after Bulgaria's independence in 1878 the state used town planning and modernization as excuses for demolishing the mosques or transforming them to warehouses, depots, and barracks. Moreover she emphasizes that these

activities could be seen as a 'de-Ottomanization' process (Stoicheva 2009: 198). Against this background Banyabashi Mosque was the only mosque which survived this era which was referred to as *de-Ottomanization* by scholars. After 1878 with the independence of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire, Muslims were not part of the hegemonic power anymore yet were perceived as "the former oppressors and expropriators" (Brunnbauer, 2001: 40). Therefore Banyabashi Mosque being the only Ottoman property left as it used to be after a conscious political urban transformation policy must be representing the existence of Islam in Bulgaria. Yet, when I asked about the mosque's past during my fieldwork in Sofia the common answer was similar to the reply of Banyabashi Mosque's Imam, "It is a shame if the imam does not know. But to be honest I don't have any knowledge about this topic."[5] Nevertheless he suggested that going the Office of the Chief Mufti. In his opinion they should have some documents on the issue.

I went to the Office of the Chief Mufti and after telling briefly about my project and some of my research questions they all immediately started telling me that I should speak to Ahmet Eminov. They called Eminov, as everyone addressed him, immediately and I met him that day before the Friday Prayer. He was a very healthy and energetic elder man who looked around his early 70s. He was actually an 82 year old man, currently occupied as a researcher journalist and a memoirist who also became my key informant during this research. We had some time before the prayer started so he began asking me questions about who I was and what I was doing there. After hearing I was studying in Middle East Technical University he got quite enthusiastic. He obviously has been a very well-known man. Everyone greeted him and showed respect. While he was introducing me to the people he also explained their obligations in the community to help me for the research[6]. After the prayer we were walking in the same direction so we started walking together meanwhile I asked him if he knew how Banyabashi Mosque came to be the only active working

[5] "İmamın bilmiyor olması ayıptır ama yalan olmasın hiç bir bilgim yok bu konuda."

[6] He was actually using the pronoun "we" as "we have to help this young man".

mosque in Sofia. He told me that this was "a very deep issue"[7] and in order to answer that question one needed to go in details of the Bulgarian history and understand the ideas of intellectual awakening starting from the 19th century that the Bulgarian state was established upon.

The literature on the intellectual awakening of the Bulgarian nation which would construct the fundamentals of the Bulgarian official nationalist discourse during the 19th and early 20th century agrees on the prevailing opinion that the Ottoman domination was a cruel yoke, 500 years of oppression and the main cause for the backwardness of the newly founded Bulgarian State (Brunnbauer 2001; Koyuncu 2009; Lory 1985; Todorova 1996). Brunnbauer states that the aim of this new nationalist discourse was to "expel the Ottoman Empire and its legacy" from the territory of Bulgaria (2001; 40). In his article about the elimination of the Ottoman material culture in Bulgaria Koyuncu states that especially after 1835 Bulgarian intellectuals started depicting the Ottoman Empire and the Turks as the main reason which was obstructing the development of Bulgarians as a nation and cutting them off from the European circles which Bulgarian nation substantially belongs to (2009; 202). Todorova in a book chapter on the Ottoman legacy in the Balkans indicates that the establishment of the nation states in the Balkans didn't only mean getting politically independent from the Ottoman state, but rather it pointed out to a deeper rupture with the Ottoman past of social, cultural and economic relations, therefore resulting in the synchronization of the Europeanization process and the elimination of the Ottoman heritage (Koyuncu, 2009; 199). Lory terms this rejection of everything that leads to remind the Ottoman times as *deottomanization* and according to him the Europeanization movement or more accurately purification from the signs of the East in order to integrate into the Western Culture and deottomanization practices such as denying or smudging the past are complementary phenomena (Koyuncu, 2009; 199). Moreover Koyuncu claims that rejecting and attempting to clear the past made it easier to construct the grounds of a new identity, a new society, a new nation and a new state in the recently independent Bulgarian

[7] "Bu çok derin bir meseledir."

Principality. Furthermore the difference of language and religion between the Turkish Ottomans and local Bulgarians accelerated the disengagement from the past period. He continues by stating that one of the least wanted elements from the past became the Ottoman material cultural heritage (2009; 200). According to Lory the reason for this frustration with the Ottoman material culture was that they were reminding the Bulgarian society of five hundred years of social and religious discrimination (Koyuncu, 2009; 216).

However, those material culture, mostly the waqf properties became a matter of a diplomatic issue between the Bulgarian state and the Ottoman Empire. According to the Berlin Treaty signed in 1878 a Bulgarian-Turkish committee for deciding on the fate of the waqf properties was to be founded. Although such a committee which was composed of two representatives from the respective countries was founded , following the 83rd meeting both parts agreed they wouldn't be able to reach an agreement on the issue and the committee was terminated by consensus (Koyuncu, 2009; 214).

The number of mosques in Sofia before the independency of Bulgaria is not exactly known. Although there are accounts of travellers of the time, they don't seem to be consistent with each other. According to Evliya Çelebi, the most famous Ottoman traveller, in the middle of the 16th century there were 53 mosques in Sofia (Cambazov, 2000: 190). Yet another account on the city of Sofia the founder of the geography discipline in Bulgaria Anastas Ishirkov[8] claims that according to other reports of different travellers from the 17th century, Sofia was a very Turkish looking city and there must have been between 150 to 300 mosques (1912: 180). Despite this quite big error margin those accounts demonstrate that the city used to have quite a lot of mosques.

However, there are more reliable documents about the number of the mosques in Sofia written in the late 19th century after 1878, after the Russo – Turkish war. Even

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http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%90%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%81_%D0%98%D1%88%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2

though there is not an exact number of mosques at that time, different reports seem to agree on around 40 to 45 mosques. After the establishment of the autonomous Bulgarian Principality, a diplomat was sent by the Ottoman State to Sofia as the Ottoman Properties Commissary. In 1902 the commissary instructed the Sofia Mufti of the time to make an inventory of the Ottoman waqf properties within the territory of the new Bulgarian state. In that report the Sofia Mufti reports the existence of 44 mosques in Sofia before the Russo – Turkish War (Koyuncu, 2009: 218). In the same report the Sofia Mufti also states that by the 8th of June 1882 all 43 mosques were either converted into other facilities like hospitals or ammunition stores or just demolished, the only mosque left still functioning as a Muslim temple was Banyabashi Mosque (Koyuncu, 2009: 221). In spite of all the diplomatic notes sent to the Bulgarian Principality by the Ottoman State, the demolishing and conversion of ex-Ottoman waqf properties were carried on. According to other official Ottoman documents from the Chamber of Translation in the Ottoman Foreign Affairs Ministry[9] kept in the Ottoman Archive of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey the Bulgarian state took decision to demolish also Banyabashi Mosque in 1890 and also again in 1906. The Municipality of Sofia was pointing out the new urban design modifications as the reason for those decisions and offering the Ottoman Commissary to build a new mosque somewhere else. Yet according to the reports written by the commissary to the Foreign Affairs Ministry in his opinion the new urban design modifications are just a cover to give an appropriate excuse while the Sofia municipality's real problem is the place of the mosque. It is located right in the very center and it is the first representative building on the way from Sofia train station to the city center. Therefore the first architectural building that takes the attention of the travellers or the visitors from the European countries happens to be a mosque which is not exactly desired at all by the new state (Koyuncu, 2009: 226). According to the historical documents the decision on destruction of Banyabashi Mosque was taken as a serious threat by the Ottoman government for the Muslim population living on the Bulgarian territory. It was met by a severe diplomatic reaction. In the note sent by the Ottoman State it was stated that the only active

[9] *Hariciye, Tercüme Odası*

mosque in the capital of new Bulgarian state was required to be destroyed due to the urban plans developed by the municipality. Yet it was the feeling of the Sultan that the true will under those actions was new state's desire to not have any signs reminding Islam in Sofia. As a result of these diplomatic contacts the destruction of the mosque was cancelled (Koyuncu, 2009: 227).

In the meantime some of the waqf buildings started to be changed already in spite of the objections by the Ottoman Commissaries. Some of them started to be converted into public buildings such as hospitals, libraries, museums, prisons, printing houses, ammunition stores. Some mosques were converted into churches, and some were converted back to churches. Some buildings started to be pulled down due to their damaged condition which poses threat for the neighboring buildings and danger for pedestrians. Moreover as part of the modernization project of the new Bulgaria Austrian and Czech architects and urban designers were invited in order to rebuild the city of Sofia with the Viennese ecole. Urban planning of the Ottoman Sofia belonged to the pre-modern urbanism and social life style. Cities were planned around *mahalles* – sort of neighborhood units where each *mahalle* had its own social and economic life with its own market place, schools, and artisans and so on. While now the city was re-planned by centralizing the administrative and commercial complexes with wider boulevards rather than the narrow streets it used to have, having grid systems for streets rather than disordered ones. According to Koyuncu the most significant changes in the post-Ottoman Bulgaria occurred in the appearance and physical structure of the cities as a result of the architectural changes and urban transformation (2009: 239).

During the rule of the Ottoman Empire Banyabashi Mosque was not the most significant mosque in Sofia, considering there were bigger mosques in the city center. As my key informant Eminov stated while talking about the importance of Banyabashi Mosque during the Ottoman times that it is not a physically big mosque, there were bigger mosques like *Kara Camii* – Black Mosque which is now a church or *Büyük Camii* – Grand Mosque which is today the Archaeological Museum of Sofia. Thus in his opinion one of the reasons why Banyabashi Mosque wasn't

destroyed or converted is because"it is not a physically big mosque nor has a significant capacity for the congregation like the Black Mosque or the Grand Mosque had. Yet, there is a Muslim population here and there is also the route to Europe and there are Arabs coming to Sofia. Those are the reasons why Bulgarian government left this mosque."[10] Yet the reports of the Ottoman diplomats of the time are stating the new Bulgarian government's discomfort with the centrality of Banyabashi Mosque. In Eminov's opinion Banyabashi Mosque became too visible at that time. He claimed that the Bulgarian government was worried whether Sofia and Banyabashi Mosque would have been too strongly associated as a result of this visibility; "wherever you are going to look at Sofia, the mosque surely is able to take attention. Look from the plane, you'll see the minaret and the mosque, look from the ground in all the old photos Banyabashi is there."[11]

Considering the historical accounts from the time of the newly founded state, as well as Eminov's opinions, it can be suggested that the overall policy of the new municipality was directed towards constructing a "western" city. A significant part of this effort was focused on reshaping the physical environment accordingly. Thus, prominent European architects and urban designers of that time were invited to manage and navigate the redesign of the capital and especially the representative city center. Concomitantly, while rejection of Ottoman heritage was not necessarily part of the values and tradition they represented, there was a predominant sentiment within the newly founded state that the reign of the Ottoman Empire was the reason for the country's underdevelopment in all aspects of life: economic, cultural, educational, philosophical etc. Ottoman buildings and structures were perceived as reminders of the domination and their eradication or at least repurposing was considered a necessary, albeit somewhat symbolic act towards reinforcing the newly reclaimed independence and breaking off the past. As a result, in 10 years

[10] "Hacim bakmından, büyüklük bakımından Kara Camii veya Büyük Camii kadar büyük değil. Burada nasıl olsa bir Müslüman nüfus var. Ve burası Avrupa'ya geçit yolu, yakın ve orta doğudan Araplar gelip geçiyorlar buraya. Bulgar hükümeti onun için bu camiyi bırakmıştır."

[11] "Bulgar devleti tarafından kötü tarafı bu Banyabaşı Camii Sofya'nın simgesi haline gelmiş. Nereden bakarsanız bakın Sofya'ya illa cami göze çarpıyor. Uçaktan bakın Sofya'da cami minare görülüyor, yerden bakın bütün eski resimlerde Banyabaşı."

Banyabashi Mosque remained as the only Ottoman architectural structure still functioning according to its original purpose.

However, it shouldn't be neglected that those years were a period of tremendous change: the heavy war and the subsequent rapid transition to independent governance, as well as the aforementioned strong emotional sentiment towards the past and the newly embraced “western” vision suggest that this shift was not easily systematic. Under all the pressures and transformations it was facing, Sofia must have been quite a chaotic city to govern for the new municipality. For this reason the particular significance of Banyabashi as a central mosque serving a considerable congregation might have been overlooked or not accommodated in the rather fragmentary plans of redesigning the center. The discourse against having an Ottoman religious building in such a prominent location started only after it remained as the single functioning mosque in Sofia. As a result, the municipality's two attempts to accommodate it in the new Bulgaria project were met with strong resistance by the Ottoman State and perceived as directed against the remaining Muslim population in Sofia.

Ahmet Eminov was born in 1928 to a Turkish family in a village of Kardzhali. When he was 16 years old in 1944 the political regime had changed in Bulgaria to a state socialism. At that time he was studying in the high school for ethnic Turks in Bulgaria, *Medresetü’n Nüvvab,* where the students were taught mostly the very fundamentals of Islam. While previously the ethnic Turkish students were not even allowed to study in the state high schools, with the internationalist ideology of the Soviet influenced new socialist reforms doors of the universities were now opened to ethnic Turks. Furthermore as Eminov states young Turkish students were encouraged by the state to continue higher education. According to Brunnbauer tolerance and non-discrimination were the first of the shifting minority policies of the Socialist Bulgaria. He claims that by granting full citizen rights the hope was to recruit the Turks as supporters for building socialism. Besides he furthers the argument to a point that by intermingling young Turkish people with the Bulgarian youth in the state universities the socialist party was also willing to transform them into a

"secular, communist Turkish elite and to establish a non-religious lifestyle for ethnic Turks" (Brunnbauer, 2001; 52). Although before enrolling in the Law Faculty of Sofia University in 1949 Eminov got a sort of religious education which was the only education Turks were allowed to have by that time and was a devoted Muslim. By the end of his university education he says that "we had a general prolonged period of atheism, all of us, all the enlightened people of Bulgaria. On the other hand we didn't notice that by then. We are a progressive youth. We are going to study; we are going to climb the ladder. What is going to make us advance? Positive sciences will. Religion is reactionism. You perform prayers, you fast. That is absurd. That was our mentality within the organization[12].„[13]

During his first year of university education in 1949 Eminov became a party member and a student representative of the university. He also founded the Turkish Student's Society where he recruited Turkish students to the party and arranged meetings and conferences for propagating communism. He finished university by 1953 and became the first Turkish lawyer of Bulgaria. He wanted to continue his career as a lawyer but the party had other plans for him and offered him to start working in one of the newspapers which was being published in Turkish as a media organ of the communist state. He accepted and worked there for 20 years before he moved to Sofia Press to work in the international propaganda department where he had worked for another good 20 years. It seems the tolerance, nondiscriminating policy for the first years of communism until the beginning of 1950s worked as it was planned with some members of the target minority group. At the end of the day Eminov was a member of that secular, communist, educated Turkish elite which the socialist state aimed for in the beginning. However he was also profoundly disappointed with communism and how things turned out to be. He had the chance to express those feelings during a meeting with the last communist leader of Bulgaria, Petar

[12] Here by organization he refers to the local organizations and their governing bodies of the Communist Party.

[13] "O zamanlar genelde büyük bir ateistlik dönemimiz oldu bizim, hepimizin, Bulgaristan aydınlarının. Onun için o yaşlarda biz bunun da farkına varmadık yani. Biz ilerici gençleriz efendim, biz okuyacağız, yükseleceğiz, şöyle böyle. Bizi ne yükseltecek? Müspet bilim yükseltecek. Dinde gericilik var. Namaz kılıyorsun, oruç tutuyorsun. Bunun hiçbir şeyi yok. Kafa o, o teşkilatta."

Mladenov. When Mladenov asked about the reasons why ethnic Turks were not feeling welcome in Bulgaria Eminov started explaining the reasons in his opninon by stating "I finished the law faculty with the first ranking among all the students in 1953 to be the first Turk to achieve this and since then have served the party with the loyalty of a dog!"[14] He was obviously regretful about not questioning some of the choices he made throughout his career but following the policies of the party blindly.

In 2010 he had been living in Sofia for 61 years and again became a devoted Muslim coming to the mosque every day for the noon prayers. He has also continued his political activity by continuously writing articles to newspapers, academic papers, political memoirs, going to turcology conferences as a discussant in other Balkan countries and also in Turkey. Thus he was a very significant source of information for my field especially with his memories of the mosque in the recent past. From 1949, the year Eminov came to Sofia to continue his education at the university until the downfall of communism his memories as a journalist and a party member of Turkish background from those times are in a way covering the history of Banyabashi Mosque and also a vivid picture of the issue of religion and the state during communism.

As I asked about his first memories of Sofia, Banyabashi Mosque shows up as an ordinary component of his story. He says in his mind the first images of the mosque are very clear and reminding him feelings of gratitude. Because as he continues explaining in 1949 the dormitories for the university students were not yet finished so students were finding rent rooms to live. Yet he adds the rooms were too costly and he didn't have money to rent a room. After getting off from the train he and three more Turkish students with whom he met in the train, directly went to find the Office of the Chief Mufti to ask for help. There the chief mufti sent them to Banyabashi Mosque and told them the mosque was not like in the old times anyway so they could stay there until the dormitories would be finished. Eminov explains what it means not to be like in the old times for the mosque by adding: "It became

[14] "Ben dedim, Bulgaristan'da 1953 yılında, efendim, hukuk fakültesini birincilikle bitiren tek bir Türk'üm. Ve efendim, o zamandan beri ben partiye köpek sadakatiyle hizmet ettim!"

our first dormitory for the students who are coming from the Turkish High School, *Medresetü'n Nüvvab*. Sofia Mosque already in 1949 had lost its former functions and was only left as a mosque as a place of worship. There was such a small congregation. Only the ones who were working in the Office of the Chief Mufti and Muslims from the country side who were visiting Sofia were coming for the five time prayers"[15]. When I asked whether there used to be some Muslims living in Sofia back then, he told me only the families of the officers in the Office of the Chief Mufti were living in Sofia. Therefore the complaint of the Chief Mufti by telling them the mosque was not like in the old days was as well referring to the gradual decrease in the Muslim population in the past fifty years. They were so much shrunk in the capital that in 1949 only three families were left. As a consequence the mosque was left only as a place of worship, nothing more than an architectural building. Nonetheless as a result of the current changes in the political atmosphere the mosque was started to be used by the first Turkish university students for accommodation in the lack of the student dormitories. Eminov recalls that they stayed there for about five months, only after the dorms were finished and they left the Banyabashi Mosque in order to move into their dorm rooms.

Eminov became a member of the socialist party during his law degree in Sofia University and even became the student representative of the university. In the meantime he founded the association for Turkish students. They used to invite guest speakers to that association to talk about socialism and contemporary issues of Bulgaria as well as the communist world, besides it used to be also a meeting point for Turkish university students in Sofia where they were discussing politics, propagating socialism to the new recruits and also preparing small plays together to be performed at several occasions. In short it was a place where students from Turkish or Muslim backgrounds were socializing with each other as well as becoming communist citizens. As the founder and the leader of this group and being the student representative of the university Eminov was recognized and known by

[15] "O bizim ilk yurdumuz oldu, Nüvvab'dan gelen üniversitelilere. Sofya Camii 1949'larda artık eski fonksiyonlarını yitirmiş ve sadece bir cami, bir ibadet yeri olarak kalmıştır. Çok az cemaati vardı. Başmüftülükte çalışanlar oraya vakit namazına geliyorlardı, bir de taşradan gelenler namaza geliyorlardı oraya."

some state officers, too. But he also emphasizes that "however we had encountered communism, we also had a Muslim side coming from the Turkish High School, *Medresetü'n Nüvvab.* So from time to time we were going to prayers in the mosque"[16]. Nevertheless one day he was required to go to the police station. It turns out civil police officers were watching the people going to the mosque and trying to identify them. They were able to identify three of the students but there was a fourth whom they couldn't identify. Thus Eminov was asked to help the police to identify that fourth one. He is having a big smile while telling me this since that fourth one was actually no one else than himself. Yet the police didn't even suspect it could have been him since he has such a proper communist student profile and is active in politics, he says "they are not able to imagine that the fourth could be me. Because [the police reckon] he seems such a socialist; president of the students, [his] other involvement [the Turkish students association]. They figure he wouldn't go to the mosque"[17].

In the same interview at the police he was also told that the Turkish students were going to be helped, state would find them scholarships, give rooms in the dormitories and they would do anything to liberate them from the influence of the reactionary religion. Eminov states that it was the fifties and the propaganda of atheism was being already overtly done. Radios were broadcasting degrading programs against religion, both for Christianity and Islam as he adds. Moreover he continues it was not possible to have religious faith and also to be a party member at the same time. "And at that time becoming a party member, being a member of the party determines the career of the person. It is an important matter. That's why you couldn't go to the church or the mosque if you were a member of the party"[18]. He also complains that those years were represented wrongly in the international media that they would

[16] "Ne kadar komunistliğe rastlamış da olsak bizde Medresetü'n Nüvvab'dan gelen bir Müslümanlık yanı da var. Zaman zaman buraya namaza geliyoruz."

[17] "Dördüncüsünün ben olduğumu tasavvur edemiyorlar. Çünkü bu işte, efendim, sosyalist görünüyor. Studentlerin başkanı, diğer mevkii... Bu gitmez camiye diyorlar."

[18] "O zaman yine partiye girip, partili olup olmamak senin hayatta yükselmen demek. Hadise önemli. Onun için teşkilat üyesi olarak kiliseye, camiye gidemezsin."

write the churches, the mosques all the religious buildings were all locked down and shut down. According to him that was quite on the contrary; "according to the Soviet constitution as well as in the Bulgarian one there was freedom of conscience. Religions are permitted. Just the religion was separated from the state. Everyone lives it in his/her privacy. Mosques were open, churches were as well. There is an archbishop as well as a chief mufti. There are imams in the offices of the muftis. Even so imams were given salaries by the state. In an atheist country imam was given salary, counted as a state officer. Our imams today are yearning for those times".[19] Yet as he states if one wants to follow a successful career there shouldn't be any publicly manifested religious belief since public space was also seen as the property of the state. However Eminov also underlines in the beginning they didn't notice the state intervention might have gone that far to auto censorship. Because at the same time the state was taking good care of the ones who were following the preachings of the political leadership and Eminov was also quite happy with the brand new world ahead of him. So they didn't really care at the time. As long as they were good communists, things would have been fine. But as the years passed it proved the contrary and his ethnic background as a Turk started to stand in his way. As the overall economy couldn't get stable in time so the political atmosphere. He remembers those years during 1960s and 1970s as getting cornered gradually, feeling an invisible pressure and also feeling having to be very cautious with his behavior. By then he says he was not even feeling comfortable passing close to the mosque, and felt like anything could be a disgrace in his personal record. Consequently for quite a long time until the fall of communism he stopped his visits to the mosque. Yet he continued meeting with the chief muftis on certain occasions.

Although the staff working in the Office of the Chief Mufti were not members of the party they were complaining to him they were not able to go to the mosque for prayers comfortably for a long time and lately they felt they should even stop going

[19] "Sovyet anayasasında, Bulgaristan'ın anayasasında, vicdan hürriyeti maddesi vardır. Dinler serbesttir. Ancak din devletten ayrılmıştır. Herkesin özel durumudur. Camiler de açık, kiliseler de açık. Baş psikopos da var, baş müftü de var. müftülüklerde imamlar da. Imamlara dahi devlet maaş veriyor. Ateist memlekette imama maaş veriyor, imam bir devlet memuru. Şimdi imamlarımız bizim o zamanı arıyorlar."

at all. He remembers one day the chief mufti of the time was telling him the only times he was going to the mosque was when they were calling his office from the ministry of foreign affairs and telling him they had diplomatic visitors from Arab countries and they were going to perform prayers in the mosque during their stay in Sofia therefore the chief mufti needed to be present in the mosque for welcoming the guests.

Moreover he remembers that during communism one of the mayors of Sofia was quite disturbed with Banyabashi Mosque's being that central and that visible so the municipality filed a petition to the parliament about demolishing the mosque. Yet after discussions it was rejected on the grounds that it would look bad for Bulgaria's image in front of the international community. Such a demonstration would have given the anti-communist circles just enough leverage to speculate about the totalitarianism of the communist Bulgaria which was trying to create a completely religion free public space and a society. Yet what the municipality did to lessen the visibility of Banyabashi Mosque according to Eminov was to build a monument in the very center that was given the status of being the symbol of Sofia.

Eminov's memories are providing a vivid account which shows various political and social meanings embodied on Banyabashi mosque. Those memories demonstrate how the relationship between human agency and space turns that space into a place where different categories like ethnicity, state power, control of space, attributed political meanings could be observed.

In 1949, Eminov and the other three university students were the first ever Muslim/Turkish background students going to receive university education since the independence of the Bulgarian state from the Ottoman Empire. At the same years as Eminov states the only Muslim/Turkish people living in Sofia were the people who were working in the Office of the Chief Mufti and their families. Therefore when discussing 1940s and early 50s in Sofia, we are talking about times where there were very few Muslims living in Sofia and besides those who were living in Sofia as I can comment from Eminov's narratives were not completely part of any economic,

political or social life. Thus when those four students came it was the Office of the Chief Mufti where they felt they could find people whom they belonged to and might get some help. Surely it must have been both sides, seeing young Muslims arriving in Sofia in order to receive higher education for the first time in the recent history of the Muslim minority the chief mufti and his assistants must have helped those children with pleasure and did whatever they could have done. At this point it was when they decided to let those students use the mosque as a temporary accommodation until the state dorms were going to be ready. As Eminov remembers it as a mosque which had already lost its initial function and wasn't bringing any congregation together, then with practice and use it was able to offer a solution to the housing problem and is now remembered by Eminov as his first student dormitory with great sentimentality. In 1949 it was already the communist party rule. The new government was trying to transform the country politically, economically and socially, besides very little number of Muslims was living in Sofia. All that background provided the sufficient context for such a change in the use of space. That change also brought new belongings along with itself. For Eminov it was much more than just a mosque, it was also a symbolical act where Muslims helping each other out and therefore where he established a different relationship with his identity as an ethnic Turk.

Banyabashi Mosque was also utilized by the state to identify non-communists. Built as a religious building it was representing firstly the religion, according to Eminov what the communist party was in fight with. As in the case with Eminov's conversation with the police the state officer shows clearly that it is not approved of a student going to a state university also going to the mosque. It is officially seen as a contradicting action. In this perspective people who are taking the advantage of state institutions are also expected to be following the ideology of the state. Therefore seeing going to the mosque as an action contrary to the state principles demonstrates how ideology could appear in material structures. In the case of communist states it is the monuments of proletarians materializing the symbols of communism. However, the communist ideology can also embody itself in kinds of material structures which are representing the ideas that are declared anti-communist such as

a mosque or a church. In the end these places are perceived by the communist state as the material representations of religion. Yet after all it was not possible to create an isolated country separated from the rest of the non-communist world. The Bulgarian state had international relations with other countries as well and in some of those cases the existence of a mosque in Sofia came in handy in the case of visitors from Muslim countries. The call to the chief mufti from the foreign affairs ministry for him to prepare the mosque for their diplomatic visitors is in a way utilizing the chief mufti and the mosque as a part of the state structure when it is for the benefit of the state.

These spatial experiences point out to the state power and its relationship to place. Different meanings and functions attributed to a place that changes the representations embodied on it. On different occasions Banyabashi Mosque was used for different purposes, almost all of them regulated by the state and the power it had come to possess. As Eminov's account shows clearly he started feeling an "invisible pressure" and just like with the *panopticon* as Michel Foucault analyses he became his own guardian by limiting his movements around the city. Leave alone going to the mosque from time to time he even stopped going anywhere near the mosque in order not to be associated with any religious activity. Since there were a lot of examples around him he wouldn't know whether he was under surveillance or not. That is a strong demonstration of state's power on the everyday spatial organizations of the individuals. Moreover the usage of the mosque when needed in diplomatic occasions reveals the other side of the power of state. State holds the right to provide the permission for a place to be temporarily within the boundaries of approval. Nevertheless through the relationship of the state with Banyabashi Mosque we are also able to trace more about the limits of its power. With the rationale to act as the public space is in the possession of the state, a particular fear about the public behavior of the citizens was successfully spread. That was made possible by the economic and political sanctions the state was holding against the citizens. However when there was a suggestion to get rid of the mosque for once and all, the power of the Bulgarian state was not enough to risk its international image and it was decided by the state officers not to do so. In other words Bulgarian government of the time

wouldn’t be able to stand against all the reactions to come from the international political arena once the decision to destroy the mosque was taken.

CHAPTER 5

SPACE AND EVERYDAY LIFE: THE ROUTINE OF BANYA BASHI MOSQUE

The mosque as a place accessible for everyone in principle serves more than just a place for performance of religious rituals, but it is an important meeting point where social actors come together and through their interactions social, political, economic and religious matters can be discussed. That interaction of individuals could help to form a community where people have access to certain prominent information and could develop belongings and solidarities. Thus the mosque is an influential place for creating a collective identity. Ghannam, in her ethnography where she is exploring the identity politics and meanings constructed and attached to spaces after people's being relocated, discusses the role of heterogeneity in the "social construction of space" where the existence of mixed groups in the same space enables the social norms to be challenged (2002: 109). Furthermore she goes on arguing that the religion actually helps the establishment of a sense of belonging and engages itself in creating an integrated community out of a fragmented structure (Ghannam 2002: 119).

Banyabashi Mosque is the only functioning mosque in Sofia. Moreover the Muslims constituting the congregation are a heterogeneous group; indigenous Muslims of Bulgaria and immigrants. Indigenous Muslims are ethnic Turks who have been living in Bulgarian geography for generations, and Pomaks, Bulgarian speaking Muslims, and the Muslim Roma. The immigrants are from Middle Eastern and African countries. Bulgaria as the neighbor of Turkey and Greece is one of the major arrival countries for asylum seekers and refugees. Therefore one of the significant characteristics of Banyabashi Mosque is its bringing different groups together under its roof. The indigenous Muslims of Bulgaria are from the Hanafi School of Law while some of the immigrants are from Shafii. It is only the Banyabashi Mosque

where they can pray with a congregation. This togetherness of such a heterogeneous community provides the grounds for the development of particular power relations and struggles which can be observed through the everyday interactions.

Overall the eventual purpose for a mosque is to provide a place of worship for a congregation and as a result a mosque as its raison d'être has to maintain a routine. In this chapter I will go into the details of the particular routine of Banyabashi Mosque at where I did the major part of my field work participating and observing. That routine includes basically all the services a mosque has to offer on a constant daily, weekly and annually basis. Firstly I will analyze the five time prayers that take place regularly on a daily basis. Secondly, I will discuss my findings about the Friday prayers, which is one of the most important prayers in Sunni Islam and takes place every Friday. Following that I will examine my observations and ethnographic data of the funeral prayers and the prayers for religious holidays consecutively. Subsequently I will provide a narrative of how one of the most important months of Islamic calendar, the month of Ramadan, is taking place in Banyabashi Mosque. This month was the only month where there was attendance of women at the mosque thus throughout this chapter I will be discussing my observations on gender relations in relation with the spatial organization of the mosque. Lastly I will end this chapter by explaining another perspective of the mosque, as a workplace for the imams and the caretakers.

While these activities are common for each Hanafi mosque, in this chapter I am going to depict and analyze how that routine is being practiced in this particular mosque where the congregation is composed of different schools of Sunni Islam and different nationalities that have to share their place of worship with each other. Thus the spatial practices of agents transform the spaces into multifaceted places displaying different meanings depending on the contextual situation of the moment. Moreover I believe giving a narrative of everyday events and examining them would help to understand how places contribute to the construction and demonstration of power and social relations between different nationality groups, religious school groups and gender groups.

5.1. Daily Prayers

5.1.1 A Brief Description of Banya Bashi Mosque's congregation

One of the duties Sunni Islam requires from its believers is to perform prayers five times a day. However it is not mandatory to perform the prayers in the mosque. What the mosque offers, though, is an imam who has the competency to lead a congregation during a prayer. Although the person could perform it alone as well, the belief is that praying with a congregation is more meritorious.[20] While that is the religious side, on the social level bringing people together as equals mediates the creation of communal feelings through a uniting discourse and performing of the same movements simultaneously (Ghannam 2002: 126). Concisely a mosque offers the opportunity to be able to perform with a congregation during all the five time prayers by assuring the presence of an imam at all times. In this section I am going to discuss my observations from the five daily prayers. The way they had taken place in Banyabashi Mosque had peculiar characteristics which were slightly differing from one prayer to another, however, revealing an overall everyday routine for each different prayer.

Firstly I would like to discuss the congregation of the mosque who were frequenting the daily prayers during my fieldwork.[21] The congregation frequenting the mosque on a daily basis was composed of about 40 people. Those 40 people were coming from different ethnic backgrounds most of which were immigrants, while the rest were the indigenous Muslims of Bulgaria, ethnic Turks and Pomaks. According to the imam of Banyabashi Mosque ethnic Turks and Pomaks who were living in Sofia

[20] Minimum two people count as a congregation in Sunni Islam. Briefly what matters is to pray with a congregation; praying in a mosque is not mandatory as long as one prays with a congregation. Nevertheless a mosque facilitates a meeting point that gathers people together for performing prayers, thus a person always knows that in a mosque regardless of anything s/he will be able to pray with a congregation.

[21] It is important to distinguish here that Banyabashi Mosque had two different congregations having different dynamics than each other. First of them is this congregation I am going to introduce now which is the daily frequenters composing of about 40 people and the other one is the congregation gathering for the Friday noon prayer which is a much bigger congregation which was composed of over 500 people. The Friday Prayers are being discussed in the next section.

were people who came to the capital for work thus most of them worked during day and after a tiring working day people preferred to go home and that was why the proportion of the ethnic Turks or Pomaks in daily prayers were so limited. I spoke about this diversity in the congregation with a journalist as well who was at that time working since 2001 as the news editor in the Bulgarian news office of a mainstream Turkish newspaper from Turkey. He indicated that "The congregation had been mostly of Arabs from Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Syria. Not from those rich Arab countries but from those problematic countries"[22]. He further explained that while he hadn't known about the status of residence of the "Arab" immigrants most of them had been living in Bulgaria for quite some time, some of them even about 20 years.[23] He didn't know much about the congregation of the mosque and when I asked further about those Muslim immigrants living in Sofia he shrugged his shoulders and said he couldn't tell me anything more about them. Moreover during my fieldwork in August an imam from Turkey had a visit to Banyabashi Mosque. It was the month of Ramadan according to the Islamic calendar and as the imam explained to me it was a coordination between the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Bulgarian Office of the Chief Mufti that every year during the month of Ramadan the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs sent imams to different towns and cities in Bulgaria to spend the whole month there. When we were talking about his overall impression about Banyabashi Mosque he stated that "Materially and spiritually it can't be compared to Turkey. The congregation is cosmopolitan, mostly Arab".[24] When I

[22] "Cemaatin çoğunluğu Araptır; Mısır, Irak, Filistin, Suriye. Öyle zengin Arap ülkelerinden değil, sorunlu ülkelerden gelenlerdir."

[23] According to the UN Refugee Agency's (UNHCR) 2003 Bulgaria Country Operations Plan, due to the geo-political location, Bulgaria is perceived by refugees as "the door to safe havens" on the route to the countries of Western Europe (2003: 3). The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is present in Bulgaria since 1992. It had facilitated the establishment of the National Refugee Authorities in 1993, operating today as the State Agency of Refugees (SAR). The SAR is currently the single central refugee authority deciding on asylum applications on first instance and dealing with all refugee and asylum issues in Bulgaria. The data found in the webpage of the SAR shows that since its establishment in 1993 until December 31, 2011, there have been 19.880 applicants seeking asylum from 79 different countries, out of which 5.540 were recognized as refugees and 1.594 were granted humanitarian status. (Source: http://www.aref.government.bg/docs/Charts-website-english-1.doc)

[24] "Maddi manevi Türkiye'yle kıyaslanamaz. Cemaat kozmopolit, çoğunluğu Arap."

want to learn why he thinks that a cosmopolitan congregation is less preferred than a 'homogenous' one he nods his head and says "Just it is".[25]

Due to the time constraint and logistic matters such as not knowing any language the immigrants were speaking I don't have further ethnographic data about this group of the congregation apart from my observations. However in my opinion a journalist's lack of interest towards the biggest part of the Muslim population living in Sofia while he has been editing news primarily considering the issues related to Islam in Bulgaria and also visiting Turkish imam's feelings of intimidation related with the ethnic diversity in the congregation without having any interest in the reasons under this shall be seen as reflections of a general attitude towards immigrants to Bulgaria. In a 2011 review of the implementation of UNHCR's urban refugee policy in Bulgaria the researchers had pointed to the fact that the modest size of the refugee population and also other socio-economic challenges confronting the country make it difficult for refugees to draw more attention to their existence in Bulgaria and get a more aware public recognition which will boost the social visibility of the immigrants.[26] Besides in the same review the researchers also reported about how little was known about the circumstances and well-being of the refugees since some of whom either had very little contact or no direct contact with the authorities, UNHCR, or an NGO. Furthermore on academic level while there are articles discussing the 'Muslims in Bulgaria' without exception in each one 'Muslims' refer to exclusively the ethnic Turks or Pomaks living in Bulgaria (some examples are Petkova 2002; Lozanova et. al 2006; Dimitrov 2007; Rechel 2007; Topalov & Nikolaeva 2008; Çelik 2009; Ghodsee 2010; Öktem 2010). The very limited Information about the refugees can only be found in formal documents reported by either UNHCR or state institutions. Thus the low level public acknowledgement of refugees as individuals and minority groups result in them being disregarded as active actors within the overall Muslim population of Bulgaria and moreover within the Muslim population of Sofia where they compose the majority.

[25] "Öyle işte."

[26] *No place to stay: A review of the implementation of UNHCR's urban refugee policy in Bulgaria*, May 5, 2011, PDES/2011/04, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e4b74892.html [accessed on January 23, 2012]

5.1.2. The Morning and Night Prayers

The time schedule of the prayers changes every day throughout the year since it is determined according to the sun rise and sun set times of the respective day. I conducted my fieldwork during summer time, which meant that the earliest morning prayer was in June at 3.30 am and the latest in September at 5.50 am. Similarly the latest night prayer was at 23.15 in June and the earliest was 21.30 in September. Because of the earliness and lateness of those prayers the attendance was quite low, up to 10 people at most. Besides the common low attendance those two prayers had, what took my attention most was the way call to prayer, *ezan*, was recited. *Ezan* is recited before performing of each prayer in a loud way that can be heard in the near vicinity in order to inform people about the starting of the prayer. In Banyabashi Mosque noon, afternoon and evening prayers' *ezans* were recited with a microphone and loudspeakers so that it could be heard from the outside of the mosque while for morning and night prayers the *ezan* was recited by the *muezzin*, the person who recites the *ezan*, without a microphone so that it won't be heard from outside. Having lived all my life in Turkey I am used to hearing *ezans* five times a day thus not hearing the *ezan* for the first time before a night prayer was an unexpected moment I even thought the mosque was closed and there might not be a night prayer due to the lack of a congregation. Later on I mentioned to the imam how surprised I was about that matter and learned that firstly the imam didn't have such an initiative to cancel a prayer due to the lack of congregation, in Banyabashi Mosque prayers took place no matter what. And secondly he explained that since for morning and night prayers the prayer was usually attended by a small congregation, the Office of the Chief Mufti didn't see a problem on not giving the voice of *muezzin*, out to the neighborhood from the speakers. He added that "It's not like we received complaints from the residents and we stopped giving the *ezan* out from the speakers. But there isn't anyone from the congregation living in the close vicinity, either".[27] While the imam claimed that it was an act of common courtesy, since 2006 ATAKA, *The Attack*, an ultranationalist political party has been campaigning against the use of loudspeakers

[27] "Öyle etraftan şikayet geldi de biz de mikrofondan okumayı bıraktık gibi değil de etrafta cemaatten yaşayan birileri de yok yani."

for call to prayers. Firstly starting in 2006 upon the gathering of about 35.000 signatures supporting the silencing of the call to prayers the Sofia mayor at the time required that the mosque reduce the volume of the loudspeakers (Dimitrov, 2007: 1). Following this request there was an official measuring of the volume and it was concluded that the loudspeakers of the mosque had been within the range of the lawful decibels.[28] However in May 2011 one year after I had left Sofia before the upcoming local elections the same demands about the silencing of the loudspeakers by the same party had been brought up again. This time the party staged a protest meeting in front of the mosque during a Friday prayer which resulted in a clash between the protestors and the Muslims gathered for the prayer with arrests and injuries.[29] Furthermore one year later in June 2012 ATAKA had revived its campaign once again and staged another rally again in front of the mosque which this time dispersed without any incident.[30]

Although turning off the loudspeakers for morning and night prayers is also a gesture of a polite concern for the neighborhood, it is also the direct result of negotiations on power relations. While a political party turned a religious matter into demonstrations appealing to xenophobic and nationalist feelings in order to attain more political support, the situation had borne further consequences. As a result of allegedly encouraged religious hatred by political circles even at times instigating physical violence the political figures who were in charge and being accused of not taking care of a disturbance of citizens had to start negotiations on the voiced issue which was resolved through turning the volume of the loudspeakers down and also not using them for the least attended prayers. The problem was solved for the moment on the middle ground having both sides making compromises. Yet, as long as religion and religion beliefs are to continue to be used for political interests the escalation of xenophobia and in this particular case Islamophobia is going to remain fostered.

[28] http://sofiaecho.com/2006/07/24/640303_bulgarias-ataka-campaigns-against-mosque-loudspeakers

[29] http://sofiaecho.com/2011/05/20/1093040_injuries-arrests-as-ataka-muslims-clash-outside-sofia-mosque

[30] http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=140288

5.1.3. The Noon, Afternoon and Evening Prayers

During my fieldwork I also observed that like morning and night prayers; noon, afternoon and evening prayers also showed alikeness among each other particularly in the behaviors and the characteristic traits of their congregation. By frequenting those prayers it was possible to identify that the mosque was being frequented by different groups who reproduced and maintained their boundaries (Barth, 1969) among themselves through daily practice.

While all belonging to the Sunni denomination of Islam, being an ethnically diverse congregation there were two different Sunni schools of law, Hanafi and Shafii who had to share the same mosque for religious activities. While Ethnic Turks and Pomaks are followers of Hanafi School, among the immigrants followers of both of the schools can be found. That means being a Shafii Muslim is indicative of also being an immigrant to Bulgaria while the opposite cannot be claimed. During those prayers it was important to see how individuals were making their identities visible in a group of asymmetrical political and social power.

One way to recognize whether a person is from the Hanafi or Shafii School was to watch his moves during a prayer since followers of those two schools of law moved slightly differently during prayers. Although how people perform prayers doesn't say anything on its own, it is one of the aspects that people distinguished themselves from each other and created similarities within themselves. When praying in congregation, the people stand closely side by side in straight parallels thus enabling people to notice each other's way of praying. Thus the slightly different use of body during a performance of a prayer within a mixed congregation is one of the indicators of conveying information to the other members of the congregation.

The more I observed the more I noticed that the behaviors of the individuals were not random after the prayers and it was actually possible to identify the different groups by simply observing the behavior of individuals following the end of the prayer. After performing the prayer it was a habit for the congregation to greet each other by shaking hands and wishing each other that Allah shall see and hear all their prayers. Further it was the moment where relationships with each other were maintained through asking each other about their wellbeing, about their families, or other issues

that they knew about each other. These conversations that took place inside the mosque following the end of the prayer were usually short and spoken with low voices. While greeting each other, at the same time little by little people also walk towards the door where they are going out to the porch. In the porch while putting their shoes on they start talking louder, they talk in more detail or this time more people could join in the conversation and share opinions. During those conversation one would hear at least three languages; Arabic, Bulgarian and Turkish. The usage of these languages revealed further information about the different groups of the congregation and their relationships with each other. While the ethnic Turks were speaking Turkish and Bulgarian, the immigrants were speaking Arabic and Bulgarian. Since my level of Bulgarian was not enough to evaluate the Bulgarian language skills of the congregation I can at least say that they were all speaking very fluently. Although the whole congregation was able to speak Bulgarian, indigenous Muslims tended to greet everyone in Turkish including the non-Turkish speaking immigrants, however, the immigrant group greeted non-immigrants in Bulgarian while they were using Arabic among themselves. Thus firstly the knowledge of a language became another indicator in demonstrating national background whether the person belonged to the national minority or the immigrant group. Secondly the fact that the immigrants were not greeting non-immigrants in Arabic despite the contrary case is also another indicator for showing the politically dominant group between the two. Ethnic Turks were full citizens of Bulgaria, acknowledged politically, and also the group that was in charge of the mosque in the administrative sense as well,[31] while some of the immigrants were also full citizens -especially the younger ones who were born on Bulgarian territory- most of them were either asylum seekers or humanitarian status holders receiving no public acknowledgement in the political arena and also excluded from the Office of the Chief Mufti as well. While this institution claims to be the religious representative organ for Muslims of Bulgaria, the immigrants were not given recognition even in the religious arena. Consequently this practice is one of the reflections of indigenous Muslims' behaving

[31] The Office of the Chief Mufti of Muslims of Bulgaria (*Bulgaristan Müslümanları Başmüftülüğü*) is the administrative and representative body of the Islam in Bulgaria in the political and public arena. In the following chapter there will be a more detailed description and analysis on this issue.

as the possessors of the ‘host’ position towards the ‘guests’ of the country and letting them know subtly who is in a stronger position.

The difference within the whole congregation first shows itself during the greetings and it can be observed more clearly when people go out to the porch. After the prayer the congregation was getting engaged in short informal conversations where they further maintained the boundaries and different groups of the congregation were more clearly visible. Those short chats out in the porch, like members of the congregation greeting each other right after the end of the prayer are parts of the practice of praying within a congregation at a mosque. It is a ritual starting with socialization followed by religious praying and afterwards more socialization where members negotiate and reproduce the social dynamics of the relationships among each other and also exchange information.

The different groups in the Banyabashi Mosque tended to split into smaller circles. The circles were formed according to the groups the members identified themselves with. Turkish speakers tended to socialize between each other and same for Arabic speakers. That doesn’t mean that two groups were ignoring each other. Individuals from the two groups were from time to time getting engaged in a chat in Bulgarian however Turkish speakers and Arabic speakers gathering together for a small conversation was not part of the common practice. The boundaries between the groups were demonstrated through circles formed roughly by individuals which were langue exclusive, excluding the other group from the pieces of information that was being shared and discussed within those groups. However I’ve seen some immigrants who spoke the three languages, yet in those rare cases they were sticking with their co-nationals. Therefore while the use of language is one of the tools to draw the boundaries and form shared space on linguistic grounds among individuals, the main determinant in creating belongings is the nationality, the circles are constructed on whether the person is from the indigenous Muslim minority of Bulgaria or from the Muslim population that immigrated to Bulgaria.

Yet the boundaries were not drawn solely according to the knowledge of a certain language or being from a particular ethnic background. Those two main groups were also divided into subgroups as well, although my findings on this issue are only on

the Turkish speaking group since that was the group I was ascribed to because of my ethnicity, in addition I spoke neither Bulgarian nor Arabic to be able to communicate with the immigrant group. Within the Turkish speaking group the subgroups while not being fixed were formed according to the particular matters of that respective moment by the individuals involved in the issues. For example from time to time some staff members from the Office of the Chief Mufti were attending the prayers. At such prayers following the prayer the staff members usually grouped together and the imam usually joined them after changing his clerical gown into his daily outfit. The conversations this group involved in were mostly about matters regarding the internal affairs of the Office of the Chief Mufti. While working in the same workplace because of different lines of official work those people were not able to see each other regularly enough during an ordinary day thus a 'prayer break' provided them the chance to update each other about ongoing daily workings from each other's sides. During my fieldwork there was an ongoing political conflict about the Office of the Chief Mufti which created a rather chaotic atmosphere. Since the Office of the Chief Mufti was not working steadily, those random meetings during prayers were an important source of information exchange on the continuing problem. Moreover besides the staff members of the Office of the Chief Mufti the imam who was also a clerk working under the Chief Mufti got to obtain information concerning the recent political developments and also about the ordinary affairs of the Office of the Chief Mufti. Therefore being from a Turkish background or speaking Turkish was not satisfactory on their own in order to participate in that group. Unlike other circles where the satisfactory trait was just to understand the language in order to join in any conversation, within such circles of people where the restriction could be felt intuitively which was in a way creating a hierarchical sense of belonging, It wasn't likely to see a person to join the conversation just to listen and comment about the politics in the Office. People knew each other and as a result of their experience as a member of this congregation they knew which circles they belonged to and which circles they didn't.

5.2. Friday Prayers

In Sunni Islam Friday prayer refers to the noon prayer that is performed on Fridays. While for all other prayers of the week the person is allowed to perform it alone or with a congregation as s/he pleases, only for Friday prayers it is compulsory for men only to perform it with a congregation. In other words performing a noon prayer on a Friday without a congregation does not have any legitimacy as a fulfilled religious duty. On the other hand this is obligatory only for men, there is no such obligation for women per se. Women can perform the prayer without joining a congregation. This is one of the reasons why a larger crowd attends Friday prayers in the mosque. Moreover it is also believed that during Friday prayers the attendant would be forgiven of his sins from the past week as well. While in my opinion those are the religious justifications of why a man should attend at least the Friday prayers, by time it also had become a tradition in order to reproduce and reinforce the Muslim identities of men. In practice being a Muslim is a matter of "self-ascription and ascription by others" (Barth, 1967: 13). One does not need to be practicing all the five pillars of Islam or following the doctrines of Qur'an and the prophet very strictly in order to identify herself/himself as a Muslim. On the other hand performance of certain practices has been being related and associated with being a Muslim, or in other words having the category of being a Muslim within one's identity set. From my personal experience living all my life in Turkey within a society most of whom identify themselves as Muslims I've seen many men who used to perform only Friday prayers while are not against for a variety of actions that are prohibited by the Islamic canon law. In such cases performing Friday prayers is an action which accentuates the 'Muslim' aspect of one's identity. That surely goes hand in hand with Turkey's official nationality discourse where being Muslim was considered a major part of being a Turk.

However, shortly what I argue here about the Friday prayers in Banyabashi Mosque is that not only because Friday prayers can be more meritorious on religious terms but also attending the Friday prayers is turned into a ritual where the feeling of belonging within a community is strengthened and moreover on an individual level identities are negotiated and reproduced

My first encounter with my field was a Friday prayer on a warm May noon. I had seen the place before but never paid detailed attention as a researcher, that's why what I came across was unexpected. It was more crowded than I would have expected however my surprise was not only caused by the number of people; it was this distinctive image I had seen for the first time at a mosque.

Banyabashi Mosque was the first mosque I've seen that didn't have a yard. There were so many people attending the prayer that inside of the mosque was using all its capacity to accommodate the congregation. When there wasn't any more space left inside the mosque then people took their places at the porch. As the porch also reached to its capacity the newcomers after that had no choice but to put the praying rugs in front of the mosque on the pavement and pray there. This absence of a yard had direct consequences. Firstly, part of the congregation had to perform their religious duties on the pavement, an area that was part of the public space, not a religious ground. Secondly, because of not having a yard the mosque is located just by one of the main traffic arteries of Sofia city center, and separated from it only with a pavement. The distance between the mosque and the road is less than three meters. Moreover just at a distance of five meters the construction of the new subway line had been going on.

As the prayer started congregation started performing the movements for the Islamic prayer in silence. Meanwhile there were pedestrians being literally blocked by the people praying outside the mosque on the pavement. They had to get off the pavement and walk on the road with the cars passing by in order to bypass the praying group. Everything looked so intermingled in that environment; the heavy machinery noises coming from the subway construction site , honking cars, the music coming from the open windows of the cars, the usual people crowd walking in the city center and just in the middle of all those praying people in silence. Besides it was not solely that particular noon but it was the same case more or less during every other Friday prayer I attended throughout my fieldwork.

This is what I saw in the first minutes of my prospective fieldwork. It seemed as if those people who wanted to worship as their religious faiths were requiring them to do, were denied to acquire the essential privacy and the respect. Nonetheless in time

like the rest of the congregation I also got used to this uncommon way of praying and didn't feel there was such a violation of privacy and disrespect, at least not in practice, not in daily life.

As a consequence of more people attending the Friday prayers compared to the usual frequenters the congregation was getting even more heterogeneous with the presence of new groups that could only be observed on Fridays. While during other prayers the congregation was mostly composed of immigrants from Muslim countries from Middle Eastern and African countries, in the congregation of the Friday prayer there were more Turkish speaking people compared to the daily congregation.

Friday prayers were taking place at the same time as a noon prayer would on any other day. Except on Fridays before the start of the prayer there were religious talks given by a preacher for about half an hour. preachings given before the start of the prayer. Those talks were only in Bulgarian and were informing the congregation about religious necessities like the importance of saying prayers or reading Qur'an. During this time the congregation was arriving at the mosque, some going to the ablution sinks to perform the obligatory ablution for entering inside a mosque or performing a prayer, some others who had taken ablution beforehand at home or where they came from were finding places for themselves if possible inside the mosque if not then in the porch. And if the porch is also fully packed then in shade outside on the rugs on the pavement. A person who had sat down already was never getting engaged in conversations unless he had found place in a remote place outside on the rugs. The ones who were going to converse were standing outside and just chatting until they decided it was time to take their places. About five minutes before the beginning of the prayer everyone present at the mosque except the just arriving ones would have already taken their places and been waiting silently.

In Sunni Islam the prayers are composed of obligatory and optional parts. One can finish the prayer after performing the obligatory segment, however also can continue with the optional segment which is considered meritorious. In Banyabashi Mosque on Friday prayers after the compulsory part of the prayer finished almost half of the congregation were going out while the rest were staying for the optional part.

The ones who were going out were gathering in groups like any other prayer and participating in conversations. Also for Friday prayers like with the daily prayers it was possible to identify the groups by observing the circles; the way they were greeting each other and also from the languages they were speaking. During the first month of the fieldwork, in the congregation on Fridays there was a considerable amount of young men most of whom were speaking in Turkish. Yet there is not only one type of Turkish that I heard during my field. Bulgaria born ethnic Turks had a very particular accent of Turkish when they spoke; pronouncing the words differently, using uncommon grammatical structures, using some words differently than I was used to and adding here and there some Bulgarian words or Bulgarian structures. When all those combined it was creating a very distinguishable dialect from any kind of Turkish accent I've heard spoken in Turkey. That's why it was rather easy for me to notice an ethnic Turk from Bulgaria just hearing the way he spoke Turkish. Therefore to my surprise only during Friday prayers I started noticing the Turkey Turkish spoken by most of those young men. Since I was also hearing them speaking about courses, studying afterwards, asking each other about the exam dates and I saw some of them incidentally heading to university following the prayer. When I ran a search in the web I noticed that Bulgaria was a quite popular destination for higher education for students from Turkey, there were forums for those who were already studying in Bulgaria and for prospective students, also commissioning agencies who were working as middlemen between the students and the universities. Once I asked a clerk working in the Office of the Chief Mufti about the attendance of those university students from Turkey. He told me in a quite disappointed and ironic manner that those students wouldn't come to the mosque, the ones that were showing up for Friday prayers were obviously not much in his opinion compared to the amount of students coming for university education from Turkey. Despite his claims by the end of June, beginning of July till the middle of August there was a visible drop in the number of the congregation and also Turkish wasn't the dominant language I was hearing anymore. That was because the university semester finished and students went back to their home towns for the summer holidays.

Not all the young men were university students from Turkey. There were young Turkish men from Bulgaria, too. It was easy to spot them as well, if not from their dialect then from the way they greeted each other. For greeting they were handshaking while hitting the edges of their foreheads softly against each other three times, right side of the forehead then left and then right again. I knew a similar kind of greeting from Turkey where two parts doing it only twice, right and left. That was known as the symbolic greeting of supporters of the nationalist party in Turkey. Here in Bulgaria they modified into doing three times. Those men were also showing up to this extent only during Friday prayers while some of them could also be seen in other daily prayers as well. They were mostly gathering with each other after the prayer but also from time to time with some elder men, too.

While most of the students from Turkey were only hanging with each other and were not mingling with the congregation, some of them made friends with their Bulgarian counterparts, with the young Turkish men from Bulgaria. That mixed groups were not talking about courses and university when they gathered around a circle but mostly politics was the preferred topic to talk. They were mostly talking about Islam in Bulgaria and Islam in Turkey and comparing those experiences of lived Islam with each other. Also since the hot topic of that summer was the ongoing political conflict about the Office of the Chief Mufti they were also talking about this and updating the knowledge of the ones from Turkey and in a way recruiting sympathizers to the cause they believed in.

Those Turkish speaking people were composing a significant part of the congregation specific to Friday prayers. Yet they were not the only new faces that showed up on Fridays only. There were more Arabic speaking people attending this prayer as well, and they were also engaging in conversations and socialization following the Friday prayer but this time there was much less intermingling between the two groups. Arabic speaking circles were almost strictly only speaking in Arabic and the new comers of Friday prayers both Turkish and Arabic speakers were not displaying any signs of knowing each other or having any interest in knowing each other. Like one day I was talking to a Bulgarian born Turkish man in his 50s who

was a construction site worker told me he'd been attending every Friday Prayer for 12 years and hadn't met any "Arab" man yet.

5.3. Funeral Prayers

Another type of prayer that is performed in the mosques is the funeral prayer. Funeral prayer has to be performed for every deceased Muslim. Nevertheless it is not an individually compulsory prayer like the five times prayers or Friday prayers. In other words if some people get to perform it then the rest of the Muslims will be accounted for it in front of Allah.

First time I encountered a funeral prayer was during a Friday prayer, a woman had passed away and her relatives informed the imam about her. The imam before starting the prayer spoke in Turkish and told the congregation "a lady"[32] had passed away and if the congregation would stay for the funeral prayer following the Friday prayer. No name was pronounced, no coffin was around, I couldn't see the owner of the funeral.[33] It seemed only like a mechanical act, everyone performed the Friday prayer, part of the congregation left, and the rest moved closer to the imam, made the proper rows behind the imam and performed the prayer on behalf of the deceased person whose name even wasn't given. As part of the ritual imam at one point turned to the congregation and asked what sort of a person they thought the deceased had been, congregation including me, we responded that she was a good person and we would vouch for her in front of God that she was a believer of Islam. I am not writing those in order to demonstrate how peculiar it was to testify for the goodness of an unknown person, because this is how it happens in Turkey during Sunni funeral prayers as well. It is part of the prayer, at one point imam turns to the congregation and asks those questions and the congregation always repeats the same phrases. While technically there were no religious duties unfulfilled in this prayer yet it felt unfair to me this time, it felt as if the woman was not sent to her last journey as she deserved.

[32] *Bir bayan*

[33] The phrase 'owner of the funeral' is a direct trasnlation from the Turkish phrase *cenaze sahibi;* the closest relatives of the deceased person are referred as such.

During my fieldwork I came upon only one more funeral prayer. A little before the performing of the afternoon prayer the imam of the mosque and an immigrant man were engaged in a conversation in Bulgarian. Before the beginning of the prayer imam announced the death of "one of our Muslim brothers"[34] this time spoke only in Bulgarian. The deceased was an Arab man from the usual congregation, someone the imam and congregation knew personally; imam this time pronounced his name and kindly asked the congregation to stay for the funeral prayer. Following the end of the afternoon prayer the owners of the funeral brought in a coffin wrapped with a green rug with verses from Qur'an embroidered on. They placed the coffin in front of the imam and everyone took their places behind the imam and the prayer was performed. Later on when I asked the imam about the coffin which was brought in on that occasion, he told me that was happening from time to time, although it was completely against the practice in Hanafi School which means also against the belief of himself, it was allowed in Shafii School. That's why some people from Shafii belief were insisting on bringing their coffin into the mosque and perform the prayer within the presence of the deceased person. He also added that it was such a pity as Hanafi believers to have to perform the funeral prayers without any coffins yet no one was really trying to solve the yard problem of the mosque. When I asked Mustafa, a clerk from the Office of the Chief Mufti in his late 20s, about the funeral prayers, he agreed with the imam that it was such a problematic case that 'Arabs' were insisting on bringing their deceased people into the mosque while according to him since it wasn't allowed in Hanafi belief it was possible that it might count as a blasphemy against the house of Allah[35]. He continued with claiming that the lack of a yard was not the only problem with the funerals. According to him all the ethnic Turks had to be sent back to their home towns in the country side of Bulgaria because of the lack of a separate cemetery for Muslims in Sofia. Although later on I had learned there was a Muslim cemetery in the neighborhood called Orlandovski, a neighborhood outside the city center of Sofia known for its Roma population. When I asked about the transfer of the death people to one of the imams while there was a

[34] *Edin ot nashite bratya myusyulmani*

[35] *Allah'ın evi*; a way to refer to the mosque.

Muslim cemetery in Sofia, he said he didn't really know about the each case but in some cases he knew that burying the deceased person in her/his hometown was preferred by the families since there were no such ethnic Turks or Pomaks who were originally from Sofia. It is also possible that being buried in her/his hometown could be the will of the deceased as well. He added that the Muslim cemetery in Sofia was used mostly for the deceased of Roma people and recently for the deceased of Arabs as well.

In conclusion, funeral prayers take place according to the Islamic religious law in Banyabashi Mosque. However, accordingly with the circumstances like the mixed congregation, and having no yard belonging to the mosque, very much of the entire practice has been shaped in time through constant negotiation. The whole experience has been 're-interpreted' and have been being performed in a way that is particular to Banyabashi Mosque.

The way I know Sunni funeral prayers from living in Turkey is that it is a communal ritual which includes the religious duties yet goes beyond this with the performing of additional communal practices. Those additional practices by the congregation turn the mourning of the people who had lost someone into a common overpowering synergy around and within the mosque. It is a routine which starts firstly with an announcement from the mosque couple of hours before the funeral. The announcement is done by the muezzin who firstly recites an Arabic religious text with a moving melody, then the name of the deceased person and the place and time of the funeral prayer via loudspeakers of the mosque. This helps to inform more people about the deceased person. About an hour before the funeral the coffin of the deceased is brought to the mosque, placed at the yard on the special stone used only for coffins to rest on, called Musalla Stone. Since the funeral prayer takes place following a daily prayer, people from the congregation see the coffin on their way out and some of them decide to stay and join the prayer with the relatives and acquaintances of the deceased person. The coffin placed in the yard accompanied by a silent group of people creates a heavy and sad atmosphere that overwhelms the entire yard. Such an atmosphere also makes the other people who even didn't know the deceased person to act with extra attention and demonstrate attitudes of respect

through manners embodied in the movements of their bodies within the space of the yard; such as talking more quietly, walking a little more slowly, and expressing their condolences as they pass by the gathered group. The whole ritual of the funeral prayer is charged with emotions that make people respect the deceased person and feel the magnitude of death. It is often referred to as 'sending the person to her/his last journey on earth'. However this routine is only possible with the presence of a yard where the coffin can be placed and the relatives and acquaintances can gather around it and wait without being disturbed by the continuing daily life.

Nevertheless, during my fieldwork through observing and experiencing the organization of place I was able to reflect on the significant role of mosque yards for the Sunni funeral prayers. Banyabashi Mosque doesn't have a yard. Thus the activities for a funeral prayer are to be adapted with respect to this underlying condition. What took my attention most about Banyabashi Mosque was the lack of spiritual feeling during the funerals. Not to mention that people were not feeling upset by their loss, yet lack of a yard prevents such a routine described above to take place on its slow and gentle pace which transforms the emotions of sadness into a widely shared universal experience about the inevitability of death.

Moreover the reason I mentioned about the pronouncement of the names was not to imply that women were not pronounced with their names while men were. The reason was just to show how hurried things were. Imam gets to announce the funeral prayer just right before another prayer and it is understandable that unless he had the name written on a piece of paper or memorized in purpose he may not even know the name of the deceased especially in the case of a woman. Because in the Islamic rules the dead body needs to be prepared for the funeral prayer according to the Islamic requirements; men are prepared by men and women are prepared by women. In Sofia the men are prepared by an imam while the women are prepared by a woman preacher. Therefore it is possible with a woman that the imam wouldn't even know there was a funeral since there is no pre-announcement system or a yard where he wouldn't miss a coffin and a mourning crowd. Imam just like the rest of the congregation is informed on the last minute whether there will be a funeral prayer.

A certain message can be conveyed to individuals through an alteration in the usual organization of a place. Thus the existence of a place has a significant role in informing the people about a certain event. Similarly nonexistence of a place can cause an interruption in the chain of information transfer which directly affects the spatial practice of the agents. In the example of Banyabashi Mosque because of the nonexistence of the yard the congregation cannot be informed beforehand about an upcoming funeral prayer, thus making the whole routine of the funeral prayer have its own distinctive dynamics.

Moreover along with the spatial organization of a certain place, it is the agents who use it actually produce and determine together the practices and the meanings attributed to the particular actions. Therefore spatial practices can also show the power relations between groups. A shared space by a mixed congregation means there will be a constant negotiation in the 'accepted' practices proportionately with the social and political capital different groups possess. While for the Shafii the practice of bringing the coffin into the mosque is the 'right' way to perform the religious duties against the deceased, for the Hanafi it is a 'wrong' act. Nevertheless for some funerals the coffin is brought inside by the owners. That shows the existence of a competitive sharing for the possession of religious space (Hayden, 2002). While the Shafii have gained more social and religious space, the Hanafi have made a compromise from their own beliefs and accepted that particular practice. However the disapproval and displeasure within the daily discourse of the individuals demonstrate the temporariness of their acceptance and informs about the continuing negotiation process.

5.4. Bayram Prayers

Bayram is a Turkish word referring in general to the celebrations of a special event, yet it is also used for religious festivals. In Sunni Islam there are two religious festivals; the Ramadan Bayram and the Sacrifice Bayram. A bayram prayer refers to the prayer that takes place in the morning of the first day of a religious holiday. That means there are only two bayram prayers performed within the same year for Sunni Muslims. For followers of the Hanafi School performing the bayram prayer is not

among the compulsory prayers, thus it is not a mandatory religious duty but a voluntary one. A voluntary religious practice in Sunni Islam means that the performer of such a practice will be awarded with additional merits yet in the case of not performing s/he won't have to account for it in the afterlife. Nevertheless the bayram prayers are one of the most popular prayers where the believers have a much stronger tendency to attend one than any other prayer. Moreover it is obligatory to perform it with a congregation.[36]

For the period of my field work I had the chance to attend to one bayram prayer; the prayer for the Ramadan Bayram. Ramadan Bayram is the three day long religious feast following the end of the month of Ramadan in the lunar Islamic calendar. The bayram prayer takes place in the early morning. The congregation starts gathering in the mosque around 7 a.m. and until the time of the prayer the imam or a preacher preaches to the present congregation.

In Banyabashi Mosque the bayram prayer of the Ramadan Bayram was scheduled for 7.40 a.m. in 2010, I decided to arrive early in order to listen to the preaching and was at the mosque at 7.00 a.m. Even 40 minutes before the beginning of the prayer the place was significantly more crowded than the most crowded Friday prayer I'd seen. According to the preacher there were 3000 to 4000 people present that day in the mosque, I don't know how accurate that number is but what I saw was an immense congregation. In front of the mosque, outside of the porch the pavement was filled with lines of all kinds of carpets that could be found, from new to very old, torn carpets and they were still not enough. People kept on arriving until there was literally not one single spot between the mosque and the car road. Some of them who saw there was simply no place on the carpets they went to find cardboards to place under themselves for praying. While some other latecomers just stood next to the congregation and performed the prayer without prostration.

For bayram prayer the preacher was not one of the imams as usually it was during the Friday prayers but the Deputy Chief Mufti himself and his preaching had already started at 7.00 a.m. He continued until 8.00 a.m. After he finished his preaching one

[36] For five time daily prayers there is no such obligation, those prayers can be performed without a congregation as well.

of the imams took the microphone and started explaining the congregation how to perform the bayram prayers since it is performed differently than other prayers. He mentioned that most people may not be able to remember it since those prayers were only twice a year. He also joked that most of the people present that day visited the mosque only twice a year so better to remind them each time. I also want to note that the preaching and the instructions were both in Turkish only. Following the instructions the imam gave, the bayram prayer was led by the Chief Mufti. After the prayer people started scattering around but not leaving quite yet. They were greeting each other's Ramadan Bayram and expressing each other good wishes. Considering that was a huge crowd there just wasn't enough space on the pavement. The entire congregation was all over the pavement and even the car road. The traffic was considerably slowed down. Only about half an hour later the congregation started to disperse.

On the other hand it was only the indigenous Muslims of Bulgaria and Turks from Turkey who attended the bayram prayer that day, that is the ethnic Turks of Bulgaria, Pomaks, Muslim Roma and Turks from Turkey, mostly the university students. Although during the month of Ramadan the immigrant Muslim community had become more crowded and attended prayers even more frequently, for the bayram prayer no one from the immigrant group joined the congregation of Banyabashi Mosque. I asked that to the imam and he told me they preferred performing the bayram prayer in a rent hall with the leading of "their own imams".

All those show the importance attributed to the bayram prayers. Especially in the case of Banyabashi Mosque the bayram prayer practice reveals certain dimensions of the relationship between and within groups. While the two major groups perform every other prayer together, it is the bayram prayer they perform it separately thus being able to create less heterogeneous congregations. For example in Banyabashi Mosque as the imam mildly criticized in a joking way the congregation was mostly composed of people who were usually not attending any other prayers but only bayram prayers thus gathering a very big group mostly composed of indigenous Muslims of Bulgaria. It is an event of unification of all indigenous Muslims living in Sofia that takes place only twice a year. Moreover the preaching being in Turkish

and talking about social, political and religious problems of indigenous Muslims of Bulgaria is another matter for emphasizing that in this particular prayer through linguistic and social disregard the differences between immigrants and 'natives' are going to be more strongly underlined compared to other times. Lastly the issue of leaving and staying is also of significance. It is the immigrants who left and the indigenous Muslims who stayed. That is an important aspect for showing the power relations between those groups. Being the 'host' group, the indigenous Muslims, appropriate the only religious temple for Muslims. While the 'newcomers' are the ones who rent a place to be able to gather on their own.

In conclusion during the bayram prayers identities and belongings are strengthened through shared feelings of unity, while the boundaries are maintained and redrawn through a temporary separation of the groups. In addition a bayram prayer in Banyabashi Mosque is also an event where through physical claiming of a religiously and politically symbolic place the relations of dominance between the groups are re-established.

5.5. The month of Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Ramadan is believed to be the most auspicious month of the year for Muslims. It is the month of fasting. Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam. Moreover in Qur'an Ramadan is stated to be the month when the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (Qur'an 2: 185[37]). In respect to the importance attributed to Ramadan in Islam, it is believed to be a sacred month where a Muslim's usual daily practices shall alter to some extent. The collective feeling of fasting together, starting at the same time and finishing at the same time, causes direct changes in the daily experiences of Muslims as a community. One of the most known changes as such is the banquets that are held for the fasting Muslims. In Sofia such banquets were held at Banyabashi Mosque. Those banquets revealed a more different routine than usual. Last month of my fieldwork coincided with Ramadan thus showing me another facet of the Muslim life in Sofia. In this part firstly I would like to start with the events which occurred

[37] http://www.cmje.org/religious-texts/quran/verses/002-qmt.php#002.185

daily during Ramadan on a regular basis. Afterwards I will move on to the nuances within that daily routine which reveal significant clues about relationships between groups that I hadn't had the chance to observe if not for the month of Ramadan.

Fasting starts at dawn and finishes at sunset. The call to prayer for the evening prayer is also the end of a fasting day. Therefore during Ramadan evening prayers had become the most attended prayer. The congregation attending the evening prayers was much more than the attendance of other months. The crowdedness was not only in the number of men but also in the women as well. While Banyabashi Mosque doesn't have a frequenting female congregation during Ramadan there was a regular women attendance to the evening prayers. Roughly half an hour before the evening prayer the men were starting to show up at the mosque. The usually empty water dispensers this time was full and there were newly opened plastic glasses next to the water dispensers. Everyone had a glass of water and an empty glass in front of them and waiting for the call to prayer. The time to break the fast is the moment the muezzin recites the call to prayer. Some members of the congregation were handing out dates and sweet snacks. Giving out date fruit was considered a meritorious act (*sevap*), also it was considered rude not to accept the offer. Accompanied with water those were the first foods to break the fast in Banyabashi Mosque. The reason of the second empty plastic glass was to be able to store all the fruits that were given out. While the dates were preferred to be handed out by the people who brought them themselves, children were also given boxes filled with wafers or biscuit for them to distribute among the congregation.

After everyone broke their fasts, the evening prayer was being performed. In Banyabashi Mosque the free dinner provisions were given at the mosque. During the performing of the prayer the provision stations were prepared inside the mosque right by the entrance door for people to take their food on their way out after the prayer. The evening meal was eaten at the porch of the mosque. When there wasn't any place left there people were not willing to leave the mosque and go find a place. They rather preferred finding places to eat inside the mosque by the wall.

Following the eating some people were starting to leave while there were still a considerable amount of people staying for the tarawih prayer. Since by the time

people had finished eating only about half an hour was being left for the next prayer, therefore some of them were choosing to stay since they were already there. Tarawih is an optional prayer performed following the ordinary night prayer; it is not among the mandatory prayers and is performed only during Ramadan. Unlike other months during Ramadan the evening prayers and the night prayers became the most attended ones. The collective spirit that is constructed through fasting together all day, having the chance to break it together and additionally free food was creating more sympathy and attention for attending the evening prayers and the night prayers. Tarawih prayers were led by a different imam than the usual imams of the mosque. He was an imam from Turkey. He was working in the Directorate of Religious Affairs in Turkey. He told me that the Turkish Directorate and Bulgarian Office of the Chief Mufti had an imam exchange program between the two countries for the month of Ramadan. For 2010 they came 20 of them from Turkey and the rest were sent to different cities and towns. During the day he was hanging around with the other imams and people from the Office of the Chief Mufti and at nights for tarawih prayer he was being the imam to the congregation.

That was how an ordinary day of Ramadan went by. Now I would like to go into details of interactions between people during such a day. As I said earlier in this part some of the incidents I'd seen during Ramadan revealed a totally new aspect of the mosque to me which I wouldn't have had the chance to observe otherwise.

Firstly I would like to talk about the excluded people from those free dinners. In Sofia where there are very few practicing Muslims, the congregation knows each other more or less and there is a kind of an intuitive comprehension of who could benefit from the free food or not.

During the evening prayers there were some more people about ten of them who used to gather in front of the mosque and ask for some food. Those people were given food only when everyone inside the mosque was served and there wasn't anyone left without food from the congregation. The system for food service was also helping to keep this system work efficiently. The food was served inside the mosque on the way out of the people who attended the evening prayer. The crowd was making a queue inwards the mosque towards the entrance door thus in order to

line up at the queue one should have had been with the group who were performing the evening prayer; already an excluding system.

From time to time I saw one of those people who were waiting outside tried to make his way to the food stations to take dinner yet he was stopped by the caretaker and told that he had to wait. In another occasion there was a man insisting quite much to the caretaker and caretaker started reprimanding him by accusing him of being drinking alcohol all day and even desiring to take the rations of the true fasting believers. However once while waiting for the evening prayer I saw someone in the mosque eating dates before it was time which showed he was not fasting. It didn't cause any troubles, he had come with friends who were fasting and he was permitted to cross the boundary between fasting and non-fasting people. In another occasion the provisions were much more than needed and it was announced to people that they could have taken more if they had wanted. Some members of the congregation shared the rest of the food among each other and packed to take with themselves. No food was left at the stations, thus no food was given to the people who were gathered outside. That was quite a demonstration to show who had the priority in the eyes of the mosque administrators who were also arranging the distribution of the meals.

Secondly I would like to talk about the children's position within the congregation, but especially male children. Before Ramadan, it was a rare occasion to see children joining the congregation. With the beginning of Ramadan when more people, men and women, began to attend to the evening prayers more children started to show up. One evening in the beginning of the meal I saw couple of boys maybe like five of them just sitting inside the mosque in a corner and looking around while everyone else was eating. I was sure at least I saw one of them taking food but I also saw him afterwards giving that food to an older man. I thought since that man was quite old to wait in the queue he asked that young boy to get food for him. I assumed the boys had already finished their food in few minutes, thus jokingly I made a remark on how hungry they must have been to eat that quickly. They said they hadn't eaten because there wasn't any food left for them. That day their mothers who were in the women's part on the second floor of the mosque sent them some food and that was all they had eaten. Next day I saw them again, they were not taking their places in

the queue rather they were waiting for the queue to end. I asked why they were not lining up with the rest of the congregation. They said they were given food after everyone took theirs. They said they didn't know why that was the case but it was so. Nonetheless after seeing they were left behind the day before and from time to time seeing some people were taking more than one portion for themselves, I accompanied them in the line. Although they hesitated a little at first we queued together, they were given food without any troubles. That got me thinking about the consequences of lacking an adult person accompanying a child in the congregation. Rest of the boys didn't face such situations since the person who was serving the food wouldn't be able to explain a grown man the reason why his child would be getting food after everyone was served. Same happened when those boys were with me, too. However when they were on their own without the protection of a grown-up it was much easier to treat them unfairly since they wouldn't be able to make an issue out of this but rather accept the authority of the world of grown-up men.

Lastly I would like to discuss the place of women in the mosque, around the mosque and within the congregation. Until Ramadan my research was taking place only around men, women were almost completely absent in the field. I saw only once a woman came for a daily prayer and afterwards she left very quickly. That was the only time I saw a woman in the mosque. Nevertheless with Ramadan women started coming to the mosque.

Banyabashi mosque has two parts; women's and men's. Men's part is the ground floor inside the mosque and also the porch. Women's part is on the upper floor of the mosque. After entering the mosque, immediately on the right side of the door there are stairs going up to the women's part which is a large mezzanine. The visual contact between the ground floor and the mezzanine is restricted by a semitransparent wooden fence. Thus light can penetrate through the fence yet one cannot see through it clearly. One can only see shadows looking down to the ground floor or looking up to the mezzanine. Even the stairs were designed right next to the entrance door which together with the semitransparent fence provides men and women with the minimum sight of each other. Additionally, there are no toilets or ablution sinks reserved for women in Banyabashi Mosque as well. From a spatial

point of view the presence of women is a quite a marginalized situation. Moreover my findings during the research show that this is accurate from a social point of view as well.

As I mentioned only one time I saw a woman at the mosque. She had come to pray. I saw her while she was leaving. She was moving very quickly, not like as if she had been in a hurry but rather like she just wanted to leave that place as soon as possible. She was looking below the chin level, trying to avoid any eye contact, she found her shoes quickly at the porch, put them on and left immediately looking straight out of the gate of the porch. That was the overall behavior of women I had the opportunity to see later during Ramadan evening prayers and tarawih prayers, too. Surely the situations I'd seen during Ramadan and my first encounter with a woman at the mosque are incomparable in regard to the different circumstances. In the first case it was an ordinary daily prayer with the attendance of mostly 50 men and only one woman, however during Ramadan when the number of men was going up 150 and women with a good guess about 30, the accidental encounter between two parties were getting to a new level of interaction. While both men and women were trying to keep the boundaries between them quite clear there were especially two noteworthy examples I had come across.

First of them happened during a queuing for dinner. I was sitting on the floor when I saw a man pushing the crowd back right by the entrance. Because of the men gathered in front of the door in the queue I wasn't able to see anything at first. The way the man pushed the crowd back in such an anxious manner and the way others started moving backwards and opening some space I wouldn't have thought anything else but someone's having a health problem. However, it was three women who decided to leave the mosque before the breaking of fast meal. And the man who saw them first started to push the crowd back nervously to open some space for the women. Even if he had been trying to be polite and thoughtful to the women, it was certainly an overreaction since there was just enough space for anyone to be able to go out, no one was blocking the door. Men were taking their food and walking out through the door, so there was certainly no need for such an overprotective behavior which turned all the eyes to the women as if something so uncanny was happening.

The whole situation caused a visible embarrassment for the women, they had to wait for the man to finish his performance and allow them to pass. After the man was convinced there was enough space, the women went out even quicker than they would have. The women had decided to leave the mosque earlier than what men supposed; thus creating an unexpected counter. The group's reaction to the encounter was a demonstration which acknowledged the presence of women and showed politeness to open them enough space to leave the place comfortably. However the untimely and abrupt meeting facilitated the way it was performed by the male group.

The second instance happened at the Night of Power. The night which believed the first verses of Qur'an were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. In Qur'an the Night of Power promoted as the holiest night of all nights.[38] That night Banyabashi Mosque was open till morning for people to be able to stay all night in the mosque. The whole mosque was full, the women's part and the men's part were completely full which makes around 700 people. That night the imam was the more experienced older imam of the two imams. The chief mufti and also his deputies were present at the mosque. The crowd and the attendance of the clergy were an indication that it was important to be at the mosque that night.

The prayer was about to start, yet the mosque was not entirely silent, there was a murmur coming from the women's part. Imam waited some time but the murmur was persistently going on. It was mostly the children who were refusing to stay put but rather play around. It was the women who were trying to stop the children and make them sit tight and remain quiet during the prayer. Imam turned around and looked up to the mezzanine and asked the women politely to cut the murmur and stop the children. Nevertheless the situation carried on the same. Imam waited a little longer, even tried to start the prayer, yet he got distracted and turned around and repeated the same request in a more frustrated tone and started waiting for the murmur to stop but it didn't. At that point men started getting disturbed with the situation and some of them started moving uncomfortably on their places, some of them turned their heads and looked up to the women's part, however no one said something. As a result of this general disturbance, imam turned around for the last

[38] http://www.cmje.org/religious-texts/quran/verses/097-qmt.php#097.001

time and started lecturing the women within an undoubtedly reprimanding manner about how much he was distracted that everyone was waiting for them to silence the kids. In the end following that last call the murmur diminished and the restless energy within the mosque got dissolved, imam started the prayer.

Those two incidents took my attention in the way that they were the only ones I was able to observe where the women were addressed by the men directly. Furthermore in order to get a more keen understanding about the interaction between men and women during Ramadan I would like to elaborate a little more on women's usage practices of the mosque. As mentioned above most men were beginning to arrive at the mosque about half an hour before the breaking of fast time while most women were coming about an hour earlier and taking their places upstairs until the moment they were going to leave. After the dinner most of the women were beginning to come downstairs after most men had finished eating and left the ground floor and the porch. If after the evening prayer some of the women had been willing to attend the tarawih prayer as well they had also been hanging around the mosque but at a further distance than men which also means further than the mosque. Thus when we are talking about Banyabashi Mosque we are talking about a place entirely dominated by men during most of the times. However during Ramadan that domination gets challenged by the arrival of women to the mosque which produces a new state of balance and for that new balance to be established a new set of behaviors need to be introduced to the congregation which now is composed of both men and women.

I prefer to see the incident where the imam reprimanded the women so comfortably, in the light of these pieces of information. When talking about the position of women within the congregation of Banyabashi Mosque, it is important to take the importance of space for mediating gender relations and the inscribed meanings to it into account. Women feel more comfortable when they arrive to the mosque earlier than men and leave after men. Very rarely this routine is broken, as I tried to illustrate such a case where under the guise of politeness the emergence of women is treated in an almost exposing way. As if all of a sudden something so out of order has started happening and need to be dealt with accordingly. I should also add that the mezzanine doesn't have any windows and the ceiling over it is quite low

compared to the men part of the mosque. Therefore while men are waiting for the time to break the fast in spacious places, be it inside the mosque or at the porch, or having dinner outside at the porch in open air women have to wait in an enclosed and a small place with low ceilings where they arrive earlier than men and where they also wait for men to leave first in order not to coincide. That dependence and also being enclosed in a small space may quite possibly cause estrangement on women's part. Moreover male domination of the physical world continues outside of the mosque as well. Women don't feel easy hanging in front of the mosque like men do but they walk further than men in order to hang around and chat among each other more restfully. In my opinion what happened at the Night of Power was Banyabashi Mosque's social dynamics about the appointed social roles of women coming together. The problem that night occurred because the women were expected to fulfill their duties as the ones taking care of the children. The children were going to be restless anywhere, but they happened to be with women so that the men and the imam as the representative figure of the male power domain were very easily taking the women responsible of the running around children since it was considered almost as a natural obligation of the women.

5.6 Mosque as a workplace

While for most of the people who visit the mosque, the mosque is mainly a place for worship, for the religious personnel, the mosque is a work place. In case of Banyabashi Mosque the religious personnel is composed of two imams and two caretakers.

There are two imams working constantly in Banyabashi Mosque. By the time I was doing the research one of them was the more experienced one who was being the imam of Banyabashi for 15 years and the other one was working there only for two years. Although no matter how much I tried the more experienced imam was very reluctant to talk to a researcher and that didn't change during my stay there, just in the opposite the other one was quite enthusiastic about helping me. That's why the

data I am going to describe here about the imams are based on my informal talks and interviews with the young imam and my own observations.

One of the most peculiar things about the imam of the Banyabashi Mosque is the appointment process. The imam of Banyabashi Mosque is always chosen among the students who have divinity education in Islam. In Bulgaria there are three vocational high schools for educating imams, the graduates of these high schools are regarded competent enough to work as an imam in a mosque. However finishing one of these high schools is just not considered sufficient to be able to be the imam of Banyabashi Mosque. The imam-to-be has to hold a degree from the High Islamic Institute where students are offered a four years education in order to deepen their religious knowledge of Sunni Islam following the three year religious vocational high school. The imam of the Banyabashi Mosque is appointed by the chief mufti himself. The Chief Mufti calls the director of the High Islamic Institute and informs him about the need for a new imam in Banyabashi Mosque. After that the director suggests a candidate to the chief mufti. If the candidate is willing to be the imam of Banyabashi Mosque, he is invited to the chief mufti's office for an official job interview. Only after the candidate passes that interview he will be appointed as the new imam of Banyabashi Mosque. In the case of Mehmet, the young imam of the time of the research, he was the top student of his year at the High Islamic Institute and during the interview he was constantly questioned about his knowledge on Islam, Qur'an and Islamic practical issues. According to him the reason for this meticulous procedure for choosing an imam for Banyabashi Mosque is because of Banyabashi Mosque's being the only mosque in the capital of Bulgaria. As he recalled just a month ago before we made that interview with him the Foreign Affairs Minister of Turkey attended the noon prayer at Banyabashi Mosque during his visit to Sofia. After the prayer Mehmet as the imam of the mosque and the minister had a short conversation. Therefore as Mehmet states he is the one representing the Muslims of Bulgaria there in front of such high-ranking diplomats or politicians. Besides Mehmet emphasizes Banyabashi's being the only mosque in Sofia thus it also has a symbolic meaning as a representative mosque of the existence of Muslims in Bulgaria. What's more as he continues, people working in the embassies of Muslim

countries from differing hierarchical levels are also coming to the mosque from time to time so he, as the imam, should be able to get engaged in religious conversations and duly represent the Office of the Chief Mufti of Bulgaria. Thus the selection and appointing of the imam is such a meticulously carried out procedure where chief mufti prefers the most suitable person to have such a representative responsibility on him before the Office of the Chief Mufti, the official institute of Muslim administration.

While the position as the imam of Banyabashi Mosque is such a prestigious one, it is not such a satisfying job in practice. By that time Mehmet told me his salary was under the subsistence wage of Bulgaria. In 2009 the subsistence wage of Bulgaria was 240 levs – equals to about 120 euro. In addition at the time of the interview the whole personnel working for the Office of the Chief Mufti had health insurance for only eight months, before that they were working without any insurance. Moreover the personnel were not paid their salaries on time as well, at the time of the interview Mehmet was not receiving his salary for two months. He concludes that when all those conditions came together imams were just not willing to work there anymore. They were quitting the job after working there for couple of months and then just looking for another job in Sofia. He told me they were mostly working in construction sites. Since diplomas they receive from the vocational high school and after the High Islamic Institute are not recognized officially by the formal education level, those students are officially seen as received education only till secondary school. Therefore unless they are able to find capital to start their own business their options for work except in the mosques or in the Office of the Chief Mufti are limited to unqualified blue-collar work. Mehmet also adds that as the imam of the mosque he has some perks and his income is not only his salary that he is receiving from the Office. He was also being invited to *mevlit* ceremonies. *Mevlit* is a traditional ceremony that takes place mostly after the birth of a child and decease of a person, but also it takes place for showing appreciation as an offering to Allah, thus occasions such as a child's circumcision, or a young child's going to university may also be blessed with a *mevlit* ceremony. During the ceremony very old long poems about the life or character of Prophet Muhammad and verses from Qur'an are cited

by a preacher. Mehmet was being invited to such ceremonies where he was receiving a certain amount of payment in return to his services. Also he was preparing the body of deceased people according to the Islamic instructions before their burial ceremony where again he receives money for this service, too. Plus as the imam he also has the license to solemnize the imam marriages. In Islam it is obligatory for a couple's togetherness to be solemnized by a religiously authorized person regardless of the official marriages they may have so Mehmet was solemnizing marriages and giving the marriage certificate certifying the religiously suitability of the couple's togetherness where he receives some amount of money for his services. Yet he was also stating that he was earning enough for the moment since he was just married and didn't have any kids while the amounts he was earning wouldn't be enough to raise a kid easily. He thought that only possible way to continue his position as the imam of Banyabashi Mosque was if he had the chance to start his own business and be the imam of the mosque as a kind of a voluntary side job.

Apart from the economic problems the imams were facing, another challenge expecting the new imam those days was the authority of the older imam as Mehmet was dealing with it as much as he could. While on the paper two imams have the same rights and power, the seniority coming with the experience of 15 years and older age is giving the senior imam quite a power to push the limits of his authority over the young one. Mehmet had quite many complaints about that situation especially when it came to division of labor. Mehmet firstly complains that two imams are not enough for such a mosque while in economic terms the Office of the Chief Mufti is not able to afford more than two imams. Therefore Mehmet continues two imams should have a regular arrangement on their schedules. Being an imam to a mosque, according to Mehmet, may not be the most exhausting job he could work yet it is definitely time consuming to have to be present at the mosque five times a day, spread throughout the day from morning prayer until the night prayer. Especially during summer time that meant a timely span of about 20 hours. Thus they had between themselves the arrangement to have two days of work in a row and the following two days off. Mehmet maintains that he had found that fair in the beginning. Yet in practice the arrangement started working against him since the

other imam was running a rather busy jewelry store quite for a while then and was not able to keep up with the schedule as they arranged between themselves. He was having work trips, business meetings; he had to go out of town. All those work related obligations that he wouldn't miss if he could. That was when he was calling Mehmet and asking him to do a favor for him and replace him at the mosque, and he would return the favor another day. Mehmet was quite furious about this then and complaining that the favor was yet to return. He remembers one day the older imam called him just an hour before the noon prayer to tell him that at that moment he was in Spain and Mehmet would have to cover for him for that day and also for the next day. Mehmet was busy at that moment and he wouldn't be able to make it for the noon prayer. During the noon prayer that day there was no imam present at the mosque which was heard by the chief mufti. Later that week both of the imams were summoned by the chief mufti and both of them received a harsh reprimanding, yet according to Mehmet chief mufti was more upset with him than the older imam since Mehmet was in Sofia that day and his first priority should have been not to let a prayer go by without an official imam appointed by the Office of Chief Mufti. In my opinion considering the problematic position of the chief mufti where there had been an ongoing political dispute over his position for more than a decade, that was not good at all for the reputation of the administrative skills of the chief mufti himself. That might seem like chief mufti was not running a smooth operation and was not able to discipline the imams well enough to comprehend the significance of their positions as the imams of Banyabashi Mosque. Nonetheless Mehmet felt a great unfairness in that attitude towards him while the other was actually the one who had the irresponsible reckless decision and not even informed Mehmet on time yet he was held more responsible for the entire occasion. That's why his trouble was he thought he didn't have any authoritarian figure to go and complain about the older imam's overall behavior since the older imam was working with the same staff for 15 years, and they were already a very small circle and all of them were already good friends, his feeling was they would take the older imam's side and only try to comfort him, tell him that this was what they all had been through, he should be more patient and think about the general well-being of the Muslim community.

As I mentioned above the older imam was more reluctant to talk to me during the research. He was giving appointments most of the time for the next day, and when I was going to the mosque next day he wasn't there or he had totally forgotten and he had something very urgent to do so we should postpone it for the next time. That had to happen at least five times to me to be able to understand that this man was too busy with his assumingly well growing business and also he just didn't feel like talking to a researcher.

The other group that also works at the mosque is the caretakers. Two caretakers were working there at the mosque at the time I was there. The day of the caretaker starts between 9 or 10 a.m., there is no determined exact hour. He opens the mosque at that time and his day starts with certain chores of ordering and cleaning around a bit. That meant washing the toilets, washing the ablution sinks, ordering the carpets at the porch, ordering the shoe shelves if they are a little displaced, then going inside the mosque checking if everything is in order, controlling whether the microphones and the loudspeakers are working and vacuum cleaning if seemed necessary. In addition to those another daily work of his is to take care of the small garden just behind the mosque. There was a small garden there surrounded by a fence and always locked except the times plants were to be watered. When he finishes all his chores his job for the rest of the day was to wait until the end of night prayer to lock the mosque again and in a way guard the mosque all day since there were examples of vandalism. The guard at least is always present there to keep an eye if everything is in order.

There were two caretakers/security guards when I was there, both of them young men in their early 20s. One of them didn't speak Turkish, he was a Pomak, and the other one spoke Turkish but didn't want to speak to me. When I went to him for the first time and introduced myself he told me it wasn't allowed to do any research unless I got permission from the chief mufti. Even after I got the permission this time he refused to talk to me about anything else except the time he explained in about five minutes what his daily job usually was. He didn't want to talk further about anything as he told me that was how it always happened with researchers or journalists that he would think that he was talking to a friend and told something then

it usually turned out written down somewhere else. I wasn't able to convince him I wasn't going to write anything that he wouldn't like to have written, he responded what he told so far was more than enough to tell me.

His attitude was actually shortly summarizing the first reaction of my field to me, to whomever I introduced myself I was questioned whether I had another agenda, who had sent me there, who was I with and so on. There was almost a tangible hesitation towards a stranger especially from the people who were connected with the Office of the Chief Mufti. As the caretaker put it well he wouldn't want to risk anything he would say to be used against him in any arena. I was able to understand this better when I learned more about the conflict between two political religious camps over the administration of the Office of the Chief Mufti.

5.7 Conclusion

Banyabashi Mosque in Sofia is a meeting point for individuals belonging to different groups. Different times of the day, week or the year attract different agents and different groups to attend the mosque. Thus everyday routine maintained at Banyabashi Mosque by the congregation is a significant aspect to getting deeper in understanding the lives of Muslims in Sofia.

In this chapter, I shared my observations and showed to what extent individuals and groups can negotiate and also are bounded by the power relations with other groups, which are constructed within varying circumstances. Departing from the daily practices of the mosque's congregation I showed that the power relations are closely tied to ethnic background, gender and age. People differentiate each other in accordance with their ethnic identity and the Islamic school of law they follow. However, as in the case of the Ramadan charity banquets the food was only for the fasting. The non-fasting group regardless of their ethnicities, because there were Turkish speaking among them as well were not welcome to enjoy the limited amount of food prepared for practicing Muslims. Thus the congregation is firstly welcoming the Muslims and then within itself forming groups according to ethnic backgrounds. Therefore some of the practices of the congregation as a whole emphasize that they share a common identity of being practicing Muslims. In addition to relationships

between groups composed of men I also described my observations during the month of Ramadan when there was women attendance at the mosque and how the change in the initial conditions introduced new groups to the mosque and temporarily altered the relations between the groups where I was able to observe gender based power relations.

Moreover I also analysed how those relationships are reflected through the usage of space. The spatial practices of the agents highlighted the differences between the groups and also helped with the negotiations and maintenance of the boundaries among the groups. Therefore exploring individuals and groups' spatial practices help to have a more intensive understanding about the power relations within and among the groups.

CHAPTER 6

SPACE AND POLITICS: THE SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATION OF THE MUSLIM DENOMINATION IN BULGARIA

In this chapter I'm going to be discussing the relationship between Banyabashi Mosque and the Office of the Chief Mufti. The spiritual authority of the Muslim denomination in Bulgaria is organized under the leadership of the chief muftiship. The headquarters office of this institution is based in Sofia under the name, the Chief Muftiship of the Muslim Denomination of Bulgaria[39].

This institution was first established with the Bulgaria's declaration of independence from the Ottoman Empire and it's been active since then.[40] However after the change of the regime from monarchy to state socialism in 1946 by the virtue of a new Religious Denominations Act, the new socialist government subverted the religious administrative structures including the chief muftiship of Muslims according to the political interests of the new state (Ghodsee, 2010: 43). That act enabled the state to practice control over the religious administrative bodies. The socialist single party state ruled until 1989, the year which the first move towards a democratic multiparty system was made. One of the changes concerning the religious life was the reinstatement of the religious freedom where the religious administrative bodies were reestablished to a less state controlled more independent status. However there was a legal issue concerning those novelties in the religious life. The legal framework was still the same one as legislated by the socialist government to enable the state control over the spiritual leaderships. A gap in this religious act caused an

[39] *Glavno Myuftiystvo Na Myusyulmanskoto Izpovedanie V Republika Bulgaria/Bulgaristan Müslümanları Başmüftülüğü.*

[40] http://genmuftibg.net/en/about-us/institutions-history.html (Accessed 30 August 2012).

unsolvable legal conflict over the post of the chief muftiship. For over two decades two rival groups are in irreconcilable competition for the leadership during which none of the groups were able to receive the position on legal grounds.

By the time I was doing my fieldwork at Banyabashi Mosque in 2010, the situation between those two groups got heated over a controversial court verdict ruling in favor of one of the groups. This court decision had a direct influence on my data. Banyabashi Mosque was an important place within the ongoing conflict. The mosque was used to create social support and turn this support also into political power. Thus it had become a contested site that possessed a certain power. Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga defines a contested space as a particular site where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance involve actors whose social positions are determined by distinctive control of resources and access to power (2003: 18). Moreover political conflicts primarily realize itself through the particular meanings attributed to sites, consequently sites come to represent a certain political power. Kuper suggests that the power of sites is directly proportionate with their capacity as symbols to convey specific meanings especially as they are stimulated during "the drama of political events" (as cited in Low & Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2003: 19). The process of spatial contestation will include opposing parties of unequal power and resources, and it will operate as an articulation tool to attach identities to social space (ibid.). Thus in this chapter through the empirical data I aim to show the ways and strategies how political contestation actualizes and reflects itself within the space of Banyabashi Mosque.

In order to be able to ground the role of Banyabashi Mosque in the internal conflict within the Muslim community over the spiritual leadership of the Muslim denomination it is necessary to give a brief summary of the legal case that initiated the entire problem which will function as the contextual background to the empirical data I'll analyze afterwards. Thus I will firstly be starting with the structure of the religious organization of the Muslim denomination since the problem has been mainly caused by the system's being open to different interpretations. From this

point on I will move on to my empirical data showing the appropriation of Banyabashi Mosque in this conflict as a power center for one of the rival groups.

6.1 The Legal Background of the Chief Muftiship Conflict

Nedim Gendzhev is the last chief mufti who was appointed by the socialist government in 1988, one year before the change of the regime. Following the resignation of the Communist Party government in 1989 the country undertook a transition period to a parliamentary democracy. In the meantime Gendzhev's term of office as the chief mufti was to end in 1994.

On October 1991 a general election was held where a new government was formed by the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) and took office by the end of 1991 (Ghodsee, 2010: 117). In 1992 Gendzhev was removed from his position by the Directorate of Religious Denominations[41] on the grounds that his appointment as the chief mufti in 1988 was at first place politically motivated.[42] While Gendzhev challenged the decision of his removal in the Supreme Court, his appeal had been dismissed.[43] By the end of 1992 a National Conference of Muslims was organized and it elected Fikri Sali Hasan as chief mufti and a new statute of the Religious Organization of Muslims in Bulgaria. The statute and the new leadership were registered swiftly by the Directorate of Religious Denominations within the next month following the elections.[44]

This was how the conflict had initially started. Gendzhev was known for his open support for the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). Thus the removal of Gendzhev from

[41] The Directorate of Religious Denominations is a governmental agency attached to the Council of Ministers which until 2003 held the power to register the leadership of religious denominations.

[42] Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Supreme Holy Council of the Muslim Community v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 39023/97, Judgment, Strasbourg, 16 December 2004, para.10.

[43] Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Hasan and Chaush v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 30985/96, Judgment, Strasbourg, 26 October 2000, para.12.

[44] İbid.

the post of the Chief Mufti was of a more political nature than legal. A governmental body's unsubstantiated intervening with the supposedly independent Muslim spiritual leadership caused divisions and internal conflict within the Muslim community in Bulgaria and generated two rival groups; the Gendzhev camp and the Hasan camp. Furthermore the legal and political struggles over the Chief Muftiship between those two rival factions actually lasted more than two decades which in the meantime resulted in Bulgarian state's being sued twice in front of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for intervention in the internal affairs of a religious denomination.

The legal history of this dispute is a very complex one and it is not within the scope of this chapter of the thesis to go in all the details of what happened over the years.[45] However without going into the complicated legal problems I will explain briefly what had caused the conflict on the legal level and respectively on the political level.

Hasan was elected at a National Conference of Muslims. Nonetheless, this conference was organized without the consent of Gendzhev's camp and without the camp nominating its own candidate. Simply put Hasan organized a conference with the indirect encouragement of the government which was only attended by his supporters and at the end of the conference he got himself elected. That was exactly the cause of the problems that would follow in the next decade. The legal dead end was created because in the 1949 Religious Denominations Act which was still in effect in 1991 regardless of the change in the regime, the situation of who could convene a national conference was not defined in detail. In practice with the exemplary of Hasan, anyone could have convened a conference and then claimed to be elected democratically at a National Muslim Conference. Thus the rival groups started organizing their own national conferences and electing their own chief mufti and afterwards each group was declaring their conference as the legitimate one

[45] For a detailed background on the disputes relating to the Chief Muftiship see Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Supreme Theological Council of the Muslim Community v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 39023/97, Judgment, Strasbourg, 16 December 2004; and Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Hasan and Chaush v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 30985/96, Judgment, Strasbourg, 26 October 2000.

(Ghodsee, 2010: 112). As a result two Supreme Muslim Councils, one of Gendzhev's and one of Hasan's, emerged claiming to represent all of Bulgaria's Muslims and demanding for state recognition and legal registration (ibid. 116).

From 1992 to 2012 seven national Muslim conferences had taken place, respectively in 1992, 1994, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2009 and the last one in 2011. They were organized by either Hasan camp or Gendzhev. In each of these conferences a new supreme holy council and a new chief mufti had been elected and applied for registration by the state authorities. However, none of the registrations made by the state institutions had gone undisputed and been the final status of the Muslim religious administration.[46] Until 2002, it was the Directorate of Religious Denominations which held the right to register a leadership legally. That was being a governmental department controlled by the government thus the registration process was very much open to political interference. For example from 1992 to 1994 Hasan acted as the official chief mufti despite the fact that Gendzhev challenged Hasan's registration with law suits. Yet in 1995 with the new general elections BSP came back into power. Simultaneously the Directorate of Religious Denominations had renounced the chief muftiship of Hasan and registered Gendzhev and his staff as the legitimate chief muftiship.[47] That had been the case with the each new general election until 2003. In 1997, UDF took office and then the Directorate of Religious Denominations registered the candidate elected by Hasan's group as the chief mufti.[48] The replacements of the leaderships of the Muslims community coinciding with every time there had been a change in the government was regarded as problematic by the ECHR. Moreover ECHR also found that the act provided the government with a discretionary power to change religious leaderships at will thus allowing state interference with the internal organization of the religious

[46] Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Supreme Holy Council of the Muslim Community v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 39023/97, Judgment, Strasbourg, 16 December 2004, para.71.

[47] Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Hasan and Chaush v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 30985/96, Judgment, Strasbourg, 26 October 2000, para.25

[48] Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Hasan and Chaush v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 30985/96, Judgment, Strasbourg, 26 October 2000, para.40.

communities.[49] Therefore in 1 January 2003 the 1949 act was repealed upon the entry into force of the new Religious Denominations Act 2002. With this new act the power to register a religious leadership had been taken from the Directorate of Religious Denominations, in other words indirectly from the government, and given to the Sofia City Court.[50]

This new act required the re-registration of all Bulgarian denominations which gave way to further conflict between Nedim Gendzhev and the faction represented then by Mustafa Alish Hadzhi who was ceded the leadership by Fikri Sali Hasan (Ghodsee, 2010: 123). Both factions applied to the court separately claiming to be the legitimate representative of the Bulgarian Muslim Community. The documents submitted by the two factions were almost identical since both of them had Supreme Muslim Councils and a chief mufti who was elected by a national Muslim conference. In the summer of 2004 the courts decided that a ruling was not possible due to the impossibility of determining the legitimate leadership from the submitted documents since they were near identical.[51] Thus in July 2004 the Sofia City Court appointed temporarily three persons administration to oversee the affairs of the Muslim community, until a legal solution would have been found.[52]

Couple of months later in December 2004 the ECHR declared the removal of Gendzhev from office in 1997 as unlawful.[53] Soon after the verdict of the ECHR, the Supreme Court in Bulgaria also ruled in favor of Gendzhev and found that the only legitimate representative of the Bulgarian Islam was the leadership that was

[49] Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Supreme Holy Council of the Muslim Community v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 39023/97, Judgment, Strasbourg, 16 December 2004, para.84

[50] Ibid. para.59.

[51] Shkodorova and Roudikova, "Bulgaria: Muslim Infighting Fuels Fundamentalist Fears", *Institute for War & Peace Reporting (IWPR)*, 8 October 2004, available online at http://religion.info/english/articles/article_103.shtml (accessed 23 August 2012).

[52] Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Supreme Holy Council of the Muslim Community v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 39023/97, Judgment, Strasbourg, 16 December 2004, para.50.

[53] İbid. para.85 and para. 99.

registered in 1997 which was Gendzhev's organization. However, the coalition government of National Movement Simeon II (NMSS) and the Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF) disregarded the court decisions. They urged the interim-triumvirate chief mufti administration to convene a national Muslim conference and hold chief mufti elections. Gendzhev refused to attend this conference as he alleged that the result of the elections of the chief mufti had been predetermined by the MRF where consequently Mustafa Alish Hadzhi, the candidate of Hasan's group was elected to the chief mufti post (Ghodsee, 2010: 124). Although the results of the conference had been protested separately by Genzhev's faction for the conference's being politically manipulated, the NMSS/MRF government recognized the conference.[54]

Gendzhev proclaimed that the government's refusal to recognize the court decisions was another interference in the internal organization of the Muslim community. He also maintained that the reason was due to the MRF's plan to make sure to retain control over the Muslim community before the parliamentary elections in June 2005.

However, by the virtue of the Religious Denominations Act 2002 recognition by the government did not have a legal binding. Thus the conference had to be registered by the Sofia City Court which the request by Hadzhi to be registered was met by Gendzhev's challenge to it. Eventually the request was rejected by the court on the grounds that the conference was not convened by the legitimate authority. It was ruled that only Gendzhev's organization held the right to convene a national Muslim conference as the legitimate authority on this matter. In fact in a 2011 report by the European Committee of Ministers the committee notes that during the period 2005 to 2010 there had been several national Muslim conferences which are the ones held in 2005, 2008 and 2009. In each of them Hadzhi was elected as the chief mufti and he

[54] "Bulgarian National Muslim Conference Elects New Chief Mufti," Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, 20 March 2005, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports.*

applied to the Sofia City Court for registration, while each of these requests was appealed by Gendzhev which resulted in the rejections of the registration requests.[55]

6.1.1 The Echoes in the International Political Society

The more the registration requests of Hadzhi's group were rejected by the court, the more attraction it drew from international political arena.

The Turkish government showed its support for the Hadzhi group on several occasion.[56] Moreover the issue was mentioned in the 2010 International Religious Freedom Report prepared by the U.S. Department of State as the court's not registering Hadzhi who was elected by Muslim conferences in 2005, 2008 and 2009.[57]

The most recent national Muslim conference took place on 12 February 2011 which was supported widely by international institutions and organizations. The conference had been attended by guests from Bulgaria and abroad, ambassadors, representatives of diplomatic missions and the chief muftis of the neighboring Balkan countries among whom were the Turkish Deputy Chairman of the Department of Religious Affairs, the Special Representative of the Chief Secretary of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Ambassador of the USA to Bulgaria, the Ambassador of Iran, representatives from the Embassies of Turkey, Palestine, Morocco, Libya, Azerbaijan, Algeria, Oman, and the Russian Federation.[58] This conference elected

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[55] Council of Europe, European Committee of Ministers, *Resolution CM/ResDH(2011)193 Execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights Hasan and Chaush and Supreme Holy Council of the Muslim Community against Bulgaria (Hasan and Chaush, application No.30985/96, judgment of 26/10/2000,Grand Chamber Supreme Holy Council, application No. 39023/97, judgment of 16/12/2004, final on 16/03/2005)*, 2 December 2011.

[56] "Ankara Concerned about Bulgaria's Chief Mufti Controversy," Novinite-Sofia News Agency, 8 September 2010; "The State Minister of Turkey Faruk Celik Visited the Chief Mufti's Office," Annual Report 2010 Muslim Denomination in the Republic of Bulgaria, p.7; "Borisov, Erdogan Exchange Big Time Niceties in Bulgaria's Sofia," Novnite-Sofia News Agency, 4 October 2010.

[57] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, International Religious Freedom Report 2010 http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010/148922.htm (Accessed on 4 September 2012).

[58] "The Crisis in the Denomination and the Additional National Conference of Muslims," Annual Report 2011 Muslim Denomination in the Republic of Bulgaria, p.25.

Hadzhi as the chief mufti and applied to the Sofia City Court. This time on 20 April 2011 the registration was granted by the Sofia Court of Cassation. However, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs Representative of the Chief Muftiship of Hadzhi organization stated at an annual human rights implementation meeting of OHIDR/OSCE[59] in Warsaw that although the Supreme Court of Cassation registered the officials and organs elected at the conference, Gendzhev contested the decision arguing that the conference was not convened by authoritative organs. As a result of which on 20 May 2011 the Sofia City Court decided to halt the registration until the completion of the legal procedure.[60]

As a short conclusion to the legal perspective of the problem, the government claims that this change in the religious denominations law actually helped to eliminate the problem by preventing any illegal interference by the executive authorities in the internal affairs of a divided religious community. Besides after the decisions of the EHCR against the Bulgarian state the new governments were very careful in not getting involved with any conflicting problem between rival religious groups. However, as the chief muftiship is a still continuing example the change in the law was not enough to sort the conflict out. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee's report on the Religious Denominations Act states that the major problem is the legal framework which requires each religious denomination to have just one leadership. Therefore no matter how much change there will be made in the competent authority who has the right to rule over the registration of religious leaderships, as long as the legal framework of Religious Denominations Act 2002 has the same essential defects as the previous one it provides an opportunity for arbitrary decisions and for empowering of one of the rival groups at the expense of the other which in this particular case means providing the court with the opportunity to interfere arbitrarily in the internal affairs of a religious community. The report concludes that the controversy over which is the legitimate leadership between Gendzhev and Hadzhi

[59] Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights / Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

[60] Human Rights Implementation Meeting of the ODIHR/OSCE, September 26 – October 7, 2011, Warsaw, during the meeting of the State Affairs of the Human Rights in Bulgaria in Relation to the Muslim Minority, 27 September 2011.

groups looks unsolvable. Since both of the rival groups attacks the acts and the existence of the other in the court and the requirement in the law for each religious denomination to have just one leadership continues to create problems.[61]

6.2 The Political Background of the Chief Muftiship Limbo

The open support of the domestic and international public and political arena to the Hadzhi group during the 2011 National Muslim Conference, plus the admission of the registration of the conference by the court created expectations about the resolution of the two decades long leadership dispute. Nonetheless the Hadzhi group expressed that those expectations had proven to be elusive when the same problem which had been occurring since the 2002 Religious Act had arisen again.[62]

Technically the conflict is of a greatly complicated legal nature. Therefore the most reliable and for that matter comprehensible sources are the sections about the circumstances of the two cases described in detail in the judgment decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. In short the problem is that the present Religious Denominations Act 2002 states that the existence of more than one legal entity representing a religious denomination is unacceptable. The legal action of the chief mufti registration should not meet with any legal challenges, in other words there shouldn't be any objection to the registration at all. Thus in the case of the Bulgarian Chief Muftiship such an action requires the consent of both of the rival groups in order to take effect.[63] It is not feasible to assume that a rival organization voluntarily would consent to be removed from the power post while the legal framework gives every rival group the right to veto the registration of another group. Thus the situation in present seems unsolvable as it is now.

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[61] Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, "*Written Notes of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee to the Committee of the Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning the cases "Hasan and Chaush v. Bulgaria", "The Supreme Holy Council of the Muslim Community v. Bulgaria" and "Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (Metropolitan Inokentiy) and others v. Bulgaria"*," 4 March 2011.

[62] Human Rights Implementation Meeting of the ODIHR/OSCE, September 26 – October 7, 2011, Warsaw, during the meeting of the State Affairs of the Human Rights in Bulgaria in Relation to the Muslim Minority, 27 September 2011.

[63] İbid.

Nonetheless it is important to see the interest of the varying political bodies to the case during the past 20 years. The Chief Muftiship of Bulgaria has different political and economic meanings on different levels since the democratization process has started in 1989. In Ghodsee's view it was the intense rivalry between the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) that provided the ripe conditions which generated the internal chaos in the Muslim denomination. The 1991-92 coalition of UDF and MRF wanted to challenge the authority of the communist structure established over a long period of time of communist governance in all aspects of life including the communist appointed leaderships of religious denominations (Ghodsee, 2010: 93).

Besides, the leadership of a religious community has a crucial influence on the members of the community. In the first EHRC case of Hasan and his associates they emphasize that the organizational structure of a religious community is not merely a form of the existence of the community, but has an essential meaning thus the identity of the leader of the community is of a critical importance.[64] The court agrees with this assertion and concludes that the personality of the religious ministers is undoubtedly of importance to every member of the community.[65] Thus controlling the Chief Muftiship entailed controlling over the votes of the Muslim denomination. No wonder the coalition of UDF-MRF firstly got rid of the chief muftiship of Gendzhev who showed continuous public support for BSP.

Ghodsee claims that in the first years of 1990s the majority of Bulgaria's Muslims were living in rural areas and struggling with poverty and despite the harsh political times in the last years of the communist state they were still sympathetic to socialist principles (2010: 118). Furthermore the mosques served as the political and social centers of most Muslim villages where the religious workers were held in high esteem. Thus the Chief Muftiship remaining under the control of the BSP had very well meant that many Muslims would have continued to vote for them in local and

[64] Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Hasan and Chaush v. Bulgaria*, Application No. 30985/96, Judgment, Strasbourg, 26 October 2000, para.56.

[65] İbid. para.62.

general elections, "effectively cutting from the MRF's 'natural' constituency" (ibid.). It was the political survival of MRF that was at stake. Therefore an MRF supporter chief mufti meant more representation for MRF in the parliament.

Nevertheless, besides the political benefit potential, the Chief Muftiship possessed a financial income which was rather attractive for both individuals and for the political parties. In 2004 in an interview a former head of the Directorate of Religious Denominations maintained that in his opinion it was the available economic profit which caused the furious fight over the leadership between the two groups.[66] The Bulgarian Muslim Denomination owns a large variety of residential, office and commercial buildings, agricultural land and city plots. The rents coming from these properties result in a sizeable income for the Muslim leadership.[67] In addition to the rent income, there was also foreign Islamic aid to Bulgarian Muslims, particularly after the outbreak of the Bosnian war in 1992. According to Ghodsee taken together the Chief Muftiship had a significant amount of cash flow which was a quite desirable revenue stream in the "cash-starved Bulgarian economy of the transition period" (2010: 116). She claims that it was the aspiration to keep these resources under control that started the initial schism in the Muslim leadership (ibid.). Moreover after 21 years since the first democratic general elections held in 1991 the dispute over the Chief Muftiship between the uncompromising groups still persists because of the same reasons of political and economic gain combined with the incompetent work of governments over solving the legal gap that actually allows a great deal of political intrusion with issues regarding religious bodies.

6.3 Duties of the Office of the Chief Mufti

In the following I will briefly describe the organizational aspects of the management of the Muslim denomination that are handled by the chief muftiship institution. While the conflict between Hadzhi's organization and Gendzhev's organization is as

[66] Albena Shkodorova and Iva Roudikova, "Bulgaria: Muslim Infighting Fuels Fundamentalist Fears," 7 October 2004, available online at http://religion.info/english/articles/article_103.shtml (accessed 23 August 2012).

[67] Ibid.

old as the beginning of Bulgaria's transition into the democratic regime in 1989, the religious life has continued since therefore the necessity to regulate it. Throughout those years the official bank accounts of the chief muftiship has continued receiving its regular income with which regardless of the situation about the registration of the chief mufti the needs of the Muslim denomination have been being taken care of. It is the administration of Hadzhi that has been regulating the religious life of the Muslim denominaton as the acting chief muftiship throughout those years except the period between 1995 and 1997. However in 1997 following Fikri Sali Hasan's registration as the new chief mufti his group received the control over the organizational aspects and the assets of the Muslim community and since then they maintained their control over it.

While the courts year after year annuls the chief muftiship of Mustafa Alish Hadzhi, Hadzhi's chief muftiship has continued to be recognized in the political sphere by domestic and foreign governmental bodies as well as by the national media and also in the social sphere by the Muslim constituency of Bulgaria. [68] Therefore Hadzhi and his organization's acting as the chief mufti in daily life is justified by the acknowledgment of political and social organizations.

The deputy chief mufti, Vedat Ahmed, explains that the religious services offered and regulated by the chief muftiship can be categorized under education, publications, Islamic charity trust properties, pilgrimage and religious supervision of

[68] See "In brief: National Muslim Conference Elects New Chief, Mufti Legitimacy Disputed," Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, 19 September 1992, in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*; "National Conference of Muslims Elects New Chief Mufti," Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, 28 October 2000, in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*; Polia Alexandrova, "Alerting Bulgaria," *Transitions Online*, 1 December 2003, available online at http://www.tol.org/client/article/11139-alerting-bulgaria.html (accessed 24 August 2012); Shkodorova and Roudikova, "Bulgaria: Muslim Infighting Fuels Fundamentalist Fears," *Institute for War & Peace Reporting (IWPR)*, 8 October 2004, available online at http://religion.info/english/articles/article_103.shtml (accessed 23 August 2012); "Bulgarian National Muslim Conference Elects New Chief Mufti," Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, 20 March 2005, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*; "Erdoğan, Bulgaristan Başmüftüsü'nü Kabul Etti,"*Haber365 Bilişim Yayıncılık*, 4 October 2010, available online at http://www.haber365.com/Haber/Erdogan_Bulgaristan_Basmuftusunu_Kabul_Etti/ (accessed 8 September 2012); "US Ambassador: Bulgaria Muslims Must Elect Own Leaders," Novinite-Sofia News Agency, 12 February 2011; "Ethnic, Religious Controversy Flares in Bulgaria," Novinite-Sofia News Agency, 23 May 2011; "Wikileaks: Credible Voices in Bulgarian Muslim Communities," Novinite-Sofia News Agency, 18 January 2012;

daily matters (*irshad*). The respective departments composing the chief muftiship rationalize the corresponding matters and coordinate those with the sixteen regional muftiships. It is the mosque board of trustees who are responsible for the execution of those services regulated from the Chief Mufti Headquarters in Sofia. It is the regional muftiships' duty to monitor the execution of the chief muftiships decisions and adjustments.[69] He states that the chief muftiship is one of the pillars for keeping the identity of the Muslims of Bulgaria intact. The rest are firstly having NGOs that will work in line with developing and protecting the Muslim-Turkish culture and lastly educational institutions that will make it possible for the chief muftiship and the NGOs keep functioning.[70]

The organization of the chief muftiship is composed of sixteen regional muftiships, 1500 mosques, 1000 imams, three Islamic vocational high schools (*İmam Hatip Lisesi*), and one Higher Islamic Institute (*Yüksek Islam Enstitüsü*). The main aim of these educational institutions is to prepare Muslim clerics: muftis, imams and teachers for the Islamic vocational high schools and the Higher Islamic Institute. Since 1998 about 400 students have graduated from the High Islamic Institute (llieva, 2004: 38). Besides those regular activities another important objective of the chief mufti administrations is to restore the ownership of all the Islamic charitable trust (*vakıf*) properties to the Chief Muftiship.[71] Many of such properties were nationalized during communism and turned into museums of community centers, but after 1989 some of them were restored to the chief muftiship (Ghodsee, 2010: 116). Thus regaining the ownership of such assets manifests itself as direct increase in the financial income of the chief muftiship.

[69] Interview with Vedat Ahmed by Mustafa Uzun, published in the monthly periodical of the Chief Muftiship of Bulgaria, *Müslümanlar*, under the title "Bulgaristan Müslümanları," April 2010, p. 3

[70] Ahmed Vedat, "Başmüftülüğün Kuruluş Süreci ve İlk Başmüftü Seçimi," *Müslümanlar*, November 2011, p.14.

[71] Interview with Mustafa Alish Hadzhi by Ahmet Varol, "Bulgaristan Müslümanları Başmüftüsü Mustafa Aliş Hacı'yla Röportaj," available online at http://www.vahdet.info.tr/isdunya/dosya3/0814.html (accessed 8 September 2012)

6.4 Banyabashi Mosque as the Stronghold of Hadzhi's Chief Muftiship

Being located at the city center Sofia, at a walking distance from Banyabashi Mosque the headquarters of Chief Muftiship maintains a direct contact and control over the administrative affairs of the mosque. It is the administration of Hadzhi that is in charge of maintaining Banyabashi Mosque, providing security to it, paying the salaries of the Islamic clergy working at the mosque and also providing services like religious marriages, funerals, or Qur'an courses. Thus I argue that as a result of this unchallenged control over the administrative religious affairs of Banyabashi Mosque, in time the mosque has become the bastion of the Hadzhi administration.

During the decades the two rival organizations, Gendzhev's and the one now led by Hadzhi, have competed over the headquarters building of the Chief Muftiship. In 1992 Gendzhev's administration left the mentioned premises as in 1995 Hasan's administration had to leave the Islamic administrational buildings which he took them back over in 1997. Afterwards while the person occupying the chief mufti post has changed, the control of the Islamic administrative premises has remained with the Hasan and Hadzhi organization.

However during my fieldwork in the summer of 2010 following the intensely protested court decision of 12 May 2010 which annulled the Chief Muftiship of Hadzhi there had been couple of more attempts by the Gendzhev organization on taking over the Sofia headquarters building of the Chief Muftiship. Those attempts were met by resistance from the Chief Muftiship organization of Hadzhi. The resistance was led by Hadzhi and his deputy chief muftis accompanied by the administrative workers of their office.[72]

Therefore all those events point out that the headquarters of the Chief Muftiship can be subjected to physical interference and competition by the rival organizations. However, throughout my research Banyabashi Mosque was never open to any such penetrations and it had been the stronghold of the administration of Hadzhi. In this

[72] "20 Bulgar, Müslümanların Başmüftülüğünü Ele Geçirmeye Çalışıyor," Kardzhali News Journal, *Kırcaali Haber Gazetesi*, 4 September 2010.

section I will elaborate on the affiliation between the Chief Mufti's Office in Sofia and Banyabashi Mosque. Through empirical examples I intend to show how Banyabashi Mosque had grown to be one of the propaganda organs of the Hadzhi organization.

Firstly, I will discuss the influence of the clergymen working at Banyabashi Mosque and the members of the congregation frequenting the mosque who are also active supporters of the Hadzhi organization.

The workers of the mosque are the two imams, a *vaiz* and two caretakers. *Vaiz* is an educated religious worker who lectures at the mosque about a variety of themes with references to religious implications. A *vaiz* could be a man or a woman while in Banyabashi Mosque there was only a male *vaiz* due to the lack of a congregation of women. The one lecturing at Banyabashi spoke every Friday before the Friday prayer and only in Bulgarian.

All the workers of Banyabashi Mosque are hired by the Hadzhi administration, yet especially the imams and the *vaiz* are meticulously handpicked by the chief mufti himself among the students of the Higher Islamic Institute. In the previous chapter I discussed the hiring process of Banyabashi Mosque's imam in more detail. However one of the reasons for the carefulness with the appointment of Banyabashi's staff was that those spiritual workers would be the representatives of the Hadzhi administration on the ground. Thus besides having to bear competent knowledge of Islam, Hadzhi himself made sure that they were also full supporters of his administration.

For example when I wanted to hear the opinion of one of the imams on the rival groups, he told me that "as someone directly involved within the organization I even don't know it in full detail. But there is a man called Nedim Gendzhev. He is a communist. What things he had done are public knowledge, there is no need for me to retell them now. In 1989, they call it *Vŭzroditelniyat Protses* ,it means *Revival.* They wanted to change our names, you must have heard. Communists made this

Nedim Gendzhev chief mufti back then. You'd better go to the Chief Mufti's Office, they'd also give you some documents."[73]

Clearly the chief muftiship he was referring as the source of correct information about the conflict over the leadership of Muslim denomination was an active side in the conflict which was in rivalry with Gendzhev's organization. The opinions of the imam were the same as used publicly as their official discourse by the Hadzhi organization against Gendzhev's. Hadzhi's group argued that the most important reason why Gendzhev should never be the chief mufti of Muslim denomination in Bulgaria was his alleged collaboration with the communist state's assimilation campaign against ethnic Turks. Thus the clergymen also work as activists of the Hadzhi group when they are to express their opinions about the leadership matters.

By controlling the education of the religious personnel the chief muftiship of Hadzhi is able to build up supporters for their cause who in return function as a propagating organ of Hadzhi's administration. The religious personnel are appointed by Hadzhi's Chief Muftiship as spiritual workers all around Bulgaria. They are the responsible staff for carrying out the Islamic affairs of the host community of their placements. Therefore the chief muftiship of Hadzhi is maintaining a certain political power through educating the religious personnel on its own terms.

Moreover within the frequenters of Banyabashi Mosque there were also active supporters of Hadzhi's organization. Those people included high ranking officials and clerks working at the Chief Muftiship's headquarters, teachers and students from the Higher Islamic Institute, journalists, authors, and clerks working at the Religious Affairs Department of the Turkish Embassy. Those people were enjoying a level of

[73] "*İşin içinde biri olarak ben bile tam ayrıntısıyla bilmiyomrum ama şimdi Nedim Gencev diye biri var. Komunist kendisi. Onun yaptıkları zaten ortada benim şimdi tekrar etmeme gerek yok. 1989'da Vızroditelniyat Protses derler, yeniden canlandırma anlamına gelir. Bizim ismimizi değiştirmek istediler, duymuşsundur. Bu Nedim Gencev'i o zaman komunistler müftü yapmışlar. Siz en iyisi müftülüğe gidin onlar size hem belge falan da verirler."*
The actions by the government of Todo Zhivkov known as *Vŭzroditelniyat Protses*, or The Revival Process were when the Bulgarian state enforced the ethnic Turks of Bulgaria to change their names into Slavic ones in 1984 and resulted in 1989 with an immigration wave of about 320,000 ethnic Turks to Turkey due to the harsh measures Bulgarian state had been taking against the rebellious groups who had resisted and not accepted to change their names.

political influence on the other ethnic Turkish members of the congregation since those people were occupying positions which provide them with a certain political capital. They were administering the religious Islamic life in Bulgaria, training the prospective religious personnel, studying to become the prospective religious personnel, publishing books or writing articles about political issues concerning the Muslim minority and lastly officially representing the Turkish state. Especially they attended exclusively to the Friday noon prayers and mingled with each other and other members of the congregation. Friday prayers provided an opportunity to chat about political matters or what they had been up to recently. Thus through the shared membership within Banyabashi Mosque's congregation socializing with those people who could be seen in political discussion programs on TV or whose books could be found in the local bookstores or whose articles could be read in local news journals helped to establish more sympathy among the ordinary members of the congregation for Hadzhi's leadership than Gendzhev's one.

Throughout my entire fieldwork with whomever I spoke about the problem at the chief muftiship I only heard about the injustice Hadzhi had been suffering and that also meant injustice for the whole Muslim community of Bulgaria. The shared information about the problem was that the 'government'[74] was not registering the elected chief mufti for a very long time. When I asked further almost each time my questions were met by the pieces of Hadzhi's political campaign discourse against Gendzhev. I was often told that Gendzhev was an atheist communist, a state agent, an alcoholic, a thief and that he was only after selling the properties of the Muslim denomination for his own benefits. This was without one exception the opinions of everyone I had talked to about Gendzhev. Although quite rarely Hadzhi, himself, attended some of the prayers throughout my field, Gendzhev never once showed up. Beside the fact that he didn't even once visit the mosque, I didn't see anyone from his political campaign, either. Thus the political activism of Hadzhi's campaign within the mosque congregation plus the non-existing political propaganda of

[74] The ordinary congregation members actually accused the government rather than the courts for not registering Mustafa Alish Hadzhi as the chief mufti.

Gendzhev resulted in Banyabashi Mosque's Turkish members of the congregation fully supporting Hadzhi's organization.

At one instance the lack of Gendzhev's voice within the congregation of the Banyabashi Mosque became quite clear. It was a night in the month of Ramadan. People were waiting for the night prayer inside the mosque in small groups following the communal fast breaking dinner. I was with one of the groups and listening to their conversation. It was a quite heated time since Gendzhev sent his representatives accompanied with professional body guards to take over the headquarters of the chief muftiship. The situation got quite tense as the clerks from the Hadzhi's Chief Muftiship locked themselves inside the building and declared that they would answer back the same way to any physical attempt of removing them from the building. Thus it was the highlight of the week within the congregation. The group was discussing about the timing of Gendzhev's actions. They concluded that even if Gendzhev had had the right to take over the building of the chief muftiship since the court decision on 12th May 2010 entitled him to the chief mufti position, the manner he had chosen to do it caused unrest within the Muslim community. Further that was even more wrong regarding that it was the middle of the holy month of Ramadan, the most sacred times of the Islamic year. Following this conclusion one of them said that "Now he claims that he is going to become the chief mufti. Yet he hasn't even once showed up in the mosque so that we would listen to his side of the story."[75] This comment pointed out to couple of facts. Firstly, Gendzhev's lack of physical existence from the mosque was likely to cause misinformation about the conflict and Banyabashi congregation was observant about this. Secondly this member of the congregation was willing to hear Gendzhev's side of the story which also meant that they had only been listening to Hadzhi's version. And lastly while he disagreed with Gendzhev's invasion-like approach to the chief muftiship premises, he was not so much against Gendzhev's leadership as long as he had come down to the mosque and expressed himself clearly to the congregation.

[75] "Şimdi, Gencev başmüftülük yapacakmış da bir kere bile camiye gelmedi ki bir de ondan dinleyelim ne olmuş."

Next day half an hour after the evening prayer four men entered the mosque. It was again the same time of the day as the day before where people in small groups were waiting for the night prayer inside the mosque. The late comers didn't greet anyone and they walked directly to the prayer niche (*mihrab*) and started praying. I hadn't seen them before and the way they moved, the intimidating self-confidence they had without looking at anyone and coming quite late for the evening prayer I wondered whether those were Gendzhev and his cadre. I reckoned that if Gendzhev had ever been to show up for a prayer he wouldn't have attended it on time with the rest of the congregation. I assumed so because only a few days earlier there had been a clash between the supporters of Hadzhi and Gendzhev in Dzhumaya Mosque in Plovdiv, the second largest city of Bulgaria with a notable ethnic Muslim population.[76] Thus Gendzhev just showing up for the evening prayer would have caused quite an unrest within the congregation. That was why I thought him arriving after the scheduled prayer time when it was less crowded and calmer in the mosque to just show himself would have been a reasonable political move. Because it would convey the message that he would be claiming the chief muftiship of Bulgaria and everything affiliated with it. However when I asked the imam whether those men were Gendzhev and his associates, he answered with a very strong skepticism and said "Not a single chance. Not even in his wildest dreams."[77] The stress in imam's response emphasized his confidence on the improbability of Gendzhev ever personally entering Banyabashi Mosque. He explained to me that those were supporters of Hadzhi who just arrived from the countryside to give their endorsement to him about Hadzhi's and his staff being removed from the chief muftiship headquarters.

Thus, to put it briefly it was legally authorized to Hadzhi's leadership to resign from the chief muftiship organization. Therefore it was in Genzhev organization's capacity to ask for Hadzhi's clerks to leave the headquarters to Gendzhev's representatives. However, such a control was not possible over Banyabashi Mosque. The workers at the mosque were still the ones appointed by Hadzhi's Chief

[76] "Tension among Bulgarian Muslims Escalate to Mosque Brawl," Novinite – Sofia News Agency, 12 August 2010.

[77] "*Yok artık daha neler?! Rüyasında göremez."*

Muftiship and the replacement of them immediately would not be so simple. Because Banyabashi Mosque in time became the strongest pro Hadzhi leadership political center through the influence of the religious clergy and other influential members of the congregation. Banyabashi Mosque's being the only mosque in Sofia makes it a strongly convenient place to reach a regular Muslim congregation. In the following paragraphs I will provide further examples about the role of the mosque as a place for generating political support and also conveying political messages.

The first example will be the use of the sermons as a means to make public statements about political matters. My first encounter with my field was a Friday noon prayer. What took my attention most in this first visit was the sermon. The sermon on Friday noon prayers are part of the praying ritual. The performance of the prayer starts and after performing the first part, the person who delivers the sermons, *hatib,* climbs up the pulpit, *minber*, and delivers a sermon, also known as Friday Sermon, *Cuma Hutbesi*. Those sermons in Banyabashi Mosque were delivered firstly in Turkish and then in Bulgarian. This first sermon I listened to in my fieldwork was openly political. That was on 14th May, two days after the court decision of 12th May which ruled the leadership of Hazdhi null and void. It was addressing current problems of the Muslim community of Bulgaria. It was about a lawsuit which was referred by the *hatib* as "A sickness upon us."[78] This open reference to the dispute about the chief muftiship institute alerted me about watching the sermons closely.

The sermons delivered in Banyabashi Mosque had been written weekly by the Chief Muftiship Office and handed to the *hatib* for him to preach at the Friday prayer. Hence via the Friday sermons the messages of the Chief Muftiship could easily be conveyed to the congregation present at the Friday prayers. The 'natural' crowd of the Friday prayers also made it quite suitable for a public statement of the chief muftiship. For this reason listening to the sermons the congregation was able to follow the position of the chief muftiship of Hadzhi on varying matters. I listened to 14 such sermons which were sometimes directly but most of the time subtly referring to the current situation of Islam in Bulgaria.

[78] *"Başımızda bir mahkeme illeti,"*

The sermons I had listened to can be categorized under two thematic groups: the themes of the sermons in the first group were composed of a more general Islamic guidance to the congregation. For example one sermon was about the humanity's alienation from religion "under the notions of modernity and technology"[79] and consequently the importance of acting in unison for Muslims. In another one the sermon was about the importance of praying together with a congregation for building up a sense of community. The sermon emphasized that praying with a congregation would help to overcome the differences between people and guide them towards feelings of brotherhood and equality. Emphasis on unity and solidarity were recurring themes among the sermons. Another time the sermon was about the love for a divine creator. The sermon stated that love is the most important aspect that brings unity and togetherness to the society through helping the society to overcome the differences within itself.[80]

As those examples show the concepts of unity and togetherness were stressed on different levels. For instance praying with a congregation would help to bring unity to the mixed congregation of Banyabashi Mosque through helping the congregation to overcome the differences within, while love would bring unity to the whole society of Bulgaria through again overcoming the differences within. Nevertheless this time the Muslims regardless of the differences they have within themselves categorized as an entity that composed the heterogeneous Bulgarian society along with other groups. And lastly in the sermon of humankind turning its back to the religion in general, Muslims were referred as a global community and were advised to act in harmony against this general global threat.

The second category of the sermons is the ones with direct reference to daily occasions. In this first sermon I listened to, it continued with directly referring to the 12th May decision that "we couldn't bring the court problem to a workable solution

[79] *"Günümüz toplumunda modernite ve tekonoloji kavramları altında din geri plana itilmiştir,"* from the sermon delivered at Banyabashi Mosque on June 11 2010.

[80] "*Sevgi toplumsal farklılıkları ortadan kaldıran; birlik ve beraberliği sağlayan en önemli unsurdur*," from the sermon delivered at Banyabashi Mosque on July 16 2010.

in our 20 years of democracy."[81] Nevertheless in the same sermon the *hatib* addressed futher problems of the Muslim community beyond the chief muftiship problem. He preached further and stated that "our call to prayers, the sacred veils of our women, our children's being able to read Qur'an fluently are bothering others."[82] He continued with arguing that "it is also our country here. Our grandparents, our parents built it all together. We also have rights in this country,"[83] The sermon was a statement of complaints on behalf of the Muslim community of Bulgaria. Following stating the chief muftiship problem, the sermon addressed the uneasiness about the call to prayers whose sound volume has been made a continuous topic of complaint since 2006 by different circles but especially by an ultra-nationalist party.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I tried to illustrate the meanings of sites in political events. As Kuper states a somewhat eclectic examination of sites might provide a fresh perspective to understand the relationship between space and political events (1972: 415). The political event I discussed in this chapter with its relationship to Banyabashi Mosque was the dispute over the religious leadership position of Muslims in Bulgaria. This spiritual leadership is organized under the name of the Chief Muftiship of the Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria. It was first established when Bulgaria declared its independence from Ottoman Empire to oversee the affairs of the Muslim community living in the Bulgarian territory. Afterwards the institution persisted to function during the state socialism years. Although the official position of the communist regime was anti religion and pro atheist, the governments decided not to abolish the spiritual leaderships but subvert to the profit of the state. At the end of 1989 when the Communist Party resigned and the transition to a parliamentary democracy started, the religious freedom was reestablished which theoretically gave

[81] "*20 yıllık demokrasisi olan ülkemizde mahkeme illetini bir çözüme ulaştırmadık.*" From the sermon delivered at Banyabashi Mosque on May 14 2010.

[82] "*Müezzinlerimizin sesinden, kadınlarımızın mübarek baş örtüsünden, çocuklarımızın bülbüller gibi Kur'an okumasından rahatsız oluyorlar."*

[8383] "*Burası bizim de ülkemiz. Dedelerimiz, ninelerimiz, annelerimiz birlikte inşa ettiler. Bizim de bu ülkede haklarımız var."*

the spiritual leaderships their right to exist independently without state interference into their internal affairs. While that had been the theoretically the case on the political level, the legal framework was not compatible with the rhetorical discourse and just on the contrary it was enacted to enable state interference in the internal affairs of religious denominations. The gap in the legal framework caused the dead end political dispute over the chief mufti position which started in 1991 and today in 2012 has not yet solved. The motives behind this dispute were argued to be the sizeable income of the Office of the Chief Mufti and also the political power that comes along with the position.

Kuper identifies that an event can be regarded as a series of interactions between people interested and involved in a particular issue. She continues by defining politics as a struggle for power and its rewards in the field of public affairs, thus political events are by definition series of more or less competitive divisive interactions (Kuper, 1972: 415). Thus the ethnographical findings I analyzed in this chapter are all in one way or another how key sites are interpreted, manipulated and appropriated in political situations within time and history by different groups of people. Thus it was important in this chapter to outline the history of the dispute since the location in which the local conflicts manifest themselves is regarded as the stage upon which social memory is constructed (Low & Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2003: 22). Moreover it is also argued that historical background to political events is a central focus of social contest since "the meanings of past define the stakes of the present" (ibid.) That's why the history of the chief muftiship dispute has always in the background of the empirical findings I came across during fieldwork. That's why without having a comment on the political and legal story behind the empirical findings I presented in this chapter the data just do not find its ground to fit.

In the ethnographic findings of this chapter I tried to illustrate how Banyabashi Mosque has become to be a site embedded with social history and power in the chief muftiship dispute. Even more through practice spread over years it had become a stronghold and a propaganda tool for one of the rival organizations struggling to take the chief muftiship post. This was accomplished firstly over controlling the

education institutions that had been training the Islamic personnel to provide religious services to the believers, secondly through constant contact of politically active people with the rest of the congregation who can in the least give their support and become sympathizers and take sides in the conflict and lastly by converting the religious duties into instruments of political propaganda, like in the case of sermons. The examples I draw upon for my analysis all illustrate how individuals and groups build up resistances through the experience of space as a contested territory against the consequences of larger sociopolitical, economic and historical forces. Finally Gupta and Ferguson claims that resistance should be seen as an experience that constructs and reconstructs the identity of subjects as long as it can be connected to some form of collective practice (1997: 19 - 20).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I aimed to explore the role of social practice in the production of space within an anthropological perspective. In particular I drew my empirical data from my fieldwork in the site of Banyabashi Mosque in Sofia, Bulgaria. Ethnographic approach to the study of built environment in the case of Banyabashi Mosque illustrated essentially the importance of diverse everyday practices in the production of the social and social space. I tried to show that there was no one unified experience of being in Banyabashi Mosque. Putting the mosque in the center of this work to study the complex reality of a place it was possible to point out that for each individual a place had a peculiar, distinctive and multifaceted reality, one that was being shared with other individuals on different levels. Thus my intention was to acknowledge the fact that places were not simply settings for social action, nor were they mere reflections of society (Rodman, 1992: 218), but rather a meeting point through which complicated sets of social and political relations manifest themselves as a result of various encounters of individuals and groups in relation to the space. Banyabashi Mosque providing complex networks within its congregation based on ethnicity, race, gender, interest, and profession was a suitable site to study the social production of the built environment within the daily routines and the experiences of individuals.

Aiming to understand how spaces were produced by social practice I started firstly with uncovering how and on which grounds Banyabashi Mosque had come to be the only mosque left among all the mosques in Sofia after Bulgaria had declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century. As part of the

Ottoman material heritage left in Sofia after the independence, the historical background of Banyabashi Mosque is deeply relevant and illustrative of the first years of Bulgarian modernization and nation-making processes. Having to live under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for centuries had come to be seen as the reason for socio-political underdevelopment of the Bulgarians as a nation. Thus buildings and structures that had been associated with the Ottoman past were started to be perceived as the remainders of the oppression. Consequently the eradication or repurposing of those buildings were considered as symbolic acts declaring a rupture with the past and a fresh start as an independent 'western' nation state. Moreover as Banyabashi Mosque was left as the only active mosque in the capital, it had become the subject of diplomatic dispute between the Bulgarian and Ottoman states. As Sofia municipality took decisions in different times towards demolishing the mosque, Ottoman governments interpreted those decisions as an evidence of the unofficial hostile state policies of Bulgaria towards the Muslim community living under the Bulgarian state.

Furthermore following the history, I included an oral history of the mosque as narrated by a politically very active and influential journalist belonging to the ethnic Turkish minority of Bulgaria. He's been living in Sofia for more than half a century. Thus his memories of Banyabashi Mosque are very much shaped by the socialist context of those years. The narratives of Banyabashi Mosque as being remembered by once a fervent supporter of communism who had to modify his religious identity for political reasons are also memories of the practiced communist ideology and its transformation in time accordingly with the changing socio-economic context of the world. Combined together the histories and individual narratives provide fragments of a particular experience. In the case of Banyabashi Mosque they provide a perspective to look at the meanings of space and the spatial practices to have a deeper understanding about the state power and the limits of it through its relationship with the perceived, conceived and lived spaces as Lefebvrian sense.

Subsequent to Banyabashi Mosque's attaining meanings and becoming a social space as was represented in historical texts and individual memories, secondly I

discussed and analyzed the way it was appropriated daily by its congregation for religious duties. Banyabashi Mosque is an intersection point for different groups. The whole congregation of the Banyabashi Mosque is professing Sunni Islam. However within the congregation there are followers of Hanafi School of Law and Shafii School of Law. Besides Banyabashi Mosque being the only place for Islamic congregational praying those groups have to share the same space for fulfilling their religious duties. Depending on the religious rituals the mosque displays a daily, weekly and annual routine during which it is attended by a different group of people. Throughout this routine since at different times different groups come together, social relations between the individuals and the groups are established, maintained and reproduced. Those social relations result in asymmetrical power relations which are directly related to the ethnic background, gender and age. Individuals appropriate discourse and spatial practice to act out the differences of ethnic identity or the Islamic School of Law. In addition to highlighting the differences, the usage of space also helps with negotiations and maintenance of the boundaries among the groups.

Lastly in order to discuss the political symbolism of spaces I outlined a two decade long legal dispute of political nature over the leadership of the Muslim denomination of Bulgaria. Banyabashi Mosque has an overall significant meaning representing the existence of Islam in the capital of the country. The historical developments since the independence of Bulgaria display that Banyabashi Mosque has been used as a political tool during different periods accordingly with the changing political body over the Bulgarian territory. During the times of monarchy the preservation of the mosque had been the departure point of interstate discussions about the wellness of the Muslim national subjects of the Bulgarian state. Following those years during the state socialism Banyabashi Mosque had continued to represent the existence of Islam and Muslims in Bulgaria. It was appropriated by the state as a litmus paper to measure how true of communists the citizens from ethnic Muslim backgrounds were; again turning the mosque into a meaningful place permeated with political symbols. It is the meanings Banyabashi Mosque was attributed to have changed as the political context has been changing in Bulgaria, yet the political nature of the mosque has remained.

After the fall of communism in 1989 one of the changes the transition period to a more democratic state regime entailed was reinstating the religious freedom. Along with the other faiths in Bulgaria the supposed spiritual authority of Muslims, the chief muftiship institution, was also reestablished to a less state controlled more independent status. However lack of a proficient legal framework on the regulation of administrative bodies of religious faiths paved the way for a struggle over the post of chief muftiship between two groups. In 2012 the conflict has still not been come to a solution that is acceptable for both parties.

What the analysis of my empirical findings pointed out was that Banyabashi Mosque in time had become the stronghold for one of the two rival groups and they had come to have a symbolic possession over the perceived space of the mosque (Lefebvre, 1991). Thus besides being the representational monument for Islam in Bulgaria, Banyabashi Mosque was also a potent political power center in a political dispute. Through different practices such as being in control of the Islamic clergy that is in touch with the congregation or directly organizing the congregation to give support and even join to the acts of political manifestation, one of the groups had turned the space of the mosque into a place where they made their own political propaganda and even recruited supporters to their cause. Thus once again on a different political context Banyabashi Mosque has come to convey changing subjective and situational meanings according to the position an individual enters to the realm of its multilayered space.

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APPENDIX

METU LIBRARY

TEZ FOTOKOPİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü ☐

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü ☐

Enformatik Enstitüsü ☐

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Kahraman.....
Adı : Yakup Deniz.....
Bölümü : Sosyal Antropoloji.....

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : Producing Space: An Ethnographic Case Study in Banyabashi Mosque, Sofia, Bulgaria.....
TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans ☐ Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılsın ve kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla tezimin bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisi alınsın. ☐
2. Tezimin tamamı yalnızca Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi kullancılarının erişimine açılsın. (Bu seçenekle tezinizin fotokopisi ya da elektronik kopyası Kütüphane aracılığı ile ODTÜ dışına dağıtılmayacaktır.) ☐
3. Tezim bir (1) yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olsun. (Bu seçenekle tezinizin fotokopisi ya da elektronik kopyası Kütüphane aracılığı ile ODTÜ dışına dağıtılmayacaktır.) ☐

Yazarın imzası ..... Tarih .....