THE STATUS OF PIOUS WOMEN IN SUNNI ISLAM: A STUDY ON THE
PUBLIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF WOMEN IN ANKARA

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# ABSTRACT

THE STATUS OF PIOUS WOMEN IN SUNNI ISLAM: A STUDY ON THE

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The aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate how pious women's undertaking of public Islamic practices shapes their social status within the private domains such as their families and neighborhoods and public spaces of the mosque and Quran courses in urban Ankara in contemporary Turkey. I conducted an ethnographic field study in the Quran courses in three districts of Ankara, namely Bahçelievler, Çukurambar and Sincan which are middle, upper middle and lower middle class respectively. This study focuses on the findings of my participant observation within congregational prayers, Quran recitation and "*sohbet*" sessions of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) and 26 semi-structured interviews conducted with pious lay women and female preachers. I aim to find out despite their subordinate status within Islamic practices, how pious women enhance their status through their practicing of Islamic rituals.

The main finding of this study is that a pious woman's social status is enhanced by the performance of public Islamic rituals juxtaposed with factors such as religious knowledge, display of emotions during ritual and the negotiation of daily chores with religious duties. This finding reflects both the fact that practicing Islamic rituals grants agency to pious women by enhancing their social status and also the fact that gender and religion work together in maintaining the subordination of women, and control of them by the patriarchal society.

**Keywords**: Sunni-Islamic rituals, social status, agency, pious women, Turkey

# ÖZ

## SÜNNİ İSLAM'DA DİNDAR KADINLARIN KONUMU: ANKARA'DA KADINLARIN KAMUSAL DİNİ PRATİKLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Bu tezin amacı günümüz Türkiye'sinde Ankara kentinde yaşayan dindar kadınların kamusal İslami pratiklerinin aile ve komşuluk gibi özel alanlardaki ve cami ve Kuran kursları gibi kamusal alanlardaki sosyal statülerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini göstermektir. Bu amaçla Ankara'nın orta sınıf, üst orta sınıf ve alt orta sınıf üç semti olan Bahçelievler, Çukurambar ve Sincan semtlerindeki Kuran kurslarında etnografik bir alan çalışması yaptım. Bu çalışma, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın "*sohbet*" ve Kuran okuma pratikleri ile cemaat namazları sırasında yaptığım katılımcı gözlemin ve "sıradan" dindar kadınlar ve vaizelerle yaptığım 26 yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatın bulgularına odaklanmaktadır. Bu tezde İslami pratiklerdeki tabi kılınan konumlarına rağmen, dindar kadınların İslami ritüeller yoluyla aile içinde, komşuları ve arkadaşları arasında statülerini nasıl iyileştirdikleri sorusuna yanıt arıyorum.

Bu çalışmanın temel bulgusu, kamusal İslami ritüeller yaparak dindar bir kadının statüsünün iyileşmesinin dini ritüel performans ile dini bilgi, duyguların ritüel esnasında dışavurumu ve günlük işlerin dini görevlerle dengelenmesi gibi etkenlerin bir araya gelmesi sonucu gerçekleştiğidir. Bu bulgu, ibadet etmenin dindar kadınların statüsünü iyileştirerek onlara bir faillik kazandırabildiğini göstermektedir. Bu bulgu,

aynı zamanda, toplumsal cinsiyet ve dinin ataerkil toplum tarafından kadınların kontrol ve tahakküm altına alınmasını sürdürmede beraber çalıştıklarını da göstermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler**: Sünni-Islami ritüeller, sosyal statü, faillik, dindar kadınlar, Türkiye

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES

**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1.Main Objectives

Women's lowly status and their limited social participation in Muslim societies have been widely discussed by scholars of gender, Islam and the Middle East (cf. Mernissi 1987; Lazreg 1988; Kandiyoti 1991; Ahmed 1992; Saktanber 2002; Keddie 2007; Charrad 2011). Some scholars suggested that despite subordinate standing of Muslim women in Islamic societies, women take active part in Islamist politics (see e. g. Göle 1997 and Arat 2012 for the Turkish case; Mahmood 2005 for Egyptian case and Afshar 1996 and Mir-Hosseini 1996 for Iranian case). Nevertheless, Muslim women are not only active in the political arena but also they have central roles in the Islamist project of identity building and lifestyle construction. It is argued that women are seen as keepers of Islamic tradition and culture hence they are given a central status by Islamist movements in their social, political and cultural agenda (e.g. Yazbeck Haddad 1982; Saktanber 2002; Raudvere 2012). There are three related controversial issues here: whether Muslim women's active participation in building an Islamist way of life gives them agency or not; the nature of this agency; and the paradox of women's support for a religious movement which is regarded as subordinating women (for example see Mahmood 2005 and Lazreg 2009). The aim of this study is to understand this riddle by analyzing one layer of it, that is, whether pious women's public religious participation grants them any agency in terms of status elevation and if yes what the nature of this agency is.

Pious Muslim women's status within religious practices reflects this general picture of women's status in Islamic societies. Within the "religious field" in the Muslim societies, in the sense that Bourdieu (1991) uses the notion of "field" as an arena where different actors compete for power using their religious capital, it has been demonstrated that pious women have a secondary status in the religious practices of Islam as they are segregated and excluded from certain rituals (cf. Smith 1985; Marcus 1987; Reda 2004). Nevertheless, I argue that certain women consciously choose to be pious followers of Islam, since this lifestyle rewards them, providing them with a certain kind of agency if they have the necessary components of "religious capital". Women's agency is conceptualized as "capacity for autonomous action" here (McNay 2000). However, it is a limited agency as it perpetuates the idea of a "good woman" put forward by the patriarchal relations of power and patriarchal interpretations of Islam. The aim of this dissertation is to explore the complex relationship between pious women's performance of Islamic religious practices in their everyday lives and their social status; within the private and public domains such as their families, neighborhoods and public spaces of the mosque and Quran courses. I assume that women's participation in religious ritual practices has an impact on their social status in terms of the level of respect and prestige they receive from their close family, friends and neighbors.

I conceptualize religion (Islam in particular) and patriarchy as systems which mutually influence each other. Although I do not claim that one is more influential over the other. As Kandiyoti (1997: 14) states, the attribution of the patterns of male domination seen in Middle Eastern countries to Islam relies upon a basic delusion: Islam, as a universal religion which can lead into various applications and interpretations, is mixed with a mode of male domination which we can call as classical patriarchy. This thesis seeks to understand how this patriarchal system which subordinates pious women and Islamic practices work together to confine women to the roles of "pious housewives, pious mothers and pious wives". In particular, it focuses on examining the patriarchal gender hierarchy produced and

reproduced through religious practices in Islam. One of the main findings of this study is that a pious woman's social status is influenced by the performance of religious rituals and a pious woman's social status is enhanced by the juxtaposition of religious ritual performance with factors such as religious knowledge, display of emotions during prayer, undertaking of supererogatory rituals and the negotiation of daily chores alongside religious duties. This finding reflects how pious women exhibit certain forms and levels of agency in gender-traditional contexts and at the same time how gender and religion work together in the domination of women, maintaining the subordination of women, and the control of them by the patriarchal society.

When major world religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam are studied, it is immediately apparent that women's religious practices are either ignored altogether, treated as secondary or in some way devalued in comparison to men's religious practices (cf. Tapper & Tapper 1987; Kraemer 1992; Schimmel 1994; Woodlock 2010). Although the boundaries between religious practices of men and women are not clear-cut, there are some gender specific rituals within certain religions. What is more, women are usually regarded as the practitioners of heterodox religious rituals. For example, in Islam most followers pray five times a day- an orthodox practice- and also undertake shrine visits on holy times such as Ramadan and at holy *kandil* nights or when they have a wish or problem. It is observed that more women than men engage in shrine visiting, an act regarded as superstitious by religious orthodoxy, and the general public (e. g. Tapper 1990; van Bruinessen 2005; Hart 2013). Furthermore, the practice of shrine visitations in itself, is seen as secondary to the daily prayers, and of a lower spiritual value. Accordingly, the women who perform shrine visitations are seen as less pious than and secondary to men. On another topic, in many major world religions, women are either completely excluded from, or given a secondary role in the performance of public, communal rituals. They are often excluded from public religious places and are often excluded from religious leadership positions. This thesis questions whether, despite their subordinate status

within Islamic religious practices and formal rituals, pious women are able to enhance their status (within the family, neighborhood and friends) by practicing Islamic rituals. This is a crucial question, as a believer's spiritual status in Islam is determined by her loyalty to religious practices and her degree of "superiority in piety". Although the sole determiner of distinction between Muslim believers is piety according to the Quran, women are subordinated and secondary at the level of religious practice.

Given the situation regarding women's secondary status in the performance of religious rituals, there are many challenges from pious women to the patriarchal religions in order to gain recognition as religious leaders, to gain their ritual rights and to better their status within religious rituals. Pious women perform religious rituals and challenge the established patriarchal norms of religion simultaneously. What is more, I argue that pious women can gain an elevated social status by their performance of religious rituals combined with religious knowledge and their performance of "good womanhood"; the standards of which are set according to patriarchal and religious norms of the society. Whether these simultaneous processes of status elevation and pious women's struggle with the orthodoxy push the limits of the established social and religious order is one of the central questions of this dissertation.

Turkey has been ruled by the neo-conservative Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002. The ruling elite's conservative discourse on "proper womanhood" and related policies have set the standards of women's status in the country from 2002 onwards. A woman's natural sphere is conceived as "the family" in contemporary Turkey (Coşar & Yeğenoğlu 2011; Acar & Altunok 2013; Beşpınar 2014) and a woman's primary function is maternal (Ayata & Tütüncü 2008). A *proper woman* as interpreted in the agenda of the Islamist AKP is a woman who puts family before her career, a woman who would not have an abortion, and a woman

who bears at least three children. This idea of a *proper woman* is based on a patriarchal understanding of orthodox Islam.

Here, I have to underline the importance of the political and social context in Turkey for the issues discussed in this dissertation. An Islamist party is in rule for the last 15 years and women's participation into public religious activities have become easier and may even provide them a certain level of prestige in their social milieu. Over the last two decades, women's status in Turkey has been set according to patriarchal parameters of the conservative government. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA), one of many of the Turkish state's mechanisms, has also played its role in perpetuating the subordinate status of women, defining them only in terms of mothers and wives. Additionally, the DRA, as the state institution responsible for religious affairs, defines women's relation to religion through Quran courses and family counseling bureaus, again constructing womanhood in terms of familial relations. The Directorate has only recently started to deal with the presence of women as primarily Muslim practitioners via an investigation of the appropriateness of women's sections at the mosques[1]. It can be said that a women's religious field- as a sub-field in Turkish religious field- has been emerging within this socio-political context.

## 1.2.Conceptual Definitions

**Islam, Islamic practices and pious women**

When referring to "Islam" and "Islamic practices", I am speaking specifically of the Sunni Muslim tradition, specifically the Hanafi School of Islamic Law, within the wider Sunni tradition. Following Bourdieu, I interpret the above as currently the

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[1] "Camiler kadınlar için düzenlendi- The mosques have been reorganized for women"
https://diyanet.gov.tr/tr/icerik/camiler-kadinlar-icin-duzenlendi/30579?getEnglish=

mainstream, dominant religious tradition, that is, the "doxa" of the religious field in Turkey.

When using the terms "religious practice" or "Islamic ritual", I am referring specifically to the word '*ibadet*'. Although *ibadet* means the "worship and service of God", its meaning changes embracing a broader definition which may include a wide array of religious practices ranging from daily prayers to charitably giving to the people in need. However, the *ibadet* practices witnessed firsthand during fieldwork concern ritualistic acts such as daily, supererogatory and communal prayers, Quran recitation combined with *sohbet* sessions, fasting and pilgrimage. The different levels of religious practice are referred as *ibadet* especially in the Islamist discourse, creating a religious motivation for its political cause, *dava*.

This study focuses on analyzing the experiences of pious women who practice the orthodox or state version of Islam in Turkey. I define pious women as those who practice their religion intensely, to a degree that their everyday lives are determined according to their religious ritual performance within Islam. Hence, it is not examining specifically women who wear headscarves or women belonging to a certain religious community or religious order. Rather, this thesis analyzes the Islamic religious practice and performance of "ordinary" pious women in their everyday lives.

**Social status**

Another crucial concept within this dissertation is the concept of "social status". I use this phrase in this study to refer to a woman's position and standing within her community. It includes respect and prestige afforded to a pious woman, by people within her closest social networks such as family, friends, neighbors, wider neighborhood and religious circles.

Weber (1946) describes prestige and social honour as the sources of social status and points out the social closure in the formation of status groups. Bourdieu (1989) expands Weber's idea of social closure to include "more subtle, informal kinds of exclusionary practices". He conceptualizes status as capital when it functions "as a social relation of power". In the case of religious field I employ Bourdieu's concept of religious capital to refer to sources providing people distinction and power in this field and symbolic capital to "legitimate demands for recognition, deference, obedience or the services of others" (Swartz, 1997). Thus my conceptualization of social status throughout this dissertation is closely linked to the Bourdieusian conceptualizations of religious capital and symbolic capital.

**Women's agency**

Agency, which emerged as a liberal notion, is a controversial concept. Within this liberal/secular framework, women's agency has been defined as resistance to patriarchal domination. In recent years, women's agency started to be discussed within religion and defined as women's capacity for action (cf. McNay 2000, Mahmood 2001, Charrad 2011). Burke (2012) outlines different forms of women's agency in gender-traditional contexts: resistance agency, empowerment agency, instrumental agency and compliant agency. I discuss these concepts in detail in the theoretical review chapter.

**1.3. Research Themes and Questions**

Focusing on the paradoxal situation of women in Muslim societies, as both subordinated and agentive subjects, the research presented here addresses two major research themes and questions:

Firstly, I investigate the position of pious women within Sunni-Islamic rituals and their struggles with the orthodox Islam's subordination of women by analyzing their forms and levels of agency. To this end, I ask which Islamic practices pious women undertake in public religious places, why they perform these practices and which meanings they assign to their ritual acts. While answering these questions, I refer to resistance agency when pious women challenge their secondary position in public and communal rituals of Islam and their exclusion from public religious places. I refer to instrumental agency to show where and how pious women gain non-religious ends through their religious practices. Lastly, I refer to the concept of compliant agency in explaining pious women's confirming to the patriarchal norms and precepts of Islam confining them to the roles of proper wives and mothers. I also examine differences and similarities across my three field sites in terms of women's agency exhibited in different forms and at different levels.

Secondly, I analyze the relationship between religious practices and social status of pious women, meaning the relationship between religious capital and symbolic capital. I aim to understand how women's participation in religious practices affects their social status within their families, neighborhood and friendship circles and among the fellow pious women who participate in the same Quran course or visit the same mosque. Questions linked to this theme include: is the social status of pious women enhanced when they perform religious rituals? Or when they have religious capital in the form of religious knowledge and expertise? Is there pious women's agency when they perform public Islamic rituals? It is crucial to question, how women, with lives already extremely full with the daily chores of household and family, whether or not they work outside of the home- for employed women, paid employment gives them the additional burden in terms of the organization of everyday life, around family, external work, in addition to observing the religious precepts and *ibadet* principles- negotiate their day to day commitments alongside their religious lives? This fact blurs the binary opposition between the sacred and the profane and gives way to a negotiation process in the lives of Muslim pious women,

enabling them to find a balance between their roles as housewives, mothers, wives, employees/workers and pious Muslims. Lastly, I examine how symbolic capital, as social status, is converted into other forms of capital, for example cultural, social and economic capital, by pious women's undertaking of Islamic rituals.

## 1.4. Research Contribution and Significance

This study is an investigation into the relationship between pious women's social standing within their closer social environments and their performance of religious rituals. The main argument of this dissertation is that religious ritual performance, combined with factors like religious knowledge, display of emotions during prayer and the balancing of daily chores and religious duties, brings pious women prestige and respect. This argument contributes to the debates of women's agency within the institution of religion, which is regarded as a patriarchal tool, used to control and subordinate women. While highlighting the empowering nature of women's religious practices, this study proves that religious practices still perpetuate traditional, patriarchal gender roles, with women expected not only to be "good" but also "pious" wives, mothers and housewives. Hence, the main concept which this dissertation questions is women's agency in the Muslim contexts and its contribution is based on this questioning.

The significance of this study is also the fact that it resulted from an intensive ethnographic field study, lasting more than two years. During this time, I conducted participant observation among pious women 26 of whom I also interviewed. The field study was undertaken in the central mosques of Ankara and within Quran courses and masjids at three field sites, namely Bahçelievler (a middle class district with mainly retired bureaucrat families), Çukurambar (a newly developed, neo-conservative middle and upper-middle class district) and Sincan (a traditionally conservative, middle and lower-middle class district with mainly immigrant

population from Central Anatolian towns). I observed everyday religious practices of ordinary pious women, those practicing the official state version of Islam, constructing their own methods of piety. I employ several theoretical approaches to methodology in social sciences. To begin with, following Weber (1998), I understand religious action as "social action" and analyze the communal religious practices of pious women within the public spaces of Islam; namely mosques and Quran courses. Moreover, following Durkheim (2002), I study religious action and religious beliefs together, as two components of one entity, religion. I also employ a "relational approach" of Bourdieu (1998) to the study of social action. According to Bourdieu, there is a relationship of subordination between different actors in a social field like the religious field. A "religious field" is an arena where there are lay believers and religious specialists who have the means of control over production, reproduction and dissemination of religious capital. Religious capital can be any source providing people distinction and hence power. My field study demonstrates that one form of religious capital is religious knowledge combined with the performance of Islamic practices in the women's religious field in Turkey. Pious women in the competitive arena of a religious field have agentive potential to turn their religious capital into other forms of capital. I also employed a Feminist methodology in order to reveal the relationship of domination and subordination on women practitioners of Islam in Turkey. Traditionally, women's religious practices have been ignored, restricted or devalued in comparison to men's religious practices which are interpreted as elements of orthopraxy. While describing and examining women's performance of Islamic practices in Turkish religious field, the patriarchal nature of society, especially within the religious sphere, limiting pious women's Islamic practices and their agency is highlighted.

## 1.5.Chapter Outline

Following the Introduction, Chapter 2 is a theoretical review, in which this research is contextualized. It begins with arguments on the concepts of religion, ritual and Islam; continuing with discussions on the intricate relationship between modernization, secularization and religious revivalism; specifically Islamism and post-Islamism, and the role of women within these movements. It focuses on feminisms of faith as a crucial response from pious women to the patriarchal interpretations of orthodox forms of religions all over the world. It then moves onto the impact of patriarchal interpretations of Islam on the status of women. The question of veiling is presented as an example of current, ongoing debate into whether Muslim women are subjugated or empowered through Islamic practices. A special section is devoted to the status of women in Turkey. The last section of the theoretical review chapter discusses theoretical answers given to the central question of why women choose to take an active part in religions which place them in a subordinate role, controlling and dominating their daily life. Accordingly, I discuss the concepts of *lived* religion, *everyday* religion and *doing* religion with an emphasis on the discussions revolving around pious women's agency in gender-traditional contexts while examining the performance of Islamic practices by pious Sunni Muslim women in the case study of Turkey.

Chapter 3 details the methodological approaches and techniques employed during the ethnographic field study. Following the idea that religious action is also a social action, an interpretative approach was utilized, in order to fully understand pious women's motivation, attachment to, and what they feel they gain from undertaking their ritual actions. What is more, I propose that a feminist methodology is necessary to accurately analyze, and understand the nature of Islamic practices, which are influenced by patriarchal power relations. The second part of Chapter 3 focuses on the fieldwork part of the research, undertaken over two years in Ankara. I elaborate on how I gained entry to, and trust in the three field sites (Bahçelievler, Çukurambar

and Sincan). The benefits of conducting participant observation while studying religious practices of pious women are also discussed. Finally, I record the profile of the interviewees, their ages, marital, educational and occupational status and the number and ages of their children. The chapter ends with discussion of the scope and limitations of my study.

Chapter 4 is the background chapter of my dissertation. I describe the role of women within religion in Turkey, as evidenced in official, mainstream Islam and its doxa: the Hanafi School of Law. The orthodox, patriarchal interpretation of Islam and Islamic practices within the Hanafi School are discussed, as are the differences between orthodox versus heterodox Islam, and the widely accepted gendered correspondence to these two versions of Islam: orthodoxy as men's sphere of religion and heterodoxy as women's sphere of Islamic practices. I outline the components of religious capital which pious women in Turkey's religious sphere are eager to own and then describe the channels through which this religious capital is produced, reproduced and disseminated. I conceptualize the DRA of the Turkish state, religious associations, orders, communities and religious companies as the institutional channels of this process of the production, reproduction and dissemination of religious capital while female preachers of the state, religious orders and communities; self-taught female hodjas and lay women who are regarded as prestigious by their religious networks; and the religious celebrity hodjas are the individual agents who produce and perpetuate the religious capital in women's religious field in Turkey. I also mention women's religious gatherings at homes as occasions where religious capital is created and spread by pious women among each other.

In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, I develop the main arguments, findings and revelations of the research. Chapter 5 discusses women's status within Islamic rituals and the forms of agency they exhibit through their public ritual performances. Despite their secondary and excluded status, it is demonstrated that the case study of Ankara's

pious women represent a challenge to the orthodoxy, by claiming the right to undertake and fulfill both public rituals and leadership positions. This challenge, however, is not a direct and organized struggle, but a resistance to tradition, from within the confines of the roles tailored for Muslim women by the patriarchal interpretation of Islam. Chapter 5 also examines the meanings and non-religious gains of rituals such as Quran recitation, *sohbet* and shrine visitation, as important religious practices for women.

Chapter 6 combines the findings of Chapter 5, with an assessment of which specific factors influence the social status, respect and prestige received by pious women, from family, friends, and neighbors. Religious knowledge and expertise is one such factor serving to enhance the social status of its beholder. Based on field observations, I argue that female religious specialists and lay women with self-gained religious knowledge alike, are hugely respected by their peers, both within formal religious congregations and less formal, social networks. I demonstrate that religious ritual performance brings respect or an enhanced social standing to a female practitioner when demonstrated alongside other beneficial qualities including the display of emotions during prayers. The most significant finding of this chapter is the negotiation of daily chores and Islamic duties by pious women as a status enhancer. After examining how religious capital is turned into symbolic capital in the form of prestige and respect, I also demonstrate how pious women convert this symbolic capital into other forms capital as extra religious ends.

In Chapter 7, the final chapter I summarize and discuss the main findings of this study. I discuss the subordinate status of pious women within Islamic practices, specifically the public communal rituals and the reasons and types of Islamic practice, as undertaken and performed by pious women within Turkey. Referring to the studies on the social status of Muslim women and data from my field study, I discuss the concept of women's agency; the complex relationship between pious women's social status and their religious practices; and the perpetuation of pious

women's roles as family and household caregivers via Islamic rituals. Finally, I sum up the similarities and differences between the three field sites in terms of pious women's agency levels and forms and also the profile of my respondents.

# CHAPTER 2

# THEORETICAL REVIEW

## 2.1. Theoretical reflections on the sociological concept of religion

### 2.1.1. Definitions, functions and conflicts

Religion has been a central concept in both classical and contemporary sociological theory. However, there is no consensus over the definition of the concept. Some scholars like Stausberg (2009) classifies the definitions of religion based on the questions[2] the theories of religion attempt to answer. This is depicted as two broad approaches in the sociology of religion when it comes to define the concept and its functions (Aune 2015; Beyer 2003): substantive or restrictive definitions which ask what religion is (e.g. Tylor 1958; Otto 1958; Berger 1974) and functionalist or expansive definitions which ask what religion does and concentrate on its function in society (e.g. Bellah 1964; Geertz 1966; Luckmann 1967). Nevertheless, these two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories. Many scholars define both the contents and the functions of religion together.

Durkheim (1858-1917), for example, is considered as the leading figure of the functionalist definitions of religion. However, his definition of religion includes both

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[2] According to Stausberg (2009:3-6), these questions are: what is specific about religions (the content and features of religions); the origins (the conditions within which religions emerge); the functions ("causal relations within a normative model") and structure of religions (components and patterns of religion).

the features and functions of religion: "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden- beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim 1995: 44). Among the sociological canon Marx (1978), contrary to Durkheim's view, conceptualized religion as a social institution which is instrumental in hiding inequalities and exploitation. A Weberian approach to religion is based on an "understanding" of its meaning for the practitioners of a particular religion[3] (e.g. Parsons 1944; Tenbruck 1980; Morris 1987). Among contemporary approaches to religion, Bourdieu's (1991) study on the "Genesis and the structure of the religious field" is one approach, built significantly upon Weber's theoretical standpoint, which tries to demonstrate power relations between groups of individuals in the particular field of religion. I employ Bourdieu's framework of religious field while analyzing pious women's Sunni Islamic practices in the public religious places in the case study of Ankara in this study because I examine women's experiences of religion and pious women's agency which are shaped by patriarchal power relations embedded in Islamic practices in an emerging sub-field, that is, women's religious field.

### 2.1.2. Discussions on the definitions of Islam

Before elaborating on the concepts of Bourdieu regarding the religious field, it is necessary to discuss how Islam and Islamic practices are defined in the literature. Mernissi (1987: 17) defines Islam as "not merely a religion" but "a holistic approach to the world". Giving reference to Cantwell-Smith's (1991) concept of Islam as a special case, Mernissi (1987: 17) adds to her definition the dimension of Islam as a "a unique insistence upon itself as a coherent and closed system, a sociologically and

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[3] In contrast to this widely accepted view that Weber's study of religions relies heavily on his methodology of "verstehen", Turner (1974) argues that the notion of rationality is more important in Weber's analysis of religions.

16

legally and even politically organized entity in the mundane world and an ideologically organized entity as an ideal." Esposito (1991) also describes Islam as a way of life where religion and society are related and as a major world religion which has diverse interpretations and ways of living. As Martin (1991) points out in his review of "Islam: The Straight Path" (1991), Esposito's understanding of Islam, however, is based on Sunni Islam and it focuses on the revivalist character of the religion.

The definition of Islam by Mernissi (1987) and Esposito (1991) is in line with Asad's (2003) description of Islam as a set of practices and discourses instead of only as a belief system: "Islam is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs and morals. It is a tradition." (Asad 2009: 20) What is more, Asad's conception of Islamic tradition as a set of discourses on understanding and performing a practice correctly is rooted in the past; it relates to the present connecting religious practices to other social institutions; and it relates to a future when these practices are to be secured, left or changed. I think that this argument of Asad (2009) is parallel to Esposito's (1991) understanding of Islam as a religion to be analyzed from its beginnings to its modern day condition and revivalist aspirations.

This understanding of Islam as a social structural entity has, of course, not been the only approach to the study of Islam and Muslim societies. Geertz (1968), for example, focused on the practice of Islamic rituals and beliefs by believers. Defining religion as a system of symbols, Geertz (1966) sought to understand how Islam as a system of symbols makes societies as unrelated as Morocco and Indonesia similar. Geertz (1968) sees Islam both as an all encompassing factor which renders different societies comparable and as a factor which forms different manifestations of a living

religion. This approach to Islam is also put forward by Gilsenan (1982) who emphasizes the existence of plural Islam(s)[4] instead of a single structure.

I think that these discussions surrounding the definition of Islam provide us with a view of dynamic Islam which interacts with a society's norms and customs and transforms both itself and the society. According to Hourani (1989), this is a response to centuries-long orientalist approach to Islam which was described as a collection of norms, practices and laws affecting all Muslim societies in the same way and creating backward, unchanging and hostile societies. Eickelman (1982: 1) points out that the notion of Islam(s), as one of these responses to orientalist discourse in the study of Islam, ironically gives way to an essentialist understanding of the religion by reducing "Islamic tradition to a single, essentialist set of principles". For him, the task is then to demonstrate how Islam with its universal principles is manifested in different local contexts. Agreeing with Eickelman's standpoint, I try to demonstrate how central rituals of Islam such as daily and communal prayers and Quran recitation are performed and attached meaning by pious women in the locality of three districts of the Turkish capital city.

Another significant issue of discussion in the study of Islam and Muslim societies is the distinction between official religion and popular religion. This distinction is present nearly in all world religions like Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism[5] and it signals a relationship of conflict. Some anthropologists and orientalists used the dichotomy of orthodox versus non-orthodox Islam (cf. Geertz 1968; Gellner 1981; Asad 2009). While orthodox Islam refers to the Great Tradition, urban, scripturalist, hierarchical and centralized religion of the ulama within this conception; non-orthodox Islam refers to the Little Tradition, rural, oral, egalitarian, and segmental

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[4] Gilsenan (1982: 19) defines Islam "as a word that identifies varying relations of practice, representation, symbol, concept, and worldview within the same society and between different societies". See also Aziz al-Azmeh (1993) according to whom there exist different Islam(s) in different socio-political and cultural settings.
[5] The distinction between official religion (or orthodox religion) and popular religion (or heterodox religion) is related to the discussions of what religion is and what it is not.

religion of the tribes (Asad 2009: 8). This distinction, according to Asad, is a way to solve the problem of studying diversity in Muslim beliefs and practices (2009: 8). Some scholars like Gellner (1981) and Geertz (1968) further correlated this dual Islam categorization with two distinct social structures of the North African countries. According to Asad (2009), it is wrong to make such a correlation. On the other hand, Mardin (1991), for the Turkish context, outlines three types of Islam(s): "official Islam" or Sunni Islam or orthodoxy; "heterodoxy" related to the mysticism; and "folk Islam" which people articulate parts of official Islam and mysticism to their everyday lives. I argue that in this articulation process, the division between official and popular Islam gets blurred, that is, central ritual practices of Islam which are categorized as orthodox can include elements of popular Islam. These discussions on the Turkish context are elaborated in Chapter 4 which is about the structure of the women's religious field in Turkey.

What is more significant about this distinction between official and popular Islam for my study is that this division is gendered. While official religion is considered as the domain of men's religious practices, popular religious practices are considered as women's domain of religion (cf. Olson 1994; Tapper 1990; Holy 1988; Tapper and Tapper 1987). In effect, what is equated with male religiosity is orthopraxy or the "correct ritual practice" while women's ritual performances are usually equated with magic and superstitions. This gendered division of religion is apparent in Turkish society, too. While men generally practice Islam in the public space of the mosque according to the precepts set by the Directorate of Religious Affairs of Turkey, women engage in religious practices in the privacy of the home and they are usually associated with heterodox practices of shrine visiting (*ziyaret*)[6]. Although this dichotomy is proven wrong by some observations of the women who engage in

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[6] Shrine visiting (*ziyaret*) in Islam is a popular religious practice performed in a dispersed geography from Far East Asia to the Balkans. Faroqhi (1995) states that when a famous saint passed away, his followers believed that the prayers said on the grave of the deceased saint would be realized. Eventually, these kinds of places would turn into shrines. Then, dervish lodges and villages would emerge around these places.

"orthopraxy" and men who engage in "heteropraxy", religious specialists create such a distinction intentionally to "devalue some practices over others", thus to devalue groups who practice those practices (Bourdieu 1991). This distinction then reproduces itself by both men and women within the society.

Since many traditional religious forms have been defined as "superstitions" by the secular state, men, who practice their religion within the state-controlled religious domains, leave a symbolical role to women: that is the role of preserving the domain of religious enthusiasm and becoming the "repositories of spiritual values" which women could perform since they are not involved in the orthodoxy of state-led religion (Tapper and Tapper 1987).

As Graham (2010) argues there is a tendency among social scientists to study "folk", "local" or "popular" Islam which seems "unique, esoteric and exotic" (p. 91). With this tendency, central religious practices of Islam or "Islamic orthopraxy[7]" has largely been ignored in social sciences. When they are studied, it is the semitic origins of the ritual practices which captured the interest of the social scientists. What Graham (2010) suggests is the work of elaborating on the "peculiarly Islamic character of the Muslim ritual" and how Muslim ritual acts "as a source for a Muslim self-image" by taking Muslim ritual seriously as a central expression of Muslim faith (Graham 2010: 92). Asad (2009: 20), too, suggests "the study of Islam with its own foundation in the Quran and the Hadith" and he states that one should start with an "instituted practice into which Muslims are inducted as Muslims" in studying Islam

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[7] The term used to define religious practices approved by the dominant groups within a religion is called as "orthopraxy". Cantwell Smith (1991) translated the word "sunni" as "orthoprax" not as "orthodox". While orthodoxy refers to doctrine and beliefs; orthopraxy refers to correct ritual practice. I should note here that it is not easy, however, to separate Islamic belief from Islamic action and doctrine from ritual. In Islam, both go hand in hand. But since my focus is on the Sunni ritual practice, I prefer using orthopraxy when I mention religious rituals.

(p. 105)[8]. Following both Graham (2010) and Asad (2009), I examine central Islamic practices of prayers and Quran recitation in my field study in order to demonstrate how these rituals shape identities, agencies and everyday lives of pious Muslim women within the Sunni Islamic field in Turkey. For this end, below I explain how the concepts of field and religious field are defined by Bourdieu (1990).

### 2.1.3. Bourdieu's "religious field"

Defining an institution in terms of its function and contents might bypass the power mechanisms and structures through which it structures individuals and how individuals structure that certain institution. Thus, power structures within religion through which gender relations and everyday lives are organized and controlled and also the chances of individuals to restructure religion constitute the main theoretical concern of this study. Hence, Bourdieu's (1990) concept of "field" both as a "structuring structure" and "structured structure" is a useful conceptual tool to determine the mechanisms and social actors that affect and manipulate the relations of the individuals with the "sacred" and also the "profane" and that uncover the gendered power relations within religious practices and institutions.

Swartz (1997) argues that for Bourdieu, "field" is "the structured arena of conflict in which practices occur" (p. 9). In his analysis of field, Bourdieu (2008) utilizes Weber's concept of religious power. Bourdieu claims that there are interactions and struggles of power between different actors in the religious field. Hence, religious field is an arena "where a group of religious specialists is able to monopolize the administration of religious goods and services" (Bourdieu 1991:9 cited in Swartz 1997: 43). Through religious power these religious specialists in the religious field,

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[8] Asad (2009) does not mean that orthopraxy and ritual are more important than the orthodoxy and doctrine. This is because, he asserts, such kind of an argument "ignores the centrality of the notion of 'the correct model' to which an instituted practice- including ritual- ought to conform…" (p. 21).

such as priests and prophets, can gain religious legitimacy which enables them to impose the religious habitus of their belief on lay-people. In this way, "material and symbolic violence can be utilized". However, Bourdieu (2008) does not claim that lay-people in the religious field constitutes a homogenous group. They have their differing religious interests, too.

According to Swartz (1997), for Bourdieu, in order to fulfill the task of sociology which is to demystify the hidden dimensions of power relations, sociological research should focus on these "fields". For Swartz Bourdieu's concept of "field" is a tool which helps capture "a broader grasp of structural conditions that shape the interactions of actors without their being aware of them" (Swartz 1997: 44). I try to understand the emergence of "religious field" in urban Turkey and women's place and experiences within this field. Furthermore, this concept helps demonstrate the chances of pious women as emerging agents within the religious field.

An analysis of the components of a field like the religious field facilitates the understanding about the ways in which religious structures and practices form individuals and how they can be formed by individual agents. Beyer's (2003: 53-54) typology of four social forms of religions can be illustrative to explain this mutual relationship: These are organized religion, politicized religion, social movement religion and communitarian/individualistic religion. Highlighting the proliferation of organizations in every arena of social life including the religious field, Beyer (2003) mentions religious organizations as forms which determine the content of what counts as religion. These religious organizations are churches, temples, religious orders, religious associations etc. The second form is the politicized religion giving religion its form through the legal, administrative and legislative organs of the state and regulation and control of religions. Social movements like the Islamist movement and spirituality movements such as new age movement and the individualistic religion lived by the communities and individuals such as Halloween and Easter are factors which give religions their social forms.

Religious practices comprising of rituals and other culturally oriented practices are the components within which individual agency can be observed more easily than within the "belief" component of religions. They are also the prominent signifiers which indicate an individual's or a group's religious identity. Thus, religious specialists use religious rituals to create distinctions intentionally to devalue groups who practice those practices by "devaluation of some practices over others" (Bourdieu 1991). In order to elaborate on this power asymmetry through religious practices, in the following section I will draw upon what ritual and religious ritual is and shows the gendered characteristics of rituals.

### 2.1.4. Religious ritual and "ritual transformation"

The element of religious ritual has a significant place in many studies of religion (cf. Parsons 1951; Radcliffe-Brown 1952; Evans-Pritchard 1965; Geertz 1973; Durkheim 1995; Bowen 1989; Mahmood 2005). Rappaport (1999: 24) defines ritual as "the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers." Some rituals, like those which are called as "rites de passage", mark the turning points in the life of an individual or society such as birth and death. Religious rituals are regarded as performances which determine the line between the sacred and the profane (Durkheim 1995; Malinowski 1922; Radcliffe-Brown 1952). Ritual is not always religious but religious rituals are the most frequently performed types of ritual practices. From a functionalist point of view, both religious and secular rituals are said to integrate the members of a community and bring social cohesion. In addition to these functions, they organize the daily lives of individuals and become guides to the behaviors of people in their everyday lives. As Bellah (2003: 40-41) puts: "even in mundane daily life, ritual is not only a matter of occasional meeting and parting; it is very much part of the

periodicity of life". Academic year with different ritual events, sports with seasonal patterns and religious rituals are some examples to this feature of ritual.

Religious rituals have also been conceptualized as techniques of self-discipline and moral self-development (cf. Asad 2003; Winchester 2008; Mahmood 2005). Asad (2003) criticized the conceptualization of ritual as only a communicative act and developed the notion of ritual as methods and techniques to acquire moral virtues by analyzing the medieval Christian monasteries. Likewise, the Muslim converts in Missouri whom Winchester (2008) studied understood religious practices as constitutive elements in the process of their moral self-development. According to Winchester (2008: 1756), moral self and religious rituals mutually constitute each other. Mahmood (2005), similarly, conceptualized religious practices as methods of the women from the Egyptian mosque movement of the late 1990s to develop pious selves by forming moral dispositions such as humility and modesty.

Religious rituals play a central role within religious revivalist movements. Tuğal (2006), for example, emphasizes the role of religious rituals within the Islamist movement in Turkey, in the case study of Sultanbeyli, a lower class district of İstanbul. He argues that in the Islamist movement "the ritual comes to occupy a greater place in everyday life" (p. 255). According to him, Islamists redefine everyday behavior as religious and thus destroy the distinction between the religious and the secular (p. 256). The unity of the sacred and the profane has also been one of the objectives of the Islamist movement in Turkey (Tuğal, 2006). Tuğal calls this phenomenon as the "ritual transformation" through which every behavior, like dressing, eating, voting, and entertainment, is transformed into religious rituals. This approach of a religious movement like Islamism demonstrates the fact that the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane is not a universal one. This criticism towards the universality of the sacred-profane distinction was also made by Goody (1961).

In this study I also try to criticize the binary opposition between the sacred and the profane based on my observations of pious Muslim women's religious rituals and their viewpoints on their ordinary, everyday acts which they see as worship, hence as sacred. This is one layer of the discussion on the importance of religious rituals in the everyday lives of pious women. The second layer is concerned with the "gendered" nature of religious rituals. The concept of gendered religious ritual is elaborated in the following section of this chapter.

### 2.1.5. Gendered religion and religious ritual

According to Walby (1989)[9], religions determine differentiated forms of correct conduct for women and men and they vary in their control and sanctioning of trespassing of the gendered religious rules. Throughout this dissertation, control of women and their subordination to men by and within religious practices and doctrines are conceptualized as domination. Nevertheless, many pious women from different religious backgrounds are challenging the gendered religion, openly or latently. I examine the gendered characteristic of Sunni Islamic rituals performed by pious women in public religious spaces in Ankara and their challenge with the "gendered religion" in this study. Thus, in this section I briefly outline the points where patriarchal understandings of gender shape religious ritual and give most of world religions their form as gendered practices. The themes in this section are elaborated and discussed in Chapter 5 and 6 of this dissertation in detail.

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[9] Walby (1989) argues that there are six structures constituting patriarchy which she defines as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (p. 214). The six patriarchal structures are: the patriarchal mode of production (referring to the women's unpaid labor at home), patriarchal relations within waged labor, patriarchal state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal culture (p. 220). She classifies religion under the category of "patriarchal culture".

Most of the religious practices, religious leadership and religious texts in world religions are gendered. There are three dimensions pertaining to the notion of "gendered religion". To begin with, religious rituals are often gender-segregated (cf. Sündal 2005; Reda 2004; Marcus 1987; Kraemer 1992)[10] as well as the religious space is sexually segregated (Woodlock 2010; Gilchrist 1994; Katzir 1983)[11]. For instance, women and men perform the Islamic daily prayer at different parts of the religious space without contact. Moreover, women are excluded from certain religious rituals. This means that they are not allowed to perform some religious rituals which are reserved for the performance of men only. For example, in many of the world religions women are excluded from public communal rituals (e. g., Ismail 2002; Schimmel 1994; Smith 1985; Umansky 1985)[12]. When they take part in rituals publicly, they do so usually "at the back of the mosque, church and the synagogue" (Davidman 2001). Last but not least, the orthodox-heterodox division within religions is associated with male and female religious practices respectively by the societies themselves (cf. Kandiyoti & Azimova 2004; Tapper 1990; Holy 1988). What is more, as Bourdieu (1991) suggests, orthodox religious practices of one hegemonic group are given primacy over the religious rituals of the subordinated group (men and women respectively, in our case) and this leads to the devaluation of the women through the devaluation of their religious practices. Some studies, however, demonstrated that despite the association of heterodoxy with women's religious practices and orthodoxy with men's religious practices, one is not valued

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[10] Kraemer (1992) mentions gender segregation in religious activities of Hellenistic Judaism and Greco-Roman world from the fourth century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. while Sündal (2005), Reda (2004), and Marcus (1987) discuss gender segregated rituals in Islam.

[11] Woodlock (2010) refers to the spatial reflections of sexual segregation in Islam and Gilchrist (1994) writes about spatial sexual segregation in medieval monasteries in Britain while Katzir (1983) mentions that women did not have access to the synagogue during the 1940s among the Jewish of Yemen.

[12] Ismail (2002), Schimmel (1994) and Smith (1985) indicate gender inequalities regarding women's participation in communal Islamic rituals. Likewise, Umansky (1985) argues that women are excluded from communal prayers in Orthodox Judaism as a result of the view of women as mothers and wives whose sphere of life is the private domain of home whereas men's natural domain is public worship.

over the other: both are equally important and functional for the group under scrutiny (cf. Orr 2007; Olson 1994; Tapper & Tapper 1987)[13]. In line with this argument, my fieldwork findings suggest that women's religious practices include both orthodox and heterodox elements. However, according to my observations and interviews with pious women, it is clear that the DRA, many pious men (and some women) try to control and devalue pious women by controlling and neglecting their religious rituals as I will discuss this issue widely in Chapter 5.

Secondly, women are not supposed to lead religious rituals in most of the religions at the discursive level (Nason-Clark and Neitz 2001; Manville 1997). It has been a controversial topic in world religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam whether women could be religious leaders or not. Current studies show that women lead different religious congregations in practice (cf. Maddox 2013; Kalmbach 2012; Peshkova 2009; Mattson 2008; Kalmbach 2008). However, Naidu (2013)[14] argues that although women become religious leaders, they act within masculine forms of power relations and they follow masculine norms of leadership.

Thirdly, religious texts are also gendered. I agree with Walby's argument that religions determine differentiated forms of correct conduct for women and men but I think that religion and gender relations are intertwined. Religions are also affected by the patriarchal way of thinking according to which holy books and sacred teachings are interpreted for the interest of men by men in most of the religions. As a reaction to the impact of patriarchy on religious ideas, there are attempts to interpret religious

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[13] Orr (2007), depending on the evidence from the inscriptions and stone engraves on Hindu temples between the 9th and 13th centuries in pre-colonial South India, argues that both women's and men's religious practices were valued. Olson (1994), in her analysis of shrine visits of women in Turkey and Tapper and Tapper (1987), in their analysis of the mevlit recitations of men and women in a southern city of Turkey, claim that everyday Islam combines both orthodox and popular elements and that women's religious practices cannot be seen as peripheral to those practices of men.

[14] Naidu (2013) states that women religious leaders, *gurus*, in Hinduism embrace notions such as care and community which imply masculine understandings of the domesticated femininity. However, even this form of female leadership carries latent possibilities of reconstituting gender hierarchies.

texts from a feminist point of view, especially starting from the 1970s onwards (e.g., Bakhtiar 2011; Schüssler Fiorenza 2001; Hassan 2001; Wadud 1999; Plaskow 1990; Stanton 1895)[15]

In addition to the view of religion as hotbed of patriarchy, pious women are viewed as victims of false consciousness because they are observant followers of gender-traditional religions. Prickett (2015: 69) conceptualized this as the "dominant paradox" approach in the sociology of religion: women participate in conservative religions as a form of submission to patriarchal religious systems. This approach claims that specifically religious practices through which observant women can be controlled are spheres of patriarchal oppression. Observant women do not always belong to lower class and uneducated groups as the common sense approach would tell us. Hence, Chong (2006: 697) formulates the "dominant paradox" question[16] as: "why are women, many of them well educated and middle class, becoming attracted to and supportive of religious groups that seem designed to perpetuate their subordination?"

Many scholars like Ozorak (1996), Kraemer (1992), Tapper (1990) and Kandiyoti (1988), along with Chong (2006), provided answers to this question. Kandiyoti's notion of "patriarchal bargaining" has been the mostly referred theoretical answer which I also use in this study of pious women's participation in Islamic practices. Basically, following this approach I state that although the religious practices women undertake are subordinating, women can still negotiate patriarchal elements within religions to escape male domination and control. Similarly, Avishai, Jafar and Rinaldo (2015), on their study of how religious communities, practices and

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[15] See Schüssler Fiorenza (2001) and Stanton (1895) on feminist biblical interpretation; Bakhtiar (2011), Hassan (2001), and Wadud (1999) on feminist Islamic theology and see Plaskow (1990) on a critical feminist analysis of Judaism.

[16] Bracke (2003) also argues that the question "why?" (as the short form of the question "why do women get involved in religious fundamentalist movements?") is a central question in feminist studies regarding religious fundamentalism and women.

institutions reproduce or challenge gendered identities and institutions, argue that conservative "religious traditions provide women solutions to the problems and anxieties of modern society and propose that women often reinterpret religious texts and narratives and find important niches of support within male-dominated religious institutions" (p. 9).

There is one more discussion point which stands at the intersection of gender and religious ritual. Some studies[17] claim that "women are more religious than men" (cf. Trzebiatowska and Bruce 2012; Walter and Davie 1998; Cornwall 1989). This argument can be thought of another form of explaining the dominant paradox mentioned above without giving references to patriarchal system or male domination. They often base their argument to quantitative cross-cultural data such as the World Values Surveys (1990, 1996, 2001 and 2007). According to these data, more women than men from different religious backgrounds stated that they are religious and that they engage in religious practice more frequently. I think that this argument on the "quantity" of women's and men's piety is problematic. It is not easy to determine whether a person is pious or not from only her testimony of participation in rituals-which are usually organized and public. Moreover, piety is not only about frequency of religious rituals but also about faith and belief which are hard to capture with quantitative methods. Furthermore, the explanations given to prove this argument are religion- and so culture-specific. One explanation for the reasons of high female piety in Christianity, for example, is associated with the fact that the feeling of guilt is more common among Christian women so they are more religious (Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle 1997) while another reason for higher female piety is social solidarity and support they receive from the church (Ozorak 1996). There were also attempts to

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[17] It is important to note that most of the studies which argue for higher female piety are psychological studies. Their preference of "religiosity" instead of "piety" to denote the quality of being observant and devote believers is remarkable.

explain gender differences within religion from the "structural location argument[18]" which claims that women's place in the society leads them to be more religious than men (De Vaus and McAllister 1987). Sullins (2006), however, claims that the argument is not universal underlining the need for comparison of different religions. In Judaism and Islam, for instance, men are more pious than women in terms of organizational religious participation. This study is more interested in the gendered forms of lived Islam and piety in Turkey in the case of pious women in Turkey and asks: why do Sunni Muslim women in Ankara perform religious rituals which are gendered and dominate women?

This paradox has been an analytical tool to discuss issues of not only women's practices and experiences of religion but also secularization, modernity and patriarchy in contemporary societies. Studies on a range of different contexts such as evangelicalism, fundamentalist forms of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Pentecostalism as experienced contemporarily, indicate that women get involved in these religious traditions "as a reaction to the problems generated by modernity" and social change.

In my study, I try to demonstrate that religion perpetuates gender differences within societies through gendered religious rituals which are elements of gendered power structures. In the Turkish context where the effect of religion has been expanding on every sphere of life, I try to reveal the ways pious women appropriate and negotiate Islamic rituals in their everyday lives in the face of orthodox Islamic discourses. In order to demonstrate these concerns of the study, we should first examine the place

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[18] "Structural location argument" attempts to explain higher rates of piety among women than men with structural factors related to women's status within the society. These factors include women's child-rearing roles, female labor force participation, and women's and men's attitudes connected to work and family life. De Vaus and McAllister (1987) found out that lower labor force participation of women in Australia is associated with their higher levels of piety. According to the authors, possible reasons for this finding may be that working women may find in work the socio-psychological satisfaction which religion is expected to provide or that women at the work-place conform to the ideas of the majority, composed of men, who are "less tolerant of religiosity" (p. 480).

of religion in the modern, rationalized and secular world; and second, the status of women within religions in the modern secular societies.

## 2.2. Demise of religion?

### 2.2.1. Modernization and secularization

Despite the differences in the viewpoints towards the definition and functions of religion, the classical social theorists agreed upon the idea that religion as a social institution has been losing its public significance within the society as a result of the rationalization and modernization processes (Durkheim 1984, Marx 1978, Weber 1965). Among these social theorists, Max Weber wrote extensively on the role of religion and its decreasing status within the society. According to Weber (1958; 1965), the relationship between the world and religion has a determinate direction towards the diminishing role of religion over social phenomena, so leading to the "disenchantment of the world", declining impact of God, belief and magic, and rise of the secularism within the society.

Based on the ideas of classical social theorists such as Weber, Marx, Comte and Durkheim, different "theories of secularization" were developed[19] (Tschannen 1991; Bruce 2001). Secularization theory of Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggests that the

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[19] Tschannen (1991) points out that there is a theoretical diversity in the field of secularization studies. Despite the diversity at the theoretical level, these studies share common concepts and examples which make the secularization paradigm coherent. Bruce (2002) argues that secularization theories differ in their view of religion as a declining force in the functioning of societal institutions or as a meaning-attribution mechanism in the lives of individuals. According to him, these two views of religion- namely, religion as a decreasing social force on sociological institutions and religion as a crucial element in individuals' search for meaning- are two distinct categories. However, they should be analyzed as categories causally related to each other while studying secularization. Bruce (2002), in his book "God is Dead: Secularization in the West", argues that declining role of religion in public institutions result in a decline in the number of pious individuals and affect the extent of people's religiosity.

impact of religion and religious specialists on social institutions of the society such as politics and economy lessens with modernization. Their theory of secularization, along with some other scholars, puts emphasis on the privatization and individualization of religious beliefs and practices[20] (cf. Berger 1967[21]; Luckmann 1967, 2003[22]). Asad (1993) criticizes the view that religion is a system of beliefs and that modernization of religion meant individualization of faith without any reference to the body and the ritual. Asad (1999: 191) claims that secularism sees religion only as a private institution which should not interfere with other spheres of life. However, according to Asad this cannot be the case since the category of the secular produces the category of the religious on a continuous basis. The rise of religious fundamentalism and the resurgence of Islam in particular can be understood from this perspective. Saktanber (2006) emphasizes a similar point by stating that confinement of religion to the private sphere and control of it by the state in Turkey "not only dissociated religion from the mainstream of modernity but also prevented the liberation of religion from its restrictive interpretations" (p. 28). I try to develop

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[20] Based on the claim that with the advent of modernization and secularism religion becomes privatized, Woodhead (2003) states that as private sphere is most often related with women, one can talk about feminization of religion (p. 77). She refers to Ann Douglas's study "Feminization of American Culture" (1977) which argues that Christianity in America is privatized and most religious activity takes place at the domestic sphere and women become the main agents in this sphere.

[21] Berger (1967) associated the emergence of secularism with the development of reformation movements and the rise of Protestantism in Europe. Protestantism removed intermediaries between the God and the believers and emphasized the role of reason, and responsibility of individuals on their performance of religious life.

[22] Luckmann (2003) argues that there are four types of social forms of religion and morality: 1) social form of religion observed in archaic societies where religion was diffused in many social institutions; 2) social form of religion seen in early high culture where religion had clear ties with power structures and where there was increasing specialization; 3) institutionally specialized social from of religion observed in the Middle Ages when religious functions were monopolized under one institution, namely the Christian church; and 4) privatized social form of religion, starting from the late 18th century when functional specialization of social institutions and pluralism consisting of different world-views and religious systems were started to be seen. According to Luckmann (1967), although the impact of religion on the functioning of the state and the economy has been declining in the present "social form of religion", religion continues to exist and affect individuals' world-views.

my arguments within this framework in the following sub-section of this chapter after I outline the major criticisms towards the secularization thesis.

Secularization thesis, as a whole, was criticized by scholars like Casanova (1994), Beyer (2003), and Wuthnow (2003). For Beyer (2003: 58-59) there is no empirical evidence towards the demise of religion or the generation of a global religion absorbing all religions. On the contrary, as Wuthnow (2003: 18) points out, the prevailing importance of religion in the modern world was reminded by events such as the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the mass suicide of the followers of Jim Jones in Guyana in 1978. "Secularism" has been criticized on the grounds that religion is still influential in the public sphere and the controversies stemming from religious differences matter in the public domain (Casanova 1994; Ahmad and Turner 2015). The notions of "public religions[23]" (Casanova 1994), "clash of civilizations[24]" (Huntington 1993) and "post-secular society[25]" (Habermas 2008) all refer to the

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[23] Casanova's (1994) study of "public religions" defines secularism in terms of three elements of modern societies: 1) separation of religion from other spheres like economy, politics, education etc.; 2) a decline in the importance of religious institutions and beliefs; and 3) privatization of religion. Casanova asserts that deprivatization of religion is not against the ideal of modernity unless there is no attack on the democratic ideas such as the civil society and liberal values. According to Asad (1999), Casanova's idea of deprivatization of religion is a break in the secularization discussions but it is not a coherent viewpoint. When there is no privatized religion, then the structural differentiation between religion and other social spaces is lost and it makes no sense to measure religiosity by institutional attendance. Hence, the secularization thesis fails if religion is deprivatized.

[24] Huntington's (1993) concept of "clash of civilizations" has been quite influential in the arena of international relations and foreign policy recommendations. The concept refers to conflicts stemming from the rise of Sinic (the Chinese) and Islamic civilizations and simultaneously the fall of Western civilization. Huntington defines civilization in terms of culture which, he thinks, is determined mainly by religion. The reason why clash of civilizations thesis is associated with the crisis of secularism is that European countries and the USA have to deal with increasing cultural (religious) pluralism and religious conflict.

[25] Habermas (2008) argues that religion is still influential in the public sphere as opposed to the claims of secularization thesis that religion would lose its public relevance with the advent of modernization. The concept of "post-secular society" refers to the revival of religious beliefs in secularized societies where religious groups participate in the civic discussions and contribute to the curing of "social pathologies" such as excessive consumerism and increasing social and economic inequalities.

crisis of secularism and secularization in the West[26]. The notion of "public religions" among these concepts indicate the continuing significance of religion in the lives of pious individuals more than the other two concepts which are related more to the political management of the conflicts arising from religious diversity in multicultural societies.

Although secularization theories assume declining role of religion and religious ideas on the functioning of the state and the creation of secular citizens; in the secular nation-states of Europe the role of the religion within the society has usually been determined by political institutions. In Asad's (2003) words, secularism "presupposes new concepts of religion, ethics and politics, and new imperatives associated with them" (p. 2). Inspired by Casanova's notion of public religions, Mahmood (2006: 344) thinks that secularism is a project which aims to produce a certain kind of religious subjectivity "who is compatible with the rationality and exercise of liberal political rule." Similar to the situation in the West, secularism is guaranteed by the states in many Middle Eastern and North African countries such as Turkey, Syria, Tunisia, and Algeria. What is different from the secularism in many European countries is that secularism was imposed by the state in these Middle Eastern and North African countries. An-na'im (2008) calls this kind of secularism as "authoritarian secularism"[27]. Writing specifically on the case of secularism in Turkey, An-na'im (2008) claims that "the Kemalist form of secularism was designed to enable the state to control religion rather than simply remove it from the public

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[26] As argued by Ahmad and Turner (2015), this crisis of secularism marks the "return of the religion" in the academia and hence the debate over what religion is.

[27] An-na'im (2008) is critical of the authoritarian secularism in Turkey since he envisions secularism as a mechanism "to enhance religious pluralism and individual freedom of choice regarding whether or not to observe Islamic precepts" (p. 214). However, his perception of the rule of Justice and Development Party (JDP) in Turkey as a positive development in the face of the "authoritarian secularism" is problematic since JDP is also authoritarian in regulating the role of Islam in the public life without enhancing pluralism and state's neutrality towards religion.

sphere" (p. 197)[28]. The rationale behind the foundation of the DRA in Turkey was this urge to control religion by the state[29]. I try to demonstrate how the state regulates religion and practices of pious individuals through the DRA in Chapter 4.

### 2.2.2. Religious revivalism, Islamism, post-Islamism and women

Politicization of religions and the emergence of religious fundamentalist movements[30] are usually considered as responses to the modernization, secularization and privatization of religion (cf. Beyer 2003; Armstrong 2000; Dorraj 1999; Lawrence 1989). Fundamentalist religious groups work for the ideal that religion governs all areas of life. They conceptualize human relations as "part of a divine order of things" so the division between religion as a private/personal matter and politics as a public matter diminishes (e.g. Utvik 2006; Kadıoğlu 1994). Dorraj (1999), among others, showed that fundamentalist movements within different religions share common features[31]. According to him, one of the most significant similarities of revivalist movements is that they are considered not only as responses to the crisis of modernity but also as attempts to "restore a sense of community and

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[28] This conceptualization of secularism in Turkey is similar to Gellner's (1981) concept of "didactic secularism" for the Turkish case where the state imposes moralistically a modern way of life on its citizens.

[29] As Arat (2009: 4) argues, as a result of the links of the state to religion, secularism in Turkey is compared to French *laicism*. Göle (1997) emphasizes that secularism in Turkey and the French laïcité are similar only because Turkish secularism confined religion into the private realm.

[30] Keddie (1998) uses the term "new religious politics" instead of fundamentalist movements or religious revivalism in order to avoid the former's connotations to the U.S. Protestant fundamentalism and its extremism and the later term's emphasis on the religious aspects of the movements but not on the political aspects of them.

[31] Dorraj (1999), in his comparative analysis of religious revivalism in three major world religions, namely Islam, Judaism and Christianity, outlines these common characteristics of fundamentalist movements. Some of the significant commonalities are: their emergence as responses to modernity and as alternatives to the dominant/established religion; their attempt to restore a sense of community; their efforts to sacralize the secular; their juxtaposition of national identity with religious identity.

cultural authenticity" (Dorraj, 1999: 238). Islamism is one of the popular revivalist movements which work for authentic Islam, the Islam of the Prophet's time[32]. On the other hand, some authors like Göle (1997) argue that Islamism offers a counter culture of modernity and creates its counter-elites and that it is a movement within modernity. I agree that Islamism is a product of modernity as other religious revivalist movements are. However, their modernist background does not hinder Islamists to long for an authentic Islam.

When we examine the Islamist revivalism in the world, modernity versus religion dispute has clearly been the most significant factor which determines the trajectories of Muslim states and societies. While the West has been seen as modern, secular and progressive; Muslim societies have been discussed as traditional, religious and backward. This viewpoint was criticized by many scholars[33] (cf. Charrad 2011; Abu Lughod 2009; Mahmood 2005; Asad 2003; Keddie 2003; Ahmed 1992; Lazreg 1988). The modern/secular vs. traditional/religious dichotomy is often discussed over the status of women.

The status of women is given central importance in the Islamist movements as well as in the modernization processes of many Muslim societies (cf. Bracke 2003; Saktanber 2002; Abu Lughod 1998; Kandiyoti 1998, 1991; Kadıoğlu 1994; Shukrallah 1994). In many Muslim countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey, women's political, social and occupational attainments have been regarded as symbolic of their nations' progress in terms of modernization (e.g. Yuval Davis & Anthias 1989; McClintock 1993; Göle 1997; Saktanber 2002; Charrad 2011; Sjoberg

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[32] Tuğal (2006) calls this urge for authenticity as "ritual purification" which means "returning to the basic sources" for religious practice (p. 259).
[33] Charrad (2011), for example, highlights the perception of Islam, by the orientalist thinking in the example of international development agencies such as UN, as an oppressing religious culture towards women. What is more, this way of thinking sees Muslim women as victims to be rescued by Western values of liberation.

& Wooley 2016[34]). These societies are similar in their construction of the new public sphere focusing on the elite and middle class women. What is more, they also liken in the way they base their claims of modernity in Islam, so their definitions of Islam are also similar. However, it should not be ignored that gender, class and religion interact in different ways in different countries (cf. Khurshid 2015; Charrad 2011; Bracke 2003[35]; Ahmed 1992; Kandiyoti 1991; Mernissi 1987; Fernea and Bezirgan 1977; Beck and Keddie 1978). On the other side of the coin, Islamists or fundamentalist religious groups see modernization attempts of their nation-states as intervention of the Western forces. Hence, they fight against the westernization processes through means ranging from popular politics to violence. One of the consequences of this kind of reaction from Islamists is the perception of liberals about lived Islam in the Muslim world as a threat to the liberal secular order. The orthodox Islamic practices such as veiling and public prayers are understood as expressions of fanatical Islam and hence a threat.

In this ideological as well as physical resistance to westernization and secularization, Islamists see women as "keepers of tradition and culture" (e.g. Saktanber 2002; Yazbeck Haddad 1982) which is tried to be kept authentic. Hence, women as mothers and wives come to be seen as the "cultivators" of the religious field. I elaborate on the relationship between modernization, Islamization and women's status, specifically focusing on practices like veiling, in the following section of this chapter.

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[34] Sjoberg & Wooley (2016) describe two narratives regarding the role of women in the Arab Spring movements: first narrative suggests women's active participation in the uprisings and the second narrative suggests that movements provided women with limited or no rights. Both narratives, according to Sjoberg & Wooley, share the viewpoint that women's liberation is a symbol of a nation's democratic progress.

[35] Bracke (2003: 340) mentions "plurality of modernities and Islamisms" since different modernities build distinct relationships with different religious practices.

Another response to the dispute between modernity and religion is post-Islamism experienced in Islamic states such as Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey[36]. Kepel (2000) defines post-Islamism as a move towards a moderate version of political Islam which supports Western ideals of democracy and freedom of expression. Similarly, Bayat (2005: 5) states that post-Islamism "wants to marry Islam with individual choice and freedom, with democracy and modernity (something post-Islamists stress), to achieve what some have termed an 'alternative modernity'." According to scholars like Bayat (2005) and Stacher (2002)[37], post-Islamist politics is inclusive in the sense that it is tolerant towards disadvantaged groups such as religious minorities and women and movements such as student movements and feminist movements. Nevertheless, Saktanber (2006) argues that post-Islamist men in Turkey support universal values of human rights and democracy but they are not supportive of Muslim women's struggle against patriarchy within Islam. Hence, according to Saktanber (2006), Muslim activist women feel themselves alienated and refrain from calling themselves feminist. In the following section, I elaborate on the relationship between feminism and religion and feminisms of faith.

### 2.2.3. Feminism and religion: feminisms of faith

As it is argued so far, religion is conceived in opposition to modernity by many social theorists. Feminists are one group of social theorists who engage in modernity versus religion debate. However, equation of feminism with modernity and secularism have been called into question since (1) this point of view marginalizes

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[36] Bayat (2005) mentions the political developments in these countries as illustrative of post-Islamist turn.

[37] Stacher (2002) analyzes the Wasat party project in Egypt which argues that democracy is a necessity in Egyptian society. According to Stacher, Wasatiyya group, which is a moderate political Islamist movement, has an inclusive approach towards women and religious minorities and it can evolve into a post-Islamist project in the future.

pious feminist women and (2) there are studies which indicate that religion is one tool for pious women to exercise agency (Aune 2015: 124-125).

During the 1970s and 1980s, religion was mostly discussed as a hindrance to women's liberation and as a patriarchal institution (cf. Aune 2015; Walby 1989; Mahdawi 1983) whereas in the 1990s, as Avishai, Jafar and Rinaldo (2015) argue, there were more nuanced questions pertaining to gender and religion. In the contemporary scholarship, we see new studies of religiously-based feminisms (cf. Plaskow 1990; Wadud 1999; Hassan 2001; Schüssler-Fiorenza 2001; Ingersoll 2003; McGinty 2007; Zwissler 2007; Klassen 2009) which demonstrate that feminists use "religious resources to negotiate and challenge gender inequalities within their religious traditions, personal lives and societies" (Aune 2015: 127). According to Dillon (2003), religious feminists like feminist Catholics, feminist Muslims or feminist Jews, criticize patriarchal interpretations of religion such as the ban on women priests, gender segregation during prayers and patriarchal readings of holy texts. However, these feminists of faith face obstacles stemming both from the patriarchal religious norms and from secular feminists' 'othering of religion' (Zion-Waldoks 2015). They are othered by secular feminists on the grounds that religion is a patriarchal institution so a feminist cannot adhere to a religion.

In opposition to the ideas of secular feminists, feminists of faith argue that religion is not to be blamed for the gender inequality and oppression of women. In the context of Islam, especially in Middle Eastern countries, this is the basic argument of feminist Muslims[38]. Some scholars who analyze the status of women in Islam argue that Islam is not the original source of gender inequalities in the Muslim societies. On the contrary, they try to assert that Islam in fact affirms the equality between the

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[38] I call feminists of faith in the context of Islam as "feminist Muslims" instead of "Islamic feminists" or "Islamist feminists". This is because feminists who are Muslims do not necessarily have political engagements with the Islamist movement. What is more, the reason I do not prefer using the term "Muslim feminists" is that the scholars to whom I refer are first and foremost Muslims who criticize the patriarchal interpretation of Islam from a feminist framework.

sexes. They look at other spheres of life as determinants of women's oppression (cf. Mernissi 1987; Ahmed 1992; Majid 1998; Keddie 2007). For instance, the role of the state and nation-state formation processes in the Middle East has been regarded as crucial factors determining women's status in the Muslim world.

What feminists of faith actually do is the critique of a patriarchal social institution from within. Devotee women resist patriarchal and oppressive interpretations and practices and fight for their rights within the existing patriarchal religious structures. They are pious adherents of Islam, Christianity, Judaism or Hinduism and they resist oppressive practices within the religious system itself. For example, in her study of Agunah activists who are pious Orthodox Jewish women fighting for women's right to divorce in Israel, Zion-Waldoks (2015: 75) argues that "devoted resistance" of women activists "inform their ability to resist culture from within and transform the public sphere". A "restorative feminism"[39] that envisions a return to Judaism's imagined past, authentic, pre-politicized religion is what feminist Jews are after (Hartman 2005). This is similar to Islamists' and some pious women's claims to return to the golden age of Islam where women were believed to be more valued than today. Feminist Muslims like Mernissi, for example, investigate the gendered nature of Islamic fundamentalism and its relationship to anxieties of modernization. Mernissi (1987), in her classical study "Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society", argues that the dissolution of practices such as gender segregation, polygamy, the importance of the mother-in-law; the strengthening of the emotional bond between men and women and women's gaining self-determination over their sexuality and marriage decisions, cause anxiety in the modern Muslim order. In order to overcome this anxiety and to reestablish control over women's sexuality, fundamentalist Islamist groups appear.

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[39] Restorative feminism is a concept introduced by Hartman (2005). She argues that restorative feminism "does not seek an outright break with tradition; rather, it regards the present state of traditions as perversions of their original or natural forms, and it therefore seeks to restore those traditions to a primordial state before the fall." (p.89)

While Mernissi (1987) claims that the transgression of traditional boundaries in Muslim societies lead to the emergence of Islamist groups, Afkhami (1995) argues that this same fact leads more and more Muslim women to fight for their rights, "openly when they can, subtly when they must" (pp. 1-2). In this fight, Muslim women show their objection to the fundamentalist and male interpretations of Islam. Likewise, according to Charrad (2011) the women rereading the Quran and challenging the patriarchal interpretation of Islam represent empowerment. Mojab (2001) on the other hand, criticizes "Islamic feminism" since it mainly focuses on religious texts and not on social institutions such as politics, economics, law and class.

The emergence of feminist Muslims is closely related to the gender relations within the Muslim societies, especially in the Middle East. Hence, the following section of this chapter is devoted to the understandings of gender and women's status within Islam.

## 2.3. Women's status and religion

### 2.3.1. Women's status in Islamic societies

In this study I aim to explore pious women's status *within* public religious practices of Islam by carrying on a field study in Ankara, Turkey and the intricate relationship between women's status, agency and their performance of public Islamic rituals. Thus, an account of how the status of women in Muslim societies has been discussed and which subjects have been debated becomes crucial for the purposes of this study. Here I underline main discussion points on Muslim women's status in the Islamic world and in Turkey.

Women's place in Islam has been one of the heated debates within the sociological and feminist analysis of the status of women. Specifically Western feminists have dealt with the issue and conceptualized the place of women in Islam as a problem of emancipation and liberation (cf. Tesler, Rogers & Schneider 1978; Tekeli 1981; Toprak 1981; Kandiyoti 1987). However, in the discussions after 1980s, Muslim women's "inferior" social position started to be described not as a problem of the religion itself but as a problem of patriarchal relations embedded within Islamic practices (Kandiyoti 1987; Keddie 2007). Both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars started to point out the positive elements of women's lives in Muslim countries along with the problems Muslim women face, with an emphasis on the diversity of women's experiences in different societies. Taking into consideration that Islamist movements intensified after the 1980s, it can be interpreted that the emergence of fundamentalist Islam made it clear that there is not only one Islam but different interpretations of Islam, the dominant one being the patriarchal approach, which is responsible for the ideas and judgments about the subordinate position of women. Islamist ideologies conceptualize women and their place within the society as a problem of morality or moral aspect of religion rather than a question of power. Afkhami (1995) points out this aspect of Islamist fundamentalism as follows:

> …rather than addressing real evolving societies, Islamists abstract Islam as an esoteric system of unchanging rules and then equate it with complex, changing, and historically specific social and political conditions. As a result, they transform the practical issue of women's historical subjugation in patriarchies, which is a matter of the economic, social, cultural, and political forms of power takes as societies evolve, to arcane questions of moral negligence and religious slackness. (p. 3)

Hence, it can be said that the development of the Islamist movement played a role in the interest and emphasis of scholars on women's status in Islam, urging them to

show that not Islam but an interaction effect of Islam and patriarchy is responsible for the lowly status of women in Muslim societies.

Keddie (1990) categorizes the approaches to the study of women in the Middle East in three groups: the first approach supports the idea that Muslim women are not more oppressed than non-Muslim women. Second view is that Muslim women are oppressed but patriarchy, not Islam, is to be blamed. Lastly, Islam is intrinsically gender-inegalitarian. This categorization is based on a comparison of the experiences of Muslim and non-Muslim women. The assumption here is that Muslim women are subject to the effects of both patriarchy and Islam while non-Muslim women are only exposed to patriarchy. Whether non-Muslim women are also subject to the effects of the religious practices in their everyday lives is not discussed in many critiques of women's status in Islam.

Mernissi (1988) also outlined the different approaches to women's status in Islam in the same geographical area on a historical basis. According to her classification, one group of scholars including Karmi (1996), states that the status of women was higher in pre-Islamic Arabia where women were freer and more active in the public sphere. Scholars who belong to this group refer to the Muslim history books which acknowledged women's active participation in the history of Islam and their role as disciples of the Prophet and as Hadith authors (Mernissi 1988: 37). Mernissi, then, rightly asks how Muslim women's image became so "lowly" within the world if the history is full of acknowledgments of Muslim women. Her brief answer to this question is that women's low status in the Muslim society does not stem from the Muslim tradition but it is "a contemporary ideological production" (1988: 44). Moreover, women's public role declined in the Muslim world because of the interaction of Islam with Middle Eastern customs and societal practices. These ideas represent the first discussions on the status of women in Muslim societies.

The second group, which is composed of Islamic scholars, the *ulema*, argues that Islam has elevated the status of women compared to the pre-Islamic times when women did not have any rights. Antoun (1968), on the other hand, claims that it was mainly men and children who benefited from the Quranic rights whereas women's freedom and status were limited by the sanctification of certain pre-Islamic customs and beliefs regarding women's modesty[40] by the Quranic verses. Mahdawi (1983) also argues that despite the rights which were theoretically given to women by Islam, certain assumptions in the Islamic approach limit women's role in practice. These assumptions include: men and women are not equal because of their biological differences; men are rational whereas women are emotional; women are elements of disturbance to men because male desire of sexuality is uncontrollable, that is why women are sources of social disorder (*fitne*) (Mernissi 1987). What the Quran says has widely been interpreted according to these assumptions. Hence, the Islamic law has been made to defend male superiority and men's rights. The most important interpretations for the lives of women are family laws such as divorce, marriage, child custody and inheritance. Medieval interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith decreased the active public role of the women in Islamic society. Some verses were interpreted as to legitimize Muslim women's exclusion from public affairs. This is apparently not specific to Islam. Jewish and Christian religions are also embedded in patriarchal practices and religion is just one tool of discrimination.

Another dimension which has been effective in the determination of the status of women within the Middle East is the nation-state formation and modernization processes of the states in this predominantly Muslim geography. While Abu-Lughod (1998) defines the modernization reforms concerned with women's status as "remaking" women, for Kandiyoti (1998) these reforms are not only remaking women but "refashioning gender" as they target to establish heterosexual monogamy

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[40] These customs and beliefs, according to Antoun (1968), include veiling and seclusion of women, women's legal inferiority with regards to men (two women witnesses are equivalent to one man) and the unequal inheritance rules (a woman receives half of what her brother receives).

and certain forms of masculinity and femininity as the ideal. Women have been conceived as markers of a nation's development and modernization next to being markers of their family's status and honor. This conception of women meant increasing public visibility, educational attainment and labor force participation. But it also included a new conception of women as mothers and wives who were to bring up the future citizens of the nation-state, manage the household scientifically and accompany their husbands as "modern-looking" women who are generally meant to be "unveiled". This new understanding of women as modern, educated, working mothers and wives certainly brought women emancipation, but to a certain extent. As Najmabadi (1998) states modernization projects in the Middle East were also regulatory on women. Her work on the pre-modern and modern understandings of ethics and household management in Iran demonstrates that there was a shift from an idea of father as the manager of the household (13th-15th centuries) to the mother and the good wife as the manager of the household and educator of the citizens. Najmabadi (1998) claims that women should be educated to be good mothers, wives and servants of the state and this is one of the regulatory aspects of the modernization projects. In a similar fashion to the emancipatory and regulatory aspects of modernization projects, I suggest that pious women's participation in public Islamic rituals is both emancipatory and regulatory for Muslim women. On the one hand, pious women go out of their homes, socialize, receive religious education and gain religious merit. That is the emancipatory aspect of performing Islam in the public. On the other hand, women are disciplined and controlled by the orthodox teachings and preachers of the state religion. There are examples in Chapter 5 where I discuss the emancipation and regulation aspects of Islamic rituals in detail based on my ethnographic study on pious women in Ankara. This status of state religion in Turkey as both an emancipatory and regulatory mechanism for pious Muslim women can be interpreted as state religion's being a continuation and element of modernization process in Turkey.

What is more, when women started to work outside the household, their domestic responsibilities were not lessened. On the contrary, women's responsibilities doubled as they have to both work outside and inside the household. This "double burden" is even tripled when a working woman is pious who practices her religion on a regular basis. As it can be seen in Booth's study (1998) on the biographies of Jean d'Arc written in Egypt between 1879 and 1939, there is a constant reconciliation of the duties towards the family, the nation and the God. Similarly, I argue that pious women in Ankara try to reconcile their duties towards the family and the household with their duties towards the God. This negotiation process through which pious women go include a balance between household chores (including child care and care for the husband) and religious rituals (including daily prayer and public rituals at the mosque). For the employed women this reconciliation also involves women's duties at work. I elaborate on the negotiation and reconciliation of duties towards the God and family in Chapter 6.

This conceptualization of women as mothers and wives within the family by the modernization projects of the Middle Eastern nation-states is echoed by the Islamist revivalist movements in the form of the role assigned to women as "keepers of tradition" (cf. Yazbeck Haddad 1982). This viewpoint underlines women's role as mothers. They are the ones who bring up children according to the Islamic precepts and thus they will be the agents who provide the continuation of Islamic tradition. Pious women are also depicted as agents who keep Islam alive in settings like Muslim Bosnia during the Communist era (Raudvere 2012). Although this role assigned to women may seem as an elevated one, women are still seen as sources of social disorder (*fitne)*, thus, they should be kept under control. This is the paradox of Islamist ideologies (Saktanber 2002). Saktanber argues that Islamic ideologies attempt to overcome this paradox through the notion of modesty which is thought to be easily accepted as a value rather than an obligation by pious Muslim women. Modesty code is also an important virtue for the women in my field study, especially in their attitudes towards veiling and piety.

### 2.3.2. Veiling: women's subjugation or agency?

Literature on gender and Islam is often limited to discussions of veiling but it tells more than that: veiling opens up broader discussions of gender and religion in the public life. The studies on veiling are thus valuable in comprehending the relationship between women's status, agency and Islamic ritual, on which I attempt to elaborate in this dissertation. For this end, I analyze the debates about and different meanings of veiling in this section.

To begin with, veiling of women is a practice performed by different cultures throughout space and time. For example, in pre-Islamic societies of the Middle East, Ancient Greece and Rome, veiling of upper class women was a status symbol (Ahmed 1992; El Guindi 1999; Keddie 2007; Charrad 2011). The elite character of the veiling continued even when Islam was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The Quranic revelation on veiling included just the wives of the Prophet, "as a means to provide domestic comfort and privacy for the female elite of Islam" (Keddie 2007: 22). By time, veiling started to be interpreted as a religious obligation on all believing Muslim women and it is still a controversial issue whether veiling is an obligatory Islamic practice or not among Islamic scholars.

It must be highlighted that in most parts of the world veiling was an urban phenomenon because poorer village women were not as privileged as urban elite women to be veiled and secluded since they had to work in the fields and in the household (cf. Beck and Keddie 1978; MacLeod 1992). In her analysis of the male-female dynamics in modernizing Morocco in the 1970s, Mernissi (1987) indicates that the seclusion of women, by veiling and gender segregation, was seen as a privilege and a source of pride by many women since it is a sign of being wealthy and not being obliged to work. Olson (1985) observed that women in the Turkish villages covered their heads with a traditional headscarf whereas working and middle

class women wore a headscarf knotted under the chin when they went out from the 1960s to the middle of 1980s[41].

Most of the work on the veiling of Muslim women revolves around the discussions whether veiling restricts or liberates women. Firstly, veiling or hijab has been considered as one of the ways of Islamic discrimination against women by many scholars, Western and non-Western alike (e.g. Mahdawi 1983; Keddie 1990; Amin 1899). Mahdawi (1983), giving examples from the interpretations of the Quran by significant *ulama* in Shi'a Iran, explores the ways women are positioned inferior to men and considers the veiling of women as the first step in women's subjugation within the Islamic society. Likewise, for Keddie (1990) veiling and seclusion are "signs and parts of a system in which males are dominant and in which it is believed that females must be controlled by a male household head if sexual and social anarchy are not to threaten" (p. 67). Amin (1899), writing in late 19th century, also saw veiling as a restriction on Egyptian women together with their seclusion and segregation. This view was criticized by scholars like Ahmed (1992) on the grounds that it was a view of the veil as Islamic inferiority, an element of the colonial discourse. As a response to this, resistance from the local people saw veiling as a valid native custom. Hence, veiling turned into a symbol of anti-colonial struggle[42]. Opposition from the Islamists to the effects of colonization, Westernization and modernization especially after the 1970s put the women's status into the center of their discourse. Thus, veiling and traditional roles of women became "cultural symbols" and ways of Muslims' "self-definition" (Stowasser 1994).

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[41] I observe that in contemporary Turkey, village women continue wearing the traditional headscarf in their daily lives but most of them use the contemporary Islamist headscarf when they go to the city center. This is also true for the veiled women in urban areas: they put on Islamist veil when they go out or when they have guests but they use traditional headkerchief at home.

[42] Other examples of veiling as a form of demonstration include the adoption of the chador or *çarşaf* by some feminists in Egypt and Iran as a symbol of rejection of women's being treated as sex objects (El Guindi 1981) and a symbol of anti-shah demonstrations (Abu-Lughod 1998) respectively.

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Secondly, veiling is seen as a liberating mechanism for Muslim women by some scholars (e.g. Papanek 1982; Hoffmann-Ladd 1987; Göle 1996; Ewing 2000; Abu-Lughod 2002). Papanek (1982), analyzing the practices of women's seclusion in Pakistan, regards veiling of women as a "liberating invention" since women can go out of their homes by covering their heads and body. Similarly, Hoffmann-Ladd (1987) sees headscarf as a way of upward mobility for lower class Egyptian women and argues that the use of veil is a politicized act. In a similar vein, Abu-Lughod (2002) conceptualizes veiling as a sign of "modernity" since it eases Muslim women's going out to the public and receiving higher education. Göle (1996), too, sees veiling of women as a political statement within the Turkish context during the 1980s and 1990s when there was a ban on veiled university students to enter the university campuses and veiled women to work at public institutions. Göle (ibid.) mentions early Islamist women's movement as a feminist movement since she argues that those women redefine their Muslim identity by willing to enter into the public sphere. Analyzing the women of the same period, Ewing (2000) also states that "women are not only political symbols; they are also people who must take up personal identities and make life choices in a socio-political field where dressing is, among other things, a political act" (p. 256). According to her, conscious Muslim women seek forms of social recognition in response to their non-recognition by secularists (ibid.). The main argument of Göle (1996) and Ewing (2000) is that Muslim women who wear the Islamist headscarf assert a conscious Muslim identity since they adopt the veil based on their personal choice rather than as a result of their submission to a patriarchal authority. Cindoğlu and Zencirci (2008) add a new dimension to this debate starting with a critique of the "conscious Muslim women" thesis. Cindoğlu and Zencirci (2008) assert that these studies analyzed women who were university students banned from entering the university because of their headscarf and women who wanted to pursue their professional careers with their headscarves. In short, they were the agents of the early Islamist movement in the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, Islamic headscarf is what made the Islamist movement in Turkey public (Aldıkaçtı Marshall 2005). However, Cindoğlu and Zencirci (2008:

804) argue that the headscarf debate in Turkey lost its "counter hegemonic potential" with AKP in 2000s since the actors of the headscarf issue transformed from women agents of the 1980s and 1990s to the wives of politicians[43] who do not hold any agentive potential to liberate and to build bridges with other feminists on the way to women's liberation. Saktanber and Çorbacıoğlu (2008), examining the veiling debates in Turkey, argue that while Islamist groups see veiling as a human right and freedom of religious expression, these same groups criticize the West and the ideals like democracy that western modernity supports and represents. Saktanber and Çorbacıoğlu's (2008) argument also helps explain why the Islamist women hesitate to cooperate with the secular feminist women.

I argue that within the discussions of veiling the concept of modesty becomes very significant because it demonstrates the difficulty of understanding a cultural practice like Muslim women's veiling in either liberating or restricting terms. Antoun (1968: 672) refers to veiling as one of the components of his notion of the "modesty code". The modesty code includes veiling of women, character traits such as shyness, humility and diffidence and customs and beliefs pertaining, for example, to the fidelity, chastity, purity and the inferiority of women and superiority of men. Those who conceptualize veiling as a liberating mechanism often miss the point that as long as women adhere to the referents of the modesty code one of which is veiling, women can participate in the public life and become liberated. Saktanber (2002) is one of the scholars who attracts attention to this point and argues that "women could only obtain an elevated social status and respectable public image as long as they stayed within the boundaries of that notion of modesty" (p. 35). Moreover, veiling does not only symbolize modesty but it also indicates piety. As Keddie (1990) also argues veiling is a visible symbol of being a pious Muslim woman. Mahmood (2005) also demonstrated that participants of women's mosque movement in Egypt in the

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[43] The authors refer to the 'Reception Crisis' in 2003, when the presidential palace failed to invite to the Reception the wives of MPs from the JDP who wear the headscarf and the case of Mrs. Erdoğan's and Mrs. Gül's headscarves in relation to the presidential elections.

1990s gave meaning to veiling as a way to improve their piety and virtue. In her view, veiling is a self-authoring religious practice of Muslim women who construct docile Muslim femininities (ibid.). Although veiling is a crucial aspect in the lives of the women in my study, most of them, who themselves wear the headscarf, asserted that veiling is not a necessary component of piety, but cultivating a moral self is.

MacLeod's (1992) study of the voluntary veiling of lower middle class women who started working outside of the home in increasing numbers during the 1980s in Egypt is another example which illustrates the complex relationship between veiling, modesty and women's agency. In her attempt to answer why subordinate groups, like women, take part in the reproduction of the relations of power which dominate them, MacLeod (ibid.) examines the new veiling movement which she conceptualizes as "accommodating protest". This notion portrays women as both active subjects who don the new veil voluntarily and as subjects of domination who attribute meanings of modesty and proper womanhood, that is, being good mothers and wives, to their veil. MacLeod (ibid.) argues that those women who worked outside the home upon their inspiration to belong to the middle class, tried to balance their loss of respect and resources as working mothers and wives through their donning of the new veil. It is obvious from MacLeod's account that the women who joined the new veiling movement in Egypt in 1970s "accommodated" the power relations within which they were dominated as they tried to be seen as good mothers, wives and Muslims. However, I find it problematic to name the women as active subjects and the movement as "protest" only because it was their own decision to wear the new veil.

On these grounds, Çınar (2008) also criticizes the idea that veiling grants agency to women since it is an agency which gives women recognition only as veiled women. In a similar vein, Mernissi (1987) argued that women's presence on the streets and at the offices as employees in Morocco in the 1970s was seen as trespassing in the male space and this trespassing was only possible through the use of veil. Hence,

according to Mernissi (1987: 143) "the veil means that the woman exists in the men's world but invisible; she has no right to be in the street".

I think that these approaches to veiling of women suggest that there are two parallel issues: veiling and seclusion are mechanisms of lived Islam which dominate pious women and they, at the same time, provide women with certain advantages to cope with conditions of modern life while staying as modest and pious Muslims. This explanation partly answers why the same women who are dominated by Islamic practices are devoted followers of Islam. Tapper (1990) asks the same question in her analysis of women's shrine visiting (*ziyaret*) practices in Turkey. She argues that women who can leave their houses only in the company of other women to the local shrines accept traditional gender roles since these roles offer them opportunities to leave their houses (1990: 241). Hence, Kandiyoti's (1988) notion of "patriarchal bargaining" helps further in explaining this dilemma. For her, the basic fallacy of the western feminists and Orientalists is their equation of patriarchy with Islam. In order to get over this fallacy, she proposes to use the concept of "patriarchal bargaining" instead of patriarchy as a category of analysis. In systems of sovereignty, there is subordination and women's own power and autonomy resources. Keddie (1990: 67) conceptualizes folktales, popular poetry and religious ceremony as a space for women's own initiative; their independent attitude. While religion and religious practice are seen as dominating factors for women, pious women internalize their religious practice and ritual as a way to escape male control and oppression. Thus, women may support those systems which seem to subordinate them. This is one of the central arguments I try to demonstrate in this study. A pious woman, for example, can receive love and respect of her family members, neighbors and relatives because she is a pious Muslim. But the devout action of women can also be explained by the pure state of obeying the commands and regulations of Islam. It should not be ignored here that the commands and regulations of Islam are not free of interpretation. The interpretations have so far been patriarchal interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith. Furthermore, these interpretations are usually on the control of

52

the female sexuality because women's sexuality is a source of social disorder (*fitne*). This interpretation not only affects sexual experiences of men and women but also practicing of certain Islamic rituals.

### 2.3.3. Women's status in Turkey

As stated before, gender and Islam interact in changing ways in different cultural and socio-political contexts. Although many of the discussions on women's status in the Middle East apply to the Turkish case, there are certain peculiarities pertaining to the status of women in Turkey. Women's status in Turkey has mainly been affected by the Republican reforms implemented by the founder of the Republic, Atatürk. Mardin (1981: 191), states that the principle of secularism was established through these reforms "as the foundation stone of Turkish constitutional theory and political life". He further mentions the rights given to women by these secularizing reforms as moves towards "the liberation of the individual from the collective constraints of the Muslim community" (p. 213). Saktanber (1995) argues that the gender politics of the Republican reforms aims at the creation of equal citizens of the newly founded Turkish state. Moreover, Saktanber (2002), in her study "Living Islam: Women, Religion, and the Politicization of Culture in Turkey", highlights the fact that one of the measures in an effort to replace the "mahalle ethos[44]" with "a new 'code of honour' based on the notion of personal 'autonomy' gained primarily through breaking with religiously determined communal morals-control" was to give Turkish women political and social rights. (p. 135).

The impact of these rights written in law was not seen immediately on the lives of Turkish women. They, however, provided the basis for the improvement of women's

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[44] Mardin (1981) uses the concept of "mahalle ethos" to describe a social dynamic in the late Ottoman society. He describes mahalle (neihborhood) as 'the smallest operative unit of the community in the Ottoman Empire' (p.214).According to Mardin, mahalle was the space where the life of an average Ottoman citizen was formed with its restrictive social boundries.

status throughout the first decades of the Republic. Despite the rights and privileges given to women, the secular reforms, too, conceptualize women primarily as mothers and promote modesty like the Islamist discourse does (e.g. Kabasakal Arat 2012: 259). This makes the private sphere of the family and the home especially crucial for an understanding of women's status in Turkey. Kağıtçıbaşı (1986), in her cross-cultural study of women's role in a number of countries including Turkey, examines women's intrafamily status within different socio-cultural contexts. As a significant output of her study, she emphasizes the fact that "culture" explains the similarities between different countries more than "religion" does. Hence, patriarchal societies of Greece, China and Turkey show more similarities in terms of women's status than Indonesia and Turkey which belong to the same religious group. Kandiyoti (1988) also highlights a similar pattern between the Mediterranean and East Asian countries which have similar gender and family structures[45].

Women's status can also be explained by tangible measures such as employment rates, educational attainment and political participation. It can be explained by measures such as those of Kağıtçıbaşı (1986), women's role in decision making processes, number of children etc. It can also be measured by looking at variables such as age, women's position within kinship structure and religious participation. Dobkin (1967) examines the social ranking of women in a rural town in southwestern Turkey in 1960s through the fact of purdah, that is, segregation of women and men. What she underlines in her analysis is that in peasant Turkish communities, social ranking among women, that is the superiority of one woman over another, was determined by age and "relative standing within a patrilineage" (p. 69). Referring to the disadvantageous position of being a new bride within the family, Dobkin points out that women do not receive status recognition until they become mothers or until there is a younger bride in the family. Additionally, when a woman becomes mother-

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[45] Baştuğ (2002) also argues that Turkey shows more similarities to Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Italy and Greece in terms of kinship and family structures than to Arab Middle East which is a Muslim context.

in-law she receives a different status involving respect and autonomy. What is more, she states that piety does not play a significant role in the social ranking of women in rural Turkey unlike it does for the social ranking of men. According to her observations, peasant women do not practice Islam frequently; when they pray, they pray at home and religious knowledge does not affect social ranking among women significantly. However, it should be stressed that these observations of Dobkin relate more to the western parts of rural Turkey during the first years of rural to urban migration in 1960s. Mansur-Coşar (1978), on the other hand, points out that as one goes from eastern to western Turkey, "religious life acquires a more sociable character" for women (p. 131). I found out in my field study in Ankara that women's performance of religious rituals and their piety play a significant role in women's gaining social status and prestige among their family, relatives and friendship circles. I discuss this issue in detail in Chapter 6.

The relationship between women's status and religious performance can also be studied by examining different spatial contexts. Kandiyoti (1977) analyzes the factors which affect the status of women during the 1970s in Turkey by using spatial categories of nomadic tribes, village, small town, and metropolitan areas as methodological devices. What she argues is that in nomadic tribes and villages, age, fertility and place of women within the family structure determine women's status whereas the socio-economic and political position of women's husbands plays a significant role on the status of women in small towns. According to Kandiyoti (1977: 69), women's involvement in religious practices such as the traditional mevlit provides legitimacy to women's visibility outside of their homes. City life, on the other hand, restricts women's activities to the confines of the neighborhood as religious activities and other occasions such as birth, death and marriage becomes more private. While this is true for the lower class residents of an urban center, middle class and upper class women enjoy more freedom in terms of access to education, employment and public visibility.

I think that these studies consider religion and performance of religious rituals as factors which play a minor role on the status of women in Turkey before the rise of Islam as a political movement. One of the reasons for this is that religion and Islamic religious practice were made matters of private conscience by the secular reforms in Turkey. However, while religion is generally lived and practiced by men in the public, it is seen as a private practice for women. Moreover, as my field study demonstrates this issue of women's practicing religion at home is seen by many women as a permission (ruhsat) given to women by God. This permission is given to women not because they are women but because they are primarily mothers and housewives. Nevertheless, there have been changes in the way pious women experience Islam and perform religious rituals in Turkey in the recent years. There is an increasing trend towards women's participation in public congregational rituals and practices. As pious women's religious ritual performances become visible through this dynamic, how pious women develop their agency and how they negotiate religious ritual performances and the fulfilling of everyday life chores "expected" from them as mothers and housewives appear as subject matters of "everyday religion" literature. Saktanber (2002), for example, discusses the ways in which Islamist women realize their selves through socio-religious activities such as *sohbet* and *kandil* gatherings, their daily conduct organized according to the principle of modesty and Islamic customs and norms and how these ways provide women with a prestigious personality. I elaborate on the question of everyday religion and pious women's agency in the following section.

## 2.4. Religious devotion and women's agency

### *2.4.1. "Everyday religion"*

As estimations of the demise of religion in the modern and secular era proved "wrong", new concepts have been developed regarding the alternative religious

formulations to the institutional religions. Davie's (1994) notions of "believing without belonging" and "belonging without believing" are such examples to the less orthodox and non-institutional dimensions of post-industrial individuals' beliefs and practices. Davie develops these notions in order to argue that some people in the post-industrial societies like the Great Britain believe without registering a church and that high numbers of church membership in countries like the Scandinavian countries does not indicate high levels of piety. As Ammerman (2007: 4) writes "if the strength of religion is measured by orthodoxy of belief, regularity of attendance, and the ability of traditional religious institutions to enforce their norms, much of the world is very secular indeed."

Spirituality, for example, is an element of religion and it has been conceptualized as a distinct form of non-institutional religion since there are people who define themselves as "spiritual but not religious". In order to encompass both religion and spirituality, the concept of "lived religion" was coined by Hall (1997) to indicate people's everyday religious experiences. Lived religion refers to the way people live religion everyday instead of the prescribed religion which includes institutionally defined beliefs and practices. Hall's (1997) concept of "lived religion" is similar to the concept of "folk religion" or popular religion which was mentioned in section 2.1.2 along with other concepts of orthodox religion, heterodox religion and folk Islam in the Turkish case (Geertz 1968; Gellner 1981; Mardin 1991; Asad 2009). Hall prefers using "lived religion" because popular religion connotes high and low forms of religion like "Great versus Little tradition" divide in the case of Islam. This concept of lived religion is beneficial in answering why individuals are attracted to religions and it focuses on the practicing of religion. As Avishai (2008: 428) states the concept of lived religion highlights "religion as something that people do, in social interaction and in the context of symbolic boundaries, regulatory cultural regimes, and institutional structures…"

The conceptualization of religion as lived experience provides scholars of religion with tools to explain, for example, women's participation in conservative religious traditions with oppressive practices towards women by trying to identify where culture ends and religion begins. Defining religion as lived experience is beneficial in offering answers to questions such as "is local culture or Islam to blame for such oppressive behaviors?" and "why do women take part in religious practices through which they are dominated and suppressed?" In a similar vein but with a focus on the everyday strategies of individuals to relate religion and modern life, Ammerman (2007) coins the concept of "everyday religion" and describes what everyday religion includes as follows:

> We are interested in all the ways in which nonexperts experience religion. Everyday religion may happen in both private and public life, among both privileged and nonprivileged people. It may have to do with mundane routines, but it may also have to do with the crises and special events that punctuate those routines. We are simply looking for the many ways religion may be interwoven with the lives of the people we have been observing (Ammerman 2007: 5).

The concept of everyday religion is very much based on the concept of "individual choice". Berger (2007) connects this idea of individual choice to "religious pluralism" which he defines as "the coexistence of different forms of religious expression in the same social space under conditions of (more or less) civic peace" (p. vi). Berger (2007) argues that even when a group of individuals adhere to a religious tradition which is fundamentalist or orthodox, it is again chosen among many alternatives: "Individuals may indeed make "orthodox" or "fundamentalist" choices—many do—but these too are choices…" (Berger 2007: vii). I think that the notion of religious field coined by Bourdieu (1991) is closely associated with everyday religion and the possibility of agency these notions attribute to the lay

believers, especially believers and practitioners of a religion who are subordinated by the very beliefs and practices of that religion.

The pious women which this dissertation analyzes choose to be observant followers of orthodox Islam which, in fact includes elements from heterodox practices and superstitions. However, this, in many cases, becomes an obligatory choice since it is the best available thing to do- to be pious Muslims- for many women in conservative societies. It should be noted here that this notion of choice is not based on rational calculations. The reasons why pious women in my field study choose to devote themselves to Islam and perform Islamic rituals are examined in Chapter 5.

### 2.4.2. Pious women's agency and "doing religion" framework

The concept of "everyday religion" with its emphasis on individual choice offers one possible framework which provides an answer to the question I ask throughout this study: "why do women take part in patriarchal religious practices which subordinate them?" Another framework which tries to answer the "dominant paradox" of the sociology of religion and gender is the concept of "doing religion" introduced by Avishai (2008). Building upon West and Zimmerman's (1987) concept of "doing gender" and Butler's (1990) concept of "performativity", Avishai develops the notion of "doing religion" as a mode of conduct and being, and a performance of identity. Before explaining doing religion framework, I briefly mention the concepts which affected this framework, namely the concepts of doing gender and performativity. Doing gender is a concept introduced first by West and Zimmerman (1987). They argue that individuals "do gender" to establish the sex category they belong to. They do so in interaction with other people and they are regarded as members of the society based on how much of a man or woman they are. On the contrary, according to Butler (1990), gender is not only limited to interactions. It also exists in other dimensions of the society such as law, institutions, media, etc. What is

more notable in Butler's (1990) theory of performativity is that gender is a construction of individuals' repetitive performances.

Although it is frequently claimed that "religion contributes to humankind's inability to perceive itself as an active agent of historical change" (Dawson 2011: 42), recent research shows that pious women can develop agency even when they live in oppressive cultural contexts (cf. Avishai, Jafar and Rinaldo 2015; Allocco 2013; Cooper 1999; Hegland 1998; Davidman 1991; Stacey and Gerard 1990).

In order to demonstrate the claim that religious ritual performance can provide women with agency, the first task is to clarify how the concept of agency is discussed. The concept of agency is a controversial and abstract notion. It was first constructed as a secular and modern concept. In recent years the concept is redefined outside the secular context, located within religion.

Women's agency has generally been defined as women's resistance to patriarchy and unequal relations between genders. This definition of women's agency by liberal Western scholars only as resistance to patriarchal domination has been criticized by especially non-Western scholars (e.g. Abu-Lughod 2002; Mahmood 2005; Rinaldo 2014). Instead, these scholars and many others claim that there are multiple ways women can be agentive[46]. In their view, agency is the capacity for action (e.g. Mahmood 2001). McNay (2000: 10) also defines agency as "the capacity for autonomous action in the face of often overwhelming cultural sanctions and structural inequalities".

After analyzing different approaches to women's agency in gender-traditional contexts, Burke (2012) classifies these approaches under four categories: resistance agency, empowerment agency, instrumental agency and compliant agency.

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[46] In a similar fashion, Beşpınar (2010) emphasizes "manifestations of agency" instead of women's agency in her study of women's work strategies in urban Turkey. She shows that the manifestations of women's agency are defined by class lines and they are work-related coping strategies. Hence, they do not bring about empowerment for women, but short-term solutions.

Resistance agency refers to the agency of women as a challenge to dominating aspects of their religion and their will to change these aspects. Some Muslim women's leading prayers to mixed congregations can be given as an example to this kind of agency. Empowerment agency refers to reinterpretation of religious doctrines and practices by women instead of resisting them. It focuses on the feelings and responses of women to religious practices and beliefs. Burke (2012) gives the example of women who, by veiling, may feel that they are challenging imperialism. Instrumental agency approach focuses on the non-religious advantages women get out of their religious acts. Socialization, going into education and job market and going out of the house can be counted as commonly referred examples to these advantages. Lastly, compliant agency approach argues that women choose to conform to religious doctrines and by conforming to gender-traditional religions they show agency. Scholars who argue for compliant agency approach focus on the ways in which religious practices are goals for pious women. Saba Mahmood's (2005) work on pious women in Egyptian mosque movement and "doing religion" concept of Avishai (2008) are examples to compliant agency approach.

As Zion-Waldoks (2015) argues, scholars like Mahmood (2005) locate agency as docile obedience to religious norms. Mahmood (2005) analyzes how participants of a piety movement in Cairo organize their daily lives according to their interpretation of Islamic faith. This brings about discussions of western "autonomy as free will" versus religious "agency as submission". Mahmood's approach was criticized since it pictured Muslim women first and foremost as religious beings and because her approach created a binary opposition between Western and Muslim women (e. g. Bangstad 2011). Similar to Mahmood, according to Charrad (2011: 426) "…all can exert agency in daily life in dealing with family, religion, the state and the economy". Emphasizing the ritual performances of women such as healing sessions and saint worship as forms of counter-orthodoxy and as challenges to male domination of religion, Charrad (2011) further claims that women carve out spaces for themselves through the performance of these rituals.

Saktanber (2002) argues that pious women in Ankara who identify themselves as "conscious Muslims" turn an obstacle to their agency (women's exclusion from public spaces) into an opportunity for their agency by meeting at homes and discussing how they should live according to the precepts of Islam. Hence, Saktanber coined the term "living Islam" in order to refer to the conscious process of attributing religious meaning to every aspect of their everyday lives.

Another way of studying women's agency through religious observance has been a conceptualization of religious participation as "strategic compliance" (e.g. Gallagher 2007; Chen 2005). Strategic compliance thesis is similar to instrumental agency approach and it argues that women take part in religious practices to gain extra-religious ends such as avoiding unwanted jobs mentioned in Gallagher's study of Syrian women and negotiating patriarchal family life exemplified in Chen's study of Taiwanese migrants in the US. Avishai (2008) states that the assumptions of "strategic compliance" are problematic. Firstly, it does not acknowledge that women may take part in religions for religious ends and that compliance is "a mode of conduct". When people engage in religious action, it is not always and only strategic and purposeful action. Avishai (2008) argues that women engage in religious rituals not only and necessarily because they get extra-religious benefits such as socialization, or being able to get out of the home to the public without discontent of the family members but women perform religious rituals because they are prescribed to the believers by God. She further argues that when a religious action is strategic, the goal may be the will to become "an authentic religious subject against an image of a secular other" (2008: 413).

Performing religious rituals was conceptualized as a way of being and experiencing the world and becoming by Avishai (2008). In her study of the practice of niddah[47],

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[47] Niddah is an orthodox Jewish practice regarding the laws of menstrual purity which regulate the behavior of women and marital sexuality before, during and after menstruation. *Niddah* laws scrutinize every instance of bleeding and spotting because women's status is affected by their state of purity. Menstruation as a marker of purity/impurity is such a vital event in orthodox Jewish women's

she analyzes this religious practice as "an avenue for cultivating orthodox subjecthood through religious conduct… in the context of a dominant and threatening secular Israeli culture" (p. 427). Stacey and Gerard's (1990) work about the impact of feminism on the evangelicals in the USA entitled "We are not doormats" claims that women are not passively submitting to the religion but they are also empowered by the very same religion that tends to restrict them. Prickett (2015) demonstrated that African American Muslim women exert their agency within their neighborhood mosque community by protecting and creating women-only spaces in the mosque. They "do religion" which is, they construct their piety and themselves as pious selves through performance of religious rituals in the sacred space. Chong (2006) affirms that pious evangelical women of her ethnographic study in Seoul both resist and consent to the patriarchal religious system. She states that scholarship on women's resistance to religious traditions is vastly documented whereas the issue of women's "consent" to traditional religions is undertheorized.

"Doing religion" approach as a form of agency is criticized because it neglects the impact of structure and women's oppression by structures like religion. (Zion-Waldoks 2015: 76). It is also criticized as this approach may include all actions of women as agency (Burke 2012). Similarly, Rinaldo (2014) criticizes "doing religion" or compliant agency approach as they define agency too broadly. Instead, Rinaldo (2014) offers the concept of "pious critical agency" in an attempt to bring together pious women's agency with feminist agency and explains pious critical agency as "the capacity to engage critically and publically with religious texts" (p. 829). She gives the example of pious women engaging in critical discussions of religious texts on veiling or female circumcision possibly leading to mobilization for social change.

In this study, I demonstrate that women's undertaking of religious practices may incorporate different forms of agency simultaneously, namely resistance,

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lives that women check whether their period has ended with a special testing rag. Ambiguous situations regarding the end of the period are decided by a male rabbi since pure and impure are perceived and lived as legal categories (Avishai 2008).

instrumental and compliant agency. Pious women may get extra-religious ends-such as escaping male control as they go out to the public religious space- through their performance of religious rituals and that pious women actually conform and perpetuate the oppressive patriarchal order while they take part in religious rituals. I discuss the findings of my field study by employing and criticizing the "doing religion" concept in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

### 2.4.3. Religious ritual, pious women's status, and everyday life

This study is an attempt to demonstrate the complex relationship between a pious woman's status and agency; her performance of religious rituals; and her negotiation of everyday life and religious practices. A believer's status in society can be determined by her or his piety. In Islam, one of the determinants of a Muslim's status is her loyalty to religious practices and her degree of superiority in piety (takva). This even finds its echo in a saying of the Prophet on a woman's desirability as an ideal wife: "the Prophet said that the woman can be married for her religion [Muslim faith], for her fortune, or her beauty. Be motivated in your choice by her religion" (cited in Mernissi 1987: 54). Hence, women's submission to Islamic norms and practices cannot be easily labeled as subordination to the patriarchal religious tradition or as false consciousness (Charrad 2011: 426). There are more latent and embedded relations behind women's piety, one factor being the attainment of status and prestige within the family and closer social networks of women. As Bourdieu (1990) argues human action is motivated towards the accumulation of status, prestige and power through different forms of capital. I argue that in the case of pious Muslim women, it is religious capital which seems to be mobilized by women. I elaborate on the concept of religious capital in the case of pious Muslim women in Ankara in Chapter 4.

In line with the extant literature mentioned above, I aim to understand pious women's status within public religious practices of Islam in the urban context and the relationship between pious women's status, their agency and performance of public Islamic rituals. I aim to demonstrate that lived Islam in Turkey is gendered. Based on this argument, I try to provide answers to the "dominant paradox" of the sociology of religion and gender: why do Sunni Muslim women perform Islamic rituals which are gendered and which tend to dominate them? While I agree with the idea that religions, in general, perpetuate gender differences within societies through gendered religious rituals as components of power structures which are also gendered, I try to demonstrate how pious women negotiate the performance of Islamic rituals in their everyday lives, but still conforming to the orthodox Islamic discourses which explain how a pious woman's "correct manner" of performing a Muslim ritual and of behaving in the public spaces of ritual should be.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I aim to explain the methodology I employ in this study and how I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork on women's religious rituals in Ankara, Turkey. First, I try to demonstrate methodological approaches towards the study of religious ritual as "social action". Here I discuss the concepts of Durkheim, Weber and Bourdieu on religion and religious ritual. I try to show why the concepts of "social action" and "religious field" are appropriate for my ethnographic field and the methodological approach I employed in this study. Next, I discuss my methodological standpoint towards studying women's religious rituals, namely qualitative approach within an interpretative social science paradigm. My main aim is to understand and interpret the meanings women assign to their religious action within the "religious field" in Turkey. Additionally, I employ a feminist approach in order to uncover hidden dimensions of patriarchal power relations embodied in women's religious experiences. Then, I describe the ethnographic fieldwork I carried out in three districts of Ankara between Winter 2011 and Fall 2013 for more than two years. What I focus on after this section is my strategies of entry into the field and gaining the trust of my respondents. The next section covers the methods I used during the data collection process. The methods I employed are participant observation and semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Here I also write about how I reached my interviewees and the sampling technique. Then, I give a brief outline of

my respondents' profile. What follows next is the data analysis process. Lastly, I discuss the scope and limitations of my study.

## 3.1. Approaches to methodology

### 3.1.1. Studying religion and ritual: beliefs and rites; thought and action

Religion has been of great interest to the founding fathers of sociology and the contemporary social theorists. While Durkheim and Weber did extensive work on religion, ritual and their place within the society, Marx examined religion in terms of the notion of ideology. How they studied religion and ritual is closely associated with their methodological standpoint. Specifically, Durkheim's and Weber's studies of religious ritual reflect their approach to studying social action in general.

Durkheim (1995: 34) states that "religious phenomena are naturally arranged in two fundamental categories: beliefs and rites. The first are states of opinion, and consist in representations; the second are determined modes of action." However, Durkheim does not prioritize beliefs over rituals or rituals over beliefs. Durkheim (2002) warns against the danger of seeing rites as the whole religion. Religion, according to him, "is not merely a system of practices, but also a system of ideas whose object is to explain the world" (p. 132). Taking this argument into consideration, religion and religious phenomena should be studied by examining beliefs and rites together. This is what I try to do in this study. I observed the religious actions of individual women; asked them about their religious beliefs and tried to understand how their beliefs affect their actions.

For Weber (1998: 25) "social action" includes acting, failure to act and being acted upon. Weber asserts that an action is social "when it has some relation to the behavior of other people" (ibid., p. 26). He states that "religious behavior is not

'social' when it takes the form only of meditation, solitary prayer, etc." (ibid., p. 26). I examine the religious action of pious women when it is communal and public ritual. Hence, I endeavor to understand "religious social action" of the pious women. Moreover, Weber (1998) sees sociology as "the science whose object is to interpret the meaning of social action and thereby give a causal explanation of the way in which the action proceeds and the effects which it produces" (p. 7). Although I follow a Weberian approach to methodology as I try to interpret and understand women's religious action, I do not adopt a cause-effect analysis. Instead, I follow Bourdieu's "relational analysis" approach.

In Bourdieu's sociology, social action is investigated through taking into account the relations between actors in the field (Bourdieu 1998). I employ relational analysis in this study because women's religious field in Turkey is a competitive arena which is determined by power relations between different actors including lay women and men; religious specialists of the state and religious communities in a context where Islamist AKP has been ruling the country for the last 15 years, with conservative policies towards women's status within the society. As Swartz (1997) highlights according to Bourdieu, relations are "invariably competitive rather than cooperative, unconscious rather than conscious, and hierarchical rather than egalitarian" (p. 63). Hence, a relational analysis of religious action tries to uncover the hidden power relations within the competitive arena of the "religious field". For Bourdieu (1977) all action is interest-oriented and the less visible the interested dimension of action to its actors, the more legitimate the interested action is. I think that religious action of Sunni-Muslim pious women can be understood from this perspective. Islamic religious action, as the object of sociological scrutiny in this dissertation, assumes to have no interest since the message of the religion is to act "for the sake of God". Thus, from a Bourdieuean perspective, religious action gains more legitimation by the invisibility of its interest-oriented nature. Within this context, I use Bourdieu's concept of field in these study as my conceptual tool to understand pious women's Sunni Islamic practices in Ankara, Turkey.

*3.1.2. Interpretative social science: understanding actions and meanings*

Interpretative paradigm in social science tries to understand and interpret how individuals create and assign meaning to their actions and intentions (Glesne, 2011: 8). Here it is important to underline the notion of "understanding". Understanding or Weber's "Verstehen" "can consist in direct understanding of the intended meaning of an action" (Weber 1998: 11). It can also mean "explanatory understanding" which is seeing an individual's motive for acting in a certain way in a certain context. Understanding is also a concept which contains empathy "… as reflective reconstruction and interpretation of the action of others" (Holloway and Wheeler 1996: 7). However, according to Weber (1998: 9) "empathetic imagination" cannot be easily applied to every case since values of some individuals may be quite different from our own, like in the case of extreme piety. Weber (1998) suggested that researchers develop insight to the experiences of people by listening and observing them. Nevertheless, he does not mean that the researcher needs to perform the same action in order to understand that action (1998: 7-8). Thus, I think that Weber is not a proponent of participant observation. This thesis, however, employs participant observation as the main method of research. The reasons of this choice are mentioned in the following parts of this chapter.

Another important notion in interpretative social science approach is "subjectivity". While the researcher tries to capture the subjective meaning attachments of the people she studies, her position during the research design process and in the research setting is also crucial. Researchers start their studies with their own pre-conceptions, biases and values about the social phenomenon they want to explore. In contrast to the positivist approach which claims that there should be distance between the researcher and the researched in order to produce objective knowledge, interpretative approach highlights the notion of self-reflexivity. Holloway (2002: 12)

states that "qualitative approaches… provide insights from the perspective of participants, enabling researchers to see things as their informants do; they explore the insider's view". While trying to understand the participant's perspective, researchers reflect upon their own experiences and values. As Swartz (1997) states Bourdieu also points out the notion of reflexivity in the practice of social science. By reflexive social science Bourdieu means that the task of sociology is to reveal "the hidden dimension of power relations" in the practical social life while at the same time to be attentive to the interests embodied in social science practice itself (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). In order to produce objective scientific knowledge, the science practitioner should look at her own research and data production process reflexively. Based on these ideas, I argue that although researchers are not free of values, the methods and techniques they use; the way they conduct research and their interpretation of the data can be value-free. In this manner, the research process can become objective and unbiased. I conducted my field research in a setting where Sunni Muslim rituals were dominant. Since I am accustomed to the practices of Sunni Islam, my familiarity with the setting surely had an effect on my choice of topic. However, I tried to be objective and self-reflexive while conducting my research and interpreting data.

### 3.1.3. Feminist methodology: uncovering patriarchal power relations

In addition to the interpretative social science approach, this thesis has a critical feminist methodological stance because I try to reveal how women's lives are affected by their performance of religious practice which is a male-dominated and male-interpreted sphere. This male dominance brings about power asymmetries and inequalities in the religious lives of women as well as their everyday lives in general. This is also in line with Bourdieu's (2001) assertion about the task of sociology: unveiling systems of hierarchy and domination. In this study, I try to uncover gender

inequalities and the domination of pious Muslim women within Islam. I challenge the assumption that lived Islam is just to all believers in the domain of ritual by demonstrating gender differences in Islamic practices. I aim to explore lived religious experiences, actions and beliefs of women by observing them in the religious settings and by listening to them.

In line with the discussions of value-neutrality in interpretative social science, feminist theorists challenge the conventional approach to objectivity and objective knowledge production (cf. Haraway 1988; Harding 1992; Hartsock 1998). The notion of "situated knowledges" developed by Haraway and the concept of "standpoint feminism" developed by Harding are two important concepts in this field. "Situated knowledges" concept of Haraway (1992) refers to an understanding of objectivity which takes into account both the object and the subject of the study as agents. Similarly, Harding's (1992) "standpoint feminism" and Hartsock's (1998) "feminist historical materialism" indicate that starting research from the marginalized people's everyday experiences, such as those of women, can make us ask critical questions about women, men and the relations between the experiences of the two (p. 443). Hartstock (1998) states that as oppressed groups we need to constitute ourselves not only as objects but also as subjects of history, producing knowledge through our daily activities. Following these methodological insights of feminist theorists, I examine everyday religious experiences of pious women by taking their accounts of religious practice as important sources of knowledge.

Within the research process, feminist researchers also reflect upon their relationship with their respondents and "focus on interrogating their own actions, interactions, power and authority in the research process" (Glesne, 2011: 12). It is often stated that power relations between the researcher and her respondents are asymmetrical (cf. Kirsch 2005; Pierce 2000). In most of the cases the researcher has the authority over her respondents. In my study, however, most of my respondents had more authoritative tone over me as the researcher. There are some reasons for this. First,

71

nearly all of my respondents were older than me. Thus, I was the "young student" who was preparing her dissertation. Secondly, the women in my sample were the ones who know about the topic of my study, "Islamic practice", better than me. However, it is important to note that these women carefully and consciously avoided narcissistic statements about their knowledge of Islam, which, they fear, would bring them closer to commit a sin. Lastly, I was there to learn about their religious lives. Thus, they treated me as an "apprentice" who wants to learn how Islam should be lived by presenting their lives as good examples for me.

## 3.2. Ethnographic fieldwork

Religious ritual is usually studied by anthropologists within the framework of an ethnographic fieldwork. Both anthropologists and sociologists try to interpret the meanings of religious ritual in the lives of individuals and groups. Hence, they embrace interpretative approach to the study of ritual. Sociologists carry out research on the subject mainly as a fieldwork which includes interviewing technique. In fact, religious practice of women can be studied by using various methods. One method is asking individuals about how, when, where, how often and why they practice a particular religious ritual. While some researchers design surveys to find answers to these questions, some others design interviews (e. g. Sündal 2005; Tütüncü 2010). Another way is doing a fieldwork which includes observing and/or participating in the actions of the individuals in their own settings. Many studies mix interview method and participant observation within an ethnographic fieldwork (e. g. Mahmood 2005; Saktanber 2002; 2005; Huq 2011). There are also other methods of studying religious action. These include documentary analysis of holy books and reference books which guide individuals about what they should do; when, how and why they should act according to certain religious precepts (e. g. Graham 2001; Stowasser 1994).

I conducted an ethnographic fieldwork to explore and understand the ritual behavior of the pious Sunni Muslim women in Ankara, that is, I aimed to encounter and observe women's actions directly in their everyday settings. I participated in the religious rituals of Sunni Islam together with the women. I agree with what Grimes (1995) states about studying ritual: "ritual is the hardest religious phenomenon to capture in texts or comprehend by thinking, therefore we need to encounter it concretely, directly, in the field, or the study of religion suffers…" (p. 5). What is more, studying women and their religious practices requires an epistemological approach which helps uncover women's experiences and feelings. Observing women in their own setting gives more significant information about their ritual action than conducting a questionnaire or interview without spending considerable amount of time in the field with the people. Field study is thus suitable for studying the performances of a subordinated group, like the pious women in Sunni Islam.

In order to produce knowledge about pious women's religious rituals and the meanings they assign to their action, I employed qualitative research methods within an interpretative social science approach. This topic requires an inquiry into the sensitive and private sphere of belief and religious practice in pious women's lives. It is hard to conceptualize and analyze this sphere as mere external reality by quantitative methods. Nevertheless, I do not mean that I ignored statistical regularities about the religious ritual action of individuals. On the contrary, if there is any quantitative data which helps reveal the characteristics and extent of the religious field, I used them in this study.
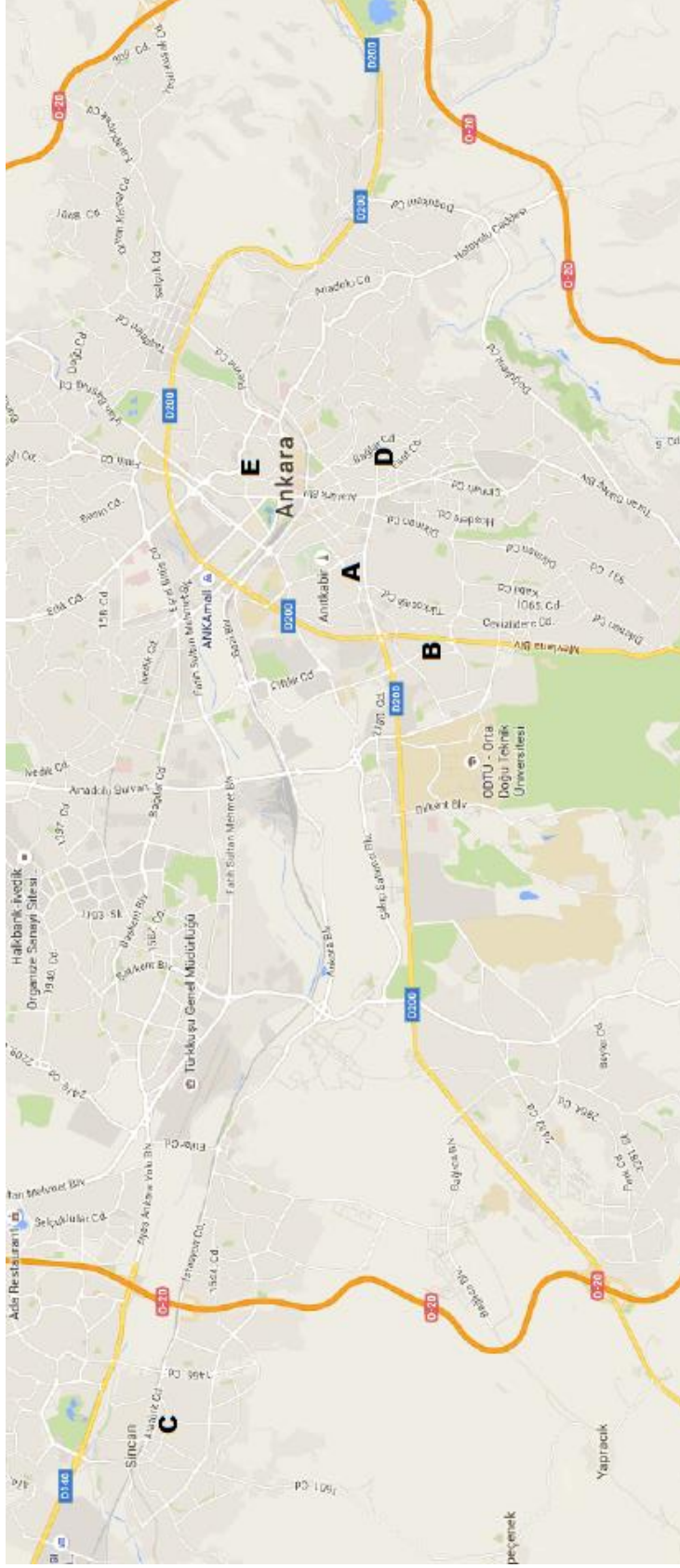
A: Bahçelievler, B: Çukurambar, C: Sincan, D: Kocatepe Mosque, E: Hacı Bayram Veli Mosque

Figure 1:Map of my field sites

Source: maps.google.com

My fieldwork lasted more than two years from Winter 2011 to Fall 2013. I also made observations before this period within the framework of a seminar course. I did participant observation in 2009 at the Kocatepe Mosque which, in effect, led me develop an interest in this problematic of Muslim women's piety and their religious practices in Turkey. Then, I started doing an ethnographic research at the central mosques of Ankara (Kocatepe Mosque in Kızılay, Hacı Bayram Veli Mosque, and Taceddin Dergah and Mosque in Ulus), at smaller mosques or masjids[48] (Şeyh Şamil Mosque which is a part of the underground station complex of Kızılay, and AnkaMall Shopping Center Masjid) and at the Quran courses (Bahçelievler Quran Course and Çukurambar Quran Course). I have also been to the local and peripheral mosques like İnanç Sitesi Mosque in 100. Yıl, Tuğba Altınok Mosque in Çukurambar, Mareşal Çakmak Mosque in Sincan and Barbaros Mosque in Balgat. I visited these mosques both during Ramadan and at other times. During the month of Ramadan, the mosques are more crowded with women and men than at other times. Pious Muslim individuals go to the mosques especially for the supererogatory prayer of "teravih" at night. Among the Quran courses named above, I visited Bahçelievler Quran Course and Çukurambar Quran Course periodically. These courses are approved courses of the DRA and the Ministry of National Education. I also attended *sohbet*[49] sessions in a masjid in Sincan. This masjid is not an official place of religious practice approved by the DRA. It is founded by the initiative of a woman who is an informal but popular preacher in the district of Sincan.

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[48] Masjid means a place for prayer. Mosques are also masjids. However, in the everyday use of the language, masjid refers to small rooms for prayer. What is more, the word refers to apartment flats donated by pious Muslims to religious communities for the purpose of sohbet gatherings in women's religious field in Turkey.

[49] Sohbet means "conversation" in Turkish. Sohbet, as a religious practice, is an interactive talk given by a religious expert to a group of listeners.

### 3.2.1. Strategies in the field: gaining entry and trust

My first encounter with the field was within the framework of a three-month long ethnography at the Kocatepe Mosque. During this time period I did participant observation in the women's section of the mosque without letting the participant women know that I was doing research. Since it is a public mosque and there are hundreds of women in dispersed small parts of the women's section, I was one of the mosque participants who did not interfere with women's behavior but who just observed them and was an earwitness to their small talks. I sometimes talked to them not as a researcher but as an ordinary mosque attendee. This kind of approaching was appropriate because I was not studying a small and closed community of women but a large group of anonymous women. The only questions I asked to those women were about the frequency of their mosque attendance to Friday prayers and other daily prayers. Since I did not tell the women that I was doing a research there, I did not ask them questions about their personal opinion or their comments. I was just trying to get the general picture of women's religious ritual practices. However, when I started my Ph.D. research study for which I visited sermons given in Quran courses by state preachers and in the masjid, I told the women that I was doing research on their religious life. In the following section I describe in detail how I gained the trust of the participant women and hence entry into the each field site after portraying the three field sites where I conducted my study.

### 3.2.2. Field Sites

I conducted my fieldwork in three districts of Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. These districts are Bahçelievler, Çukurambar and Sincan. While Bahçelievler and Çukurambar are located within close proximity to the city center, Sincan is a peripheral district, 30 kilometers away from the city center. Bahçelievler is an old neighborhood with its middle class residents who are mostly bureaucrats and old-

aged retired people. Despite this character of its residents, it is a lively area with entertainment and shopping facilities and it is full of young people day and night. Bahçelievler took my attention as an appealing field site when I first saw the neighborhood mosque and the poster of the *sohbet* for women in the mosque. I was interested in the profile of the attendees at this religious *sohbet* held in a Quran course on a street with cafes and bars; young trendy boys and girls.

Moreover, general election results can be a useful indicator to show the political affinity and world view of the residents of the districts. Bahçelievler is a neighborhood residents of which are mostly social democrats. We understand this by looking at the 2015 November general elections when Republican People's Party (CHP) received 63.3 % of the votes whereas AKP received just 14.8 % of the votes and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) received 13.5 % of the votes[50].

Çukurambar is a newly developed neighborhood of Ankara. It is an upper-middle class district where professionals like doctors, lawyers, engineers and also retired people and return migrants live. One can sense the atmosphere of neighborliness and "mahalle" culture in this district. It is also considered as a conservative place because of the presence of the new wealthy segments of pious Muslims. Despite this reputation, 46.4 % of the residents in Çukurambar voted for CHP while 29.1 % of them voted for AKP and 16.5 % voted for MHP[51].

Sincan is a lower-middle class neighborhood of Ankara and its population mainly consists of immigrants from the nearby Anatolian towns such as Yozgat, Çorum, Çankırı and Sivas. It has a working class population consisting of people who still have ties with their villages (Zengin 2014). The district is well known for its conservative population and for its support to the Islamist AKP. AKP received 62.8

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[50] https://sonuc.ysk.gov.tr/module/sonuc.jsf, accessed on 27.03.2016

[51] https://sonuc.ysk.gov.tr/module/sonuc.jsf, accessed on 27.03.2016

% of the votes in Sincan in 2015 November general elections. MHP followed this figure with 16.1 % and CHP with 16.0 %[52].

By looking at this brief description of my field sites, it can be seen that I try to understand the piety and religious practice performance of Sunni Muslim women from middle class background (consisting of lower middle and upper middle classes) in urban settings. There are also other reasons why I selected these particular districts. I chose Sincan because of its prominent conservative character; Bahçelievler because it is considered as not conservative and Çukurambar because of its neo-conservative character. Lastly, practical reasons also played role in my selection of the sites. I chose Çukurambar and Bahçelievler because of their proximity to where I live and study; and I chose Sincan where my parents, relatives and friends live.

Within these districts I visited three places to conduct participant observation: the DRA's official Quran courses in Bahçelievler and Çukurambar, and an unofficial masjid in Sincan. I chose the official Quran courses because I want to explore the "orthodox" Sunni Muslim practices of pious women in their everyday lives. This is also the reason why I did not choose a certain closed religious community to conduct research. The unofficial masjid in Sincan does not represent any particular religious community (cemaat) or religious path (tarikat) either. Although the religious expert "hodja" belongs to a particular religious community, there is no propaganda of any religious belief during the lessons. Some of the women who participate in these three settings do possibly belong to certain religious groups or communities. However, my purpose is not to study one particular religious group.

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[52] https://sonuc.ysk.gov.tr/module/sonuc.jsf, accessed on 27.03.2016

*3.2.2.1. Bahçelievler Quran Course*

I started my visits to the sermons in Bahçelievler Quran Course which is located in a middle class district of Ankara. The Quran Course is adjacent to the Bahçelievler Mosque which is entered from the main street. In order to enter the Quran course, however, one must use the side street. The main street is a very lively shopping and entertainment area. Hence, it was always curious to me who attend this mosque, especially who the women attendees are. I thought young university students with headscarves attend the mosque and the Quran Course. I first went into the mosque after seeing the poster advertising the *sohbet* for the ladies and the young girls ("*hanımlar ve genç kızlar için sohbet*") every Friday in the mosque. On a Friday of June 2011, expecting to find a group of women at the women's section, I entered into the mosque. However, there was nobody inside. I made a tour in the empty building; read the signs on the walls and checked out the women's section. Since there was apparently no *sohbet* in the mosque, I decided to go out to the mosque courtyard and asked two 'grandpas' and an aunty where the *sohbet* for women was being held. They told me that it was in the Quran Course near the Mukhtar's Office and Mufti's Office and they showed me the way. I found the place and went into the room where the sermon had already had started. The place was designed like a classroom with desks and chairs, a poster of Atatürk, Gençliğe Hitabe (Atatürk's Speech to Turkish Youth) and İstiklal Marşı (Turkish National Anthem). There was an "Atatürk Corner" with pictures of him from different periods of his lifetime. These are things that you could find in a Turkish primary school classroom. What is different is the presence of a picture of Kaba.

When I went into the room, the female preacher was already saying prayers and women were accompanying her. I greeted her with my head and smiled and went straight ahead to a desk at the back of the room. My late entrance did take the attention of the female preacher and the audience. I was wearing a pair of jeans and covered my head with a traditional Anatolian thin piece of cloth called "yemeni"

which signified that I was not a covered woman but covered my head for this occasion only.

After the sermon, I approached the female preacher "*vaize*" and introduced myself to her. I said that I was doing my Ph.D. research on the pious Muslim women in Ankara and their religious practices. I also told her that I was studying Sociology at METU. This was the key which opened the gate to my research study because my to-be gatekeeper, the female preacher G. Hodja, was the mother-in-law of a friend of mine from the Bachelor years at METU. This coincidence is the facilitating event for my whole Ph.D. research. She has spent years in her job as a state-sponsored preacher and knows most of the preachers. She also knows which religious event is happening when and where so she helped me a lot for "being at the right place at the right time" (Drury and Stott, 2001). I think that even without this coincidence, the preacher and the women from her congregation would still help me but this was a quick start of trust and friendship between my respondents and me. In fact, my acquaintance with the preacher was accompanied with the introduction of two prominent women of the Quran Course: Halime and Sakine. These two women were called by the other women as "hodja", religious person teaching Quran and Islam, although they do not have a formal religious education and/or certificate to teach Islamic script, doctrine and practice. However, they are self-educated in Islam and highly-respected by their community.

The female preacher, *vaize*, who facilitated my access to the field of the pious women, also appreciated my presence and my project in the Quran course she worked. But the strange thing was that she always reminded her audience and me that there was a researcher in the small room of the mosque or the Quran course. Whether she was doing this on purpose or not is not clear to me. However, while warning me to take note of important points she makes during her preach, she called me "my researcher friend".

### 3.2.2.2. Sincan Masjid

The second place I visited was the "unofficial" masjid in Sincan. The mother of a friend of mine visits this masjid regularly to attend the sermons and lessons of a popular "hodja", who is a preacher with no formal religious education. I met my friend's mother outside the masjid and after introducing ourselves briefly to each other we proceeded to the flat in a nearby apartment where the masjid is located. The hodja was already there in the room reserved for her. The mother of my friend introduced me to the preacher who was wearing a black headscarf which also covered her chin. After my friend's mother's introduction, I told her that I was working on a study about pious women's religious practices. Then she started talking and her speech lasted 15 minutes. She implied that she liked me by stating that if God loved one of the servants, God would make everyone love her. Here I should note that being a young woman who makes her study in the mosques and who goes to the *sohbet* sessions for this purpose is very appealing to the pious women I study. Most of the women showed me sympathy by caressing my face or touching my knees as we sat on the ground of the mosque. Thus, I think that participant observation as the method itself helped me gain entry and trust in the field.

### 3.2.2.3. Çukurambar Quran Course

The last place I visited was the Çukurambar Quran Course during the Ramadan of the year 2013. I attended the Quran recitation, mukabele[53], in the course every week day for four weeks. Nobody in this case facilitated my attendance there. I wanted to

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[53] The word "*mukabele*" literally means "to respond" and "reciprocation." *Mukabele* is the religious ritual where the Quran is recited by the religious experts while the listeners follow from their own copies of the Quran. It is an Islamic tradition performed every Ramadan especially by women at their homes or in the mosques. *Mukabele* is a performance aimed to mimic Prophet Muhammad's memorization of the Quran by the help of the Angel Gabriel in Ramadan.

participate in a mukabele and I knew that there would be sessions in every mosque and at the homes of women. On the first day of Ramadan, I went to this mosque and saw the sign on the door of the Quran course saying mukabele starts today at 11:30 am and it was 11:40. I went inside and decided to follow this course for the whole month. On the third day of my visit, I told the Quran teacher that I was there to conduct a research study on the pious women's religious practices and wanted to interview women who practice religious ritual (*ibadet*) frequently. After listening to me, she introduced me to Saliha who was also called as "hodja" by other women of the course. That day I interviewed her and the other day her neighbor. As other women saw me doing interviews with women, they wondered what we were talking about. I made interviews with ten women in total there and with the Quran course teacher. Saliha and Seher (she was also called as hodja, also by the DRA's teachers and preachers) wanted to help me very sincerely so one day before the mukabele started, they announced that I was a student who was preparing a study about pious women, their *ibadet* practices and religious life. They asked other participant women to give their 10-15 minutes to help this "young student". With their help, I could complete my interviews in this field site.

### 3.2.2.4. Other sites, other religious occasions

I also participated in other religious occasions such as women's Friday meetings and mevlit[54] recitations where women gather at homes to recite some sections from the Quran, pray, eat and chat together. It is a common practice among women of the middle and lower-middle classes who are usually neighbors or relatives. As Friday meetings are held at homes, they are intimate gatherings. Hence, the women whom I met at these meetings were quite excited and willing to talk to me about my project.

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[54] Mevlit is originally a poem written by Sülayman Çelebi and it celebrates the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. However, by time this poem started to be recited in the form of a song in the special religious occasions such as Islamic holy nights.

For example, one attendee at one of the gatherings even asked me whether I was going to interview her or not before I requested an interview. It is surprising to see how willing the pious women are about my research study instead of being shy and resistant to talk about their faith, beliefs and practices which are all very individual and private issues.

Another place I visited is the Women, Family and Youth Center of the Diyanet Vakfı[55] in Kızılay. I attended family counseling sessions as an observer; talked to the Arabic course participants and the teachers; and the vaqf officers informed me about the profile of the participants and the activities of the center. I also had the opportunity to have a conversation with Hatice Görmez, a female preacher working voluntarily at the center and the wife of the President of the DRA. Moreover, I went to the conferences organized by the DRA, and charity organizations of some religious vaqfs. I did not prefer to include the activities at these vaqfs in my analysis since they are not religious but secular performances such as hobby courses, Arabic courses and family counseling activities.

## 3.3. Data Collection Methods

For this ethnographic study, I employed participant observation and semi-structured interviews with Sunni Muslim women of middle-class background in Ankara. Blasi (1985) suggests that sociologists are interested in "measuring something that is simultaneously religious and exteriorly visible" (p. 59). When I started this study, my interest was also on the visible actions of the pious women, something I could observe. Thus, I chose to observe the Islamic rituals of daily prayer, recitation of the Quran and some supererogatory prayers and organizations on special religious days. However, without understanding the meanings women attach to their acts and the reasons they give to their ritual practice, mere observation provides the researcher

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[55] http://tdvkagem.org.tr, accessed on 13.02.2012

incomplete information. Thus, I also decided to conduct semi-structured interviews with the women in order to gain deeper knowledge about women's religious acts.

I did participant observation in order to examine the ritual behavior of women in the religious settings where public religious ritual practices take place such as mosques, masjids and Quran courses. In the following section, I write about participant observation and why I chose to employ this method for this particular topic. Later, I mention details of the semi-structured interviews.

### 3.3.1. Participant Observation

Participant observation is a qualitative research method which "ranges across a continuum from mostly observation to mostly participation" (Glesne, 2011: 64). Bernard (2006: 347) states that "fieldwork can involve three very different roles: (1) complete participant, (2) participant observer, and (3) complete observer. The first role involves deception- becoming a member of a group without letting on that you're there to do research. The third role involves following people around and recording their behavior with little if any interaction..." He further argues that ethnographic research is basically based on the second role which is the participant observer. "Participant observers can be insiders who observe and record some aspects of life around them (in which case, they're observing participants); or they can be outsiders who participate in some aspects of life around them and record what they can (in which case, they're participating observers)" (ibid., p. 347).

During my fieldwork, when I was in big public mosques such as Kocatepe Mosque or Hacı Bayram Veli Mosque, I was a complete observer: I was observing and recording the behavior of the people around me. I had very little interaction with the people in the mosque, but sometimes I had very insightful dialogues with some of the mosque participants without asking them direct questions about my research. These dialogues were in the form of small talk or ordinary conversation.

On the other hand, when I did fieldwork in smaller groups in the Quran courses, I informed the course participants about my identity as a researcher and in this case, I had shifting roles between an observing participant and a participating observer. Some days I was more an insider who participated in the rituals and observed aspects of the social interactions around me. Some days I was an outsider who mostly observed and took less part in the activities of the group I was observing. There were times when I did not pray with the congregation and just sat down in the mosque. These were the times when I had my menstruation period. This is one unique point which affects the female researcher while doing a fieldwork in an Islamic religious setting. I usually preferred not going to the mosque when I was having my period. However, sometimes I did not want to miss occasions such as kandil[56] nights. During these visits, I did not pray with the congregation but listened to the sermon and watched the women praying. My presence in the mosque without praying was never a problem except when a woman asked me why I was in the mosque and what I was doing there since I was not performing the ritual prayer (*namaz* in Turkish). I told her that I liked being in the mosque. Her reaction was "of course, the mosque is God's house. Everyone can come in".

My role as a participant observer in a religious setting was a tough one because I, myself as a believer, was praying while trying to observe other women praying. And this is not something a believer should do while performing a prayer which requires meditation. However, this was not a problem when I was listening to the sermons. Then, I could take notes while listening and observing the female participants. The position of a participant observer as someone who engages both in a profane research study and a sacred ritual could have been seen unethical and not-religious by the women of the congregation but this was not the reaction I received during my study.

Here it is important to state that a researcher's belief becomes important when studying a religious community. Saktanber (2002) while studying the Islamist

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[56] Kandil literally means "oil lamp". In this context, it refers to the Islamic holy night where there are special programs with recitation of the Quran, hymns and prayers at the mosques and on TV.

women of the 1990s in their social environment was asked questions as to "whether she possessed faith". The woman who asked this question told her that she wants to know "whether she knew the five pillars of Islam" (p. 74). I was not asked such questions concerning whether I perform daily prayers or other religious activities because I was already participating in the religious rituals of Islam in their presence.

A significant point in doing participant observation is to keep the balance between participation and observation. For example, some months I did not go to the Quran course because I wanted to reflect upon what I had observed throughout the days when I was with the pious women. But my absence was received a bit negatively by the participant women by raising their suspicions about my piety or sincerity. On the other hand, when I went to the course continuously, I felt the danger of "going native" and "losing my objectivity" towards the community of believers which I was studying. This, I believe, is the basic contradiction of participant observation and attempts to build a balance between "participation and observation" indicates the researcher's difficult position as a participant observer.

The method of participant observation does not only consist of participation and observation. The data observed has to be coded. For this end, after each visit I took field notes on how women practice religious rituals, how they interact with each other and with men, how they negotiate their daily and religious life, and how they relate and deal with the religious authorities. I generally took my notes after the performance of the religious ritual, whether it was salat or recitation of the Quran. As soon as I left the mosque, I went to a nearby café and wrote the details of the visit. I also took notes during the sermons and *sohbet* sessions where note-taking was a sign of a keen listener.

### 3.3.2. Semi-structured interviews

I conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with women from the Bahçelievler Quran Course, Çukurambar Quran Course, Sincan Masjid and with women who live in these districts but have no relation to these institutions. I also made one expert interview with three female preachers of the DRA. I give a detailed account on the profile of my respondents in the following section of this chapter.

My interview questions were grouped under four headings:

1. general demographic questions about the women and their family;
2. how women spend their time every day, their spare time activities and relations to friends, relatives and neighbors;
3. questions about religious practices women perform (daily prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, almsgiving, Quran recitation and listening, and other supererogatory practices and their meanings to women); and
4. lastly ideas of women about religion, piety, being a good Muslim and woman, religious practices and profane activities.

I conducted most of the interviews at the mosques and some interviews at the homes of the participants. Nearly two thirds of the interviews were not recorded since some of the women rejected recording their voice because of Islamic reasons. They said a woman's voice should not be heard by a stranger man. Although I guaranteed that no man would hear their voice, I did not want to make my participants uncomfortable with this idea and I did not insist on recording. Thus, I did not even ask some of my respondents if I could record the interview since I thought this might create an atmosphere of discomfort and distrust. I took notes of these interviews and it worked pretty well since I could write most of the conversation very fast and my interviewees were very understanding towards me and my work. I could feel their positive attitudes in every phase of my field work.

Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to two hours. I asked the same questions to all the women most of the time. While some respondents were willing to talk, some others made very short statements. In some instances, I skipped some questions which were irrelevant to the women and in other instances, I elaborated on some questions which opened up interesting cases.

In addition to these techniques in the field, I collected documents and artifacts which are very often distributed in women's religious field in Turkey. These documents include photocopies of prayers and suras from the Quran; brochures of various religious organizations including the DRA and other non-governmental religious associations, for example, the invitation card of a charity lunch organized by an Islamic association and the ticket for the show called "Gözyaşı Geceleri-Nights of Tears" written and played by an Islamic intellectual.

### 3.3.2.1. Sampling techniques: using networks and snowball sampling

I found my respondents basically by using my established network in Sincan and by creating new networks in Bahçelievler and Çukurambar. In order to reach the women in Sincan, I asked my friends and relatives who live there. I interviewed pious women whom my acquaintances know very well in addition to the women who go to the masjid. I reached the women in Çukurambar and Bahçelievler by introducing myself to them as a Ph.D. researcher who was studying women's religious rituals. After knowing one woman in the group, I reached her friends, neighbors or relatives. I mainly used "snowball sampling" technique in order to find my respondents. Since all of the women knew that I was there to make interviews, I asked them after each *sohbet* and mukabele session whether they would be willing to talk to me. My response rate was very high. Out of twelve women in Çukurambar Quran course, for example, only one woman rejected the interview. My fieldwork in Bahçelievler depends mostly on participant observation. I did interviews with three women from

the Quran course. I also interviewed women from other districts with similar characteristics like Bahçelievler.

## 3.4. Profile of the respondents

Firstly, all 25 women in my sample belong to Hanefi madhap (Islamic school of law) of Sunni Islam which is the orthodox madhap in Turkey. These women are all practicing Muslims although their degree of piety differs. Some of them perform only the basic duties of Islam, while some others practice extra rituals and participate in *sohbet* sessions. What is common among them is that religious ritual plays a very significant role in the lives of these women.

Although the women vary according to their age, profession, number of children and educational background, there are striking patterns which can be drawn from the profile of these women. In the following pages, I try to outline these patterns by using charts. These charts do not aim at a statistical representation of all the pious women in Ankara. I use these figures in order to visualize the profile of the pious women in my sample. They help understand what kind of a group is under scrutiny in this study.

First of all, there are not many young women in my sample. This is in line with the general trend in Quran courses in Ankara. Official statistics regarding successful Quran course participants in Ankara at the end of the educational year 2010-2011 show that 18,7 percent of those who finished the course are between ages 15-22[57]. These numbers include both men and women although most of the participants are women.

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[57] http://turkstat.gov.tr, non-formal education statistics, accessed on 13.02.2012
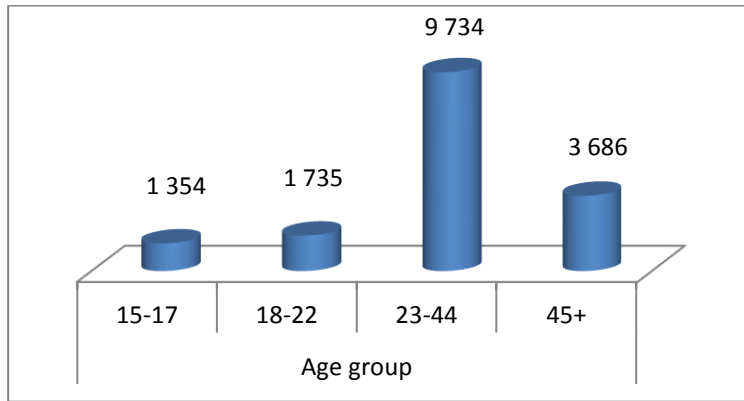
Figure 2: Number of Quran course participants in Ankara according to age groups
Source: http://turkstat.gov.tr

When the respondents in my sample are examined according to age groups, it can be seen that 18 out of 25 women are 50 years old and more. Only three women are under the age of forty.
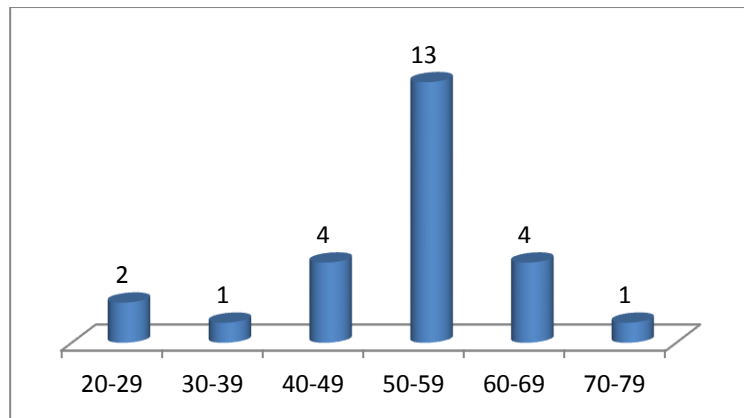


Figure 3: Number of women in my sample according to age groups

This fact should be thought together with the fact that most of the women in my sample are retired women and housewives who have grown-up children. The distribution of my respondents' professions can be seen in the following graph.
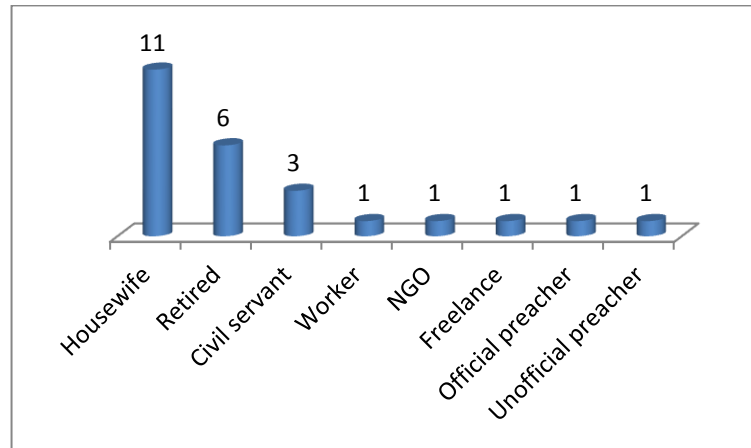
Figure 4: Number of women in my sample according to profession

I think that women who are older and who do not work have more time for free time activities. Participating in religious rituals is one of the popular spare time activities for these women. What is more, if the children of these women are grown-up, they find even more time and motivation to take part in religious activities. In order to strengthen this argument, I looked at the ages of my respondents' youngest children. The youngest children of the housewives in my sample are mostly more than 30 years old. The youngest children of all the retired women in my sample are between 20 and 29 years old. On the other hand, the youngest children of the working women in my sample are younger than 24.
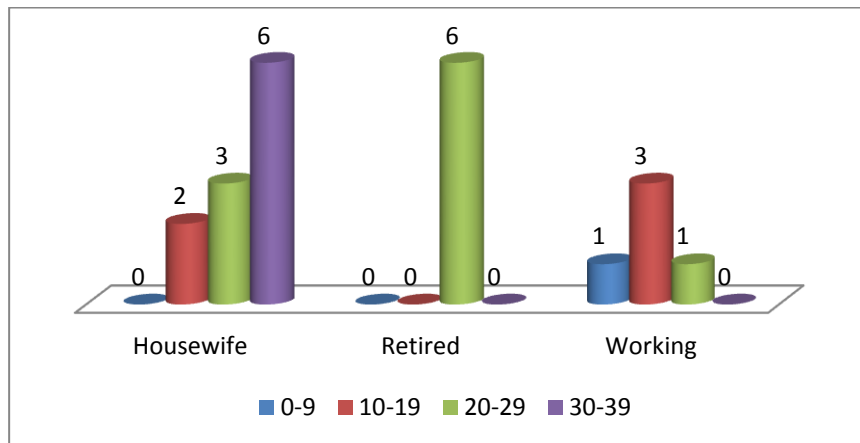
Figure 5: Age distribution of women's children according to women's profession

The graph below shows the numbers of women in my sample according to education level. This graph indicates that most of my respondents have high school education or more (20 out of 25). This is due to the fact that I did my fieldwork in middle income districts of Ankara. This figure is different from the illustration which shows the general education level of the Quran course participants in Ankara (2010-2011). Almost half of the Quran course participants in Ankara (49,26 %) have primary education.
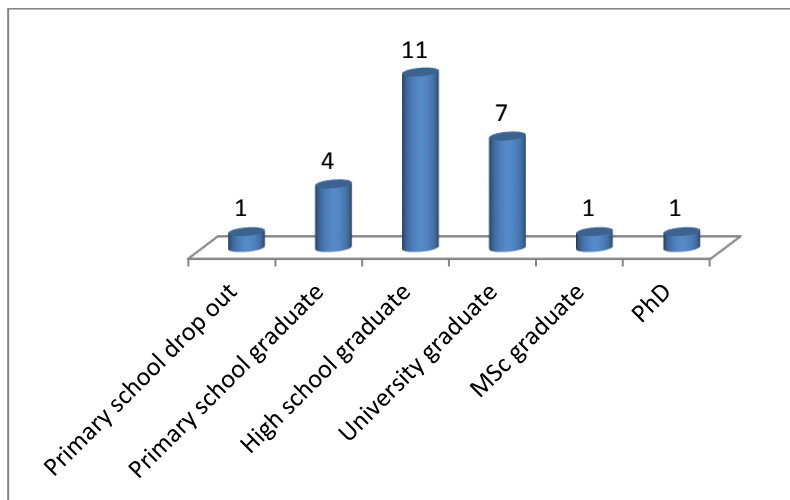
Figure 6: Number of women in my sample according to education level
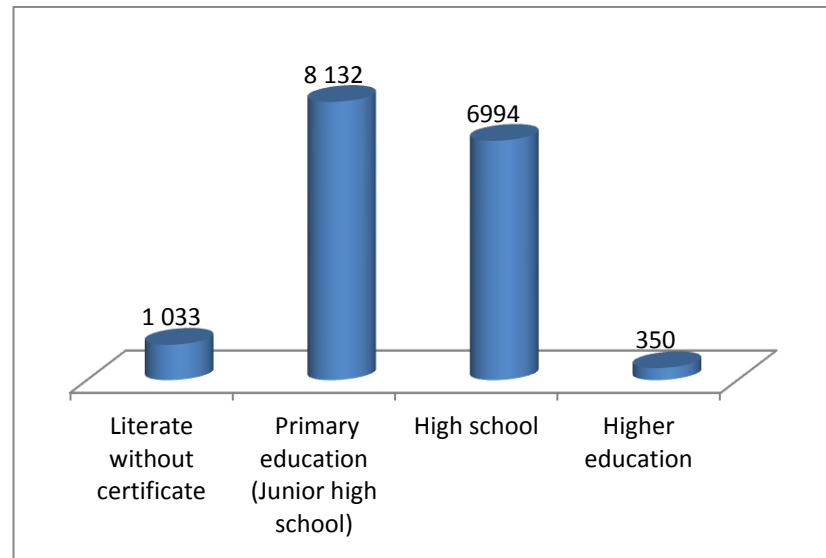


Figure 7: Education level of the Quran course participants in Ankara
Source: http://turkstat.gov.tr

## 3.5. Data analysis methods

Data analysis depends on the particular ways the data has been collected. I collected my data by participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Thus, what I have as raw data is field notes I had taken after each visit to my field sites and the transcription of the interviews. I wrote my field notes on a notebook so first I had to transfer them on the computer in order to ease the data analysis process. My recorded interviews had to be transcribed whereas I had to create the soft copies of the interviews which I took note. After having all of my data as digital files, I could analyze them by grouping them according to themes often emerging within the conversations in the field notes and interviews.

## 3.6. Scope and limitations of the study

This study covers a very limited part of the "religious field" in Turkey. I examine Sunni Muslim women's public religious rituals in three middle-class districts of Ankara. This means I did not include men's religious rituals; lower and upper class women's religious rituals; rituals of women from other Islamic madhabs (schools of Islamic law); from rural areas and women's rituals in the privacy of home. Although I try to observe and participate in as many religious rituals and occasions in the city as possible, I chose to focus on some of the public rituals such as Friday prayers, *sohbet* sessions and Quran recitation in the mosques and in the Quran courses. This is because I wanted to focus on the "observable behaviors" of the women in the public religious space. Moreover, I did interviews with a small number of women. It is necessary to state that this number does not aim at any representation of the pious women in Ankara. It is also important that this thesis does not search for significant statistical relationships between women's religious rituals and their status within society. Instead, I try to gain a deeper insight to pious women's public ritual practices and reveal the patterns of relationship between women's religious ritual performance and their social status through an ethnographic study and analysis of smaller groups of women.

# CHAPTER 4

## WOMEN'S RELIGIOUS FIELD IN TURKEY

### 4.1. Introduction: Turkish religious field and its doxa

As I stated in the theory chapter, I use the concept of field, developed by Bourdieu, as a central notion to understand the dynamics of how pious women perform religion in contemporary Turkey. Field, according to Verter (2003), is defined by Bourdieu as "a hierarchically structured social arena (or market) in which actors compete for money, prestige, and power" (p. 153). Hence, I understand that religious field is also a structured competitive arena which is determined by the conflict between the specialists, as well as lay believers, in the field who compete for different kinds of capital- whether economic, symbolic, social or political- by using their religious capital. Within this competition, the dominant groups try to impose their view of religion as the universal definition. This is what Bourdieu calls as the doxa of the field. According to Bourdieu (1998: 57), doxa is "a particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant, which represents and imposes itself as a universal point of view".

Religious field in Turkey is dominantly consisted of Sunni Islamic discourse and Sunni Islamic practice which we can call as the doxa of Turkish religious field according to the definition of Bourdieu (1998) cited above. As it is widely announced by the state authorities, Muslims constitute the highest percentage of the population in the country. This declaration has gained acceptance by national and

international audience. To give one reference, according to a World Values Survey research paper written by Alexander and Welzel (2011: 69), 99 % of Turkey's population is Muslim[58]. However, this data is not accurate. Neither is the data regarding the percentage of people who belong to different religious groups in the country. Even within the Muslim population, we do not know the exact percentages of the Sunni and Alevi citizens[59]. This is because Turkish Statistical Institute does not collect and provide data regarding the percentages of people who belong to different religious groups. Shankland (2012: 107) suggests that 10-12 percent of the Muslim population in Turkey is Alevi. We do not have information on the numbers of people who are atheists or deists, either. We can only assume from the information we currently have that majority of the Muslim population in Turkey is Sunni. What is more, the majority belongs to the Hanafi School of Law[60] in Sunni Islam. There is also a considerable percentage of Shafii Muslims especially in the eastern provinces of Turkey but we do not know the exact numbers regarding the Shafii population in the country[61].

The DRA is the state institution responsible for issues regarding Islam in Turkey. The DRA gives fatwa, which is a religious legal opinion on an issue pertaining to the

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[58] Despite the lack of official statistics for the distribution of religious beliefs in Turkey, there are some estimations from different surveys. In their report dated 2014, the DRA estimated the number of Muslims in Turkey as 99, 2 %.
http://www2.diyanet.gov.tr/StratejiGelistirme/Afisalanlari/dinihayat.pdf
In a similar research by PEW, the estimated Muslim population in Turkey by 2010 is 98 %. http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/table-religious-composition-by-country-in-percentages/.

[59] A research by Toprak and Çarkoğlu (2006) estimates the percentage of Alevi population as 11,4 % http://www.insanhaklarisavunuculari.org/dokumantasyon/files/original/88a4ab5dedbd1d515418cdc50 a0582e2.pdf. On the other hand, another research by KONDA dated 2007 estimates Alevi population as 5, 73 % of Turkey's population but they admit in the report that due to various reasons sampled people may refrained from revealing their religious identity and the real percentage might be higher.

[60] There are four schools of law in Sunni Islam: Hanafi, Shafii, Hanbali and Maliki.

[61] The "Religious Life in Turkey" report by the DRA (2014) estimates the Hanafi population as 77, 5 % and Shafii population as 11, 1 %.

Islamic law[62], according to the Hanafi School of the Sunni Islam. *Fatwas* mention the opinions of all schools of law of the Sunni Islam but at the end the *fatwa* is given according to the Hanafi School. This highlights the fact that Hanafi School of Law constitutes the orthodox belief set of official Islam in Turkey. I briefly mention the historical background of how Sunni Islam has dominated and become the official religion in the Ottoman Empire and its relationship to the principle of secularism in Turkey in the following section.

### 4.1.1. Orthodox-heterodox Islam and secularism in Turkey

Ottoman Empire ruled over a geographical setting comprised of different religious communities, ethnic groups and sub-cultures (e.g. Mardin 1981; Barkey 2005; Kafadar 1995; İnalcık 1973; Heper 1991). The concept used for these various religious groups was "millet" which started to refer to "nation" from the end of the 19th century onwards (Mardin 1981: 209). Although the Ottoman Sultan was the Islamic Caliphate and he represented the Muslim community, Islam has never been a homogeneous unit when the heterodox doctrines within the Islamic tradition in the Ottoman Empire are concerned (ibid., p. 193). Sufism[63], as an alternative way of living Islam, has existed side by side with the orthodox Islam (Mardin 1991).

As Mardin (1981) states this heterogeneity was a source of worry for the statesmen who thought that the empire would fragment. In order to prevent this possible scenario, the bureaucrats of the Ottoman State

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[62] Dictionary of Religious Concepts, DRA
https://kurul.diyanet.gov.tr/SoruSor/DiniKavramlarSozlugu.aspx, accessed on 13.04.2014
[63] Sufism is an inner mystical sect of Islam (Huda 2003). Followers are called *sufi* and they belong to different sects called as *tariqa*.

tried to impose orthodox, Sunni Islam and were constantly on the lookout for traitorous Shii... they deported to the far corners of the empire heterodox groups which they considered dangerous... they engaged in building a religious élite and educational system controlled by this élite... (Mardin 1981: 193).

We can see the implications of these decisions in contemporary Turkey where Sunni Islam prevails. An important example is the subordinated status of Alevi citizens, that is still being discussed (e.g. Ocak 2000; Shankland 2003; Erman & Erdemir 2005; Erdemir 2005). There are various religious orders and communities, too, but some of these religious groups are on the side of the dominant ideology and ruling class.

Modernization and secularization processes in the Ottoman Empire started in the 19th century with the Tanzimat Edict which "intended to guarantee equality before the law to all subjects of the Ottoman Empire, Muslim and non-Muslim alike" (Deringil 2000: 556) and continued with the Reform Edict of 1856 (Islahat Fermanı) by Sultan Abdülmecid which clearly stated religious freedom:

As all forms of religion are and shall be freely professed in my dominions, no subject of my empire shall be hindered in the exercise of the religion that he professes, nor shall he be in any way annoyed on this account. No one shall be compelled to change their religion (cited in Deringil 2000: 556).

The process to secularize the society continued throughout the foundation of the Turkish Republic, with the principle of laicism. The abolition of the Caliphate, religious educational system and religious courts in 1924; the prohibition of all practices at saintly tombs and dervish lodges in 1925, and the declaration that the state has no official religion in 1928 are all elements of secularization in Turkey (Akşit 2008). Nevertheless, the principle of laicism means that the state controls

98

religious activity hence there is the Directorate of Religious Affairs which regulates religious institutions, religious education and matters pertaining to religion. But the citizens of Turkey are left with their own conscience in the practice of their religion. Hence, it should be kept in mind that religious performances of Muslims in Turkey are, one way or the other, shaped by the principle of secularism and the policies of the DRA. Pious women in this study also encounter secularism and the secular state in their everyday religious practices. One of the negotiations they constantly make is between their religious beliefs/practices and laicism. This is one of the issues I analyze in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

The existence of DRA in Turkey makes it complicated to understand the nature of secularism in the country since this institution, which is directly ruled by the government, is the representative of Sunni Islam and it coordinates the religious organizations and mosques. This seems contradictory to the idea of religion "as a matter of conscience and a private belief" (Mardin 2002: 98) advocated by first Ziya Gökalp and then Atatürk. The reconsideration of the relationship between state and religion started during the 17th century Ottoman Empire with the deportation of heterodox groups as mentioned above, long before the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Atatürk's reforms in 1920s aimed at creating a Turkish nation which is western, that is modern and secular. As Saktanber (2002: 20) argues "religion would be transformed into orthodoxy purified of the more superstitious elements suffocating the masses" by the processes of modernization and secularization. In addition, religion would be controlled by the state and retreated to the private realm. Turkish state controls religious lives of its Muslim citizens through the Directorate of Religious Affairs (e. g. Berkes 1964; Ayata 1996; An-naim: 2008; Azak 2010).

### 4.1.2. Orthodoxy, orthopraxy and gender in Turkish religious field

This study tries to elaborate on the religious practices of the pious women who belong to the Hanafi School of Sunni Islam in Ankara. In line with this endeavor, I conducted a field study in the public religious places, namely the mosques and the Quran courses, controlled by the DRA and in a masjid in Sincan which is not a state-controlled place but a meeting point for the pious women of the Hanafi School. Thus, this study is an account of the orthodox religious discourse (which is Hanafi-Sunni Islam) and its reflections on the religious lives of the pious women within the Turkish religious field.

It is a relatively new phenomenon to see women outside of the home in the mosques or Quran courses which are male-dominated religious spaces or spaces of religious orthopraxy. There are studies which show that women's "shrine visiting" (ziyaret) practices in the public adds to their emancipation and socialization (e.g. Marcus 1987; Tapper 1990; Olson 1994; van Bruinessen 2005). Agreeing with this point, I add that going out of the home *to practice religious orthopraxy* makes pious women more visible and contributes more to their status enhancement.

### 4.1.3. Political Context

In order to fully describe the doxa in the Turkish religious field, we have to describe recent political context. Since 2002, Islamist AKP is in power in Turkey. AKP is established just 15 months before the 2002 election by mostly the members of the Virtue Party (FP), which was banned by the Supreme Court on the grounds that it became the focus of movements against laicist republic. In its earlier years, the founders of the party put a distance with the previous Islamist parties and even rejected the label Muslim democrat and rather defined their policies as conservatism (Ayata & Tütüncü, 2008). In its first years in power, AKP was considered as a pro-EU and pro-democracy party which challenges the influence of military in Turkish

politics. However, a critical look would show that AKP is a neoliberal party with a Muslim face (Coşar & Özman, 2004).

According to Kaya (2014), especially after 2007 the society and the politics in Turkey went under an Islamisation process via AKP's political emphasis on family, faith-based organizations and charitable work and via discussions around headscarf ban, Imam Hatip schools, faith communities and Alevism.

In this sense, it can be said that I conducted my fieldwork in a political and social context in which the influence of Islam become more and more visible. Thus, the pious women I encountered in the field may feel more secure and confident in terms of participating in public religious activities.

In order to describe and understand the dynamics of women's religious field in Turkey in relation to women's performance of Sunni-Islamic practices, the remaining parts of this chapter, firstly, defines the elements of the religious capital in the Sunni Islamic field in Turkey. Here, I mention what constitutes religious capital in the women's religious field in Turkey and the sources of the religious capital, namely the Quran, the Hadith, the Sunnah, the lives of the role model Muslims and catechism (ilmihal) books derived from the main source books. Next, I outline the religious services and practices, which are conceptualized by Bourdieu (1991) as "religious capital", provided to the pious women by different institutions and religious specialists in the case study of Ankara.

## 4.2. Religious capital in women's religious field

Bourdieu (1991) describes "religious capital" as "accumulated symbolic labor". Building upon Bourdieu's notion of religious capital, I conceptualize religious practices, religious experience, and religious knowledge as components of religious

capital in the women's religious field in Turkey. I think of these components as related to religious capital in Sunni-Islamic field in Turkey because I argue that they are turned into other forms of capital (symbolic capital in the form of social status and prestige; and social capital in the form of socialization patterns) by the religious practices of pious women. As it will be revealed below, I conceptualize religious rituals, religious knowledge and experience as significant elements of religious capital which enhance pious women's social status and which provide them prestige among their family, friends and neighbors. However, it must be underlined that pious women in Turkish religious field do not instrumentalize their religious capital to receive symbolic and social capital, engaging in a cognitive process of cost-benefit analysis. Rather, Bourdieu's (1977) claim is that our practices stem from and reflect our habitus. Relating this viewpoint of Bourdieu to "doing religion" framework of Avishai (2008) which I discussed in theory chapter, I show that pious women in Turkey state that they perform religion for the sake of God's will, which is a belief embodied in their habitus as pious beings. However, I also demonstrate that there are side benefits, in the form of symbolic capital or social capital, which appear as women perform religion and I take into account that these benefits might have an impact on pious women's motivations for increased piety. In the following sub-sections, I try to elaborate on different dimensions of religious capital in Turkish religious field.

In order to understand the relationship between pious women's standing within the society and their participation in Islamic rituals, I firstly demonstrate which religious rituals are performed in Turkish Islam, especially by women. I also examine how Sunni Muslim women practice Islam and Islamic rituals.

Following Graham's (2010) description of what a religious ritual is, I agree with his choice of *ibadet* as the most approximate concept to religious ritual in Muslim usage. According to him, religious ritual is action with reference to the transcendental; it is always related to a community since ritual is a social behavior; it is formalized and repeated behavior; and lastly, it is representational and expressive (p. 93). In the

daily usage in Turkey *ibadet* is used as the concept to refer to religious practices such as salat (namaz), almsgiving (zekat), pilgrimage (the Hajj), fasting (oruç) etc. There is also the belief in Muslim societies that *intention* (niyet) makes an ordinary action into an *ibadet*. For example if you intent to cook for the sake of God, it becomes an *ibadet*: it changes from a mundane activity into a sacred act. Intention is an important component of religious rituals in Islam. But it is no ordinary intention. You should intent to act for the sake of God. For many of the pious women whom I interviewed, any act is sacred as long as it is an act which God wants and which is done according to the Islamic principles of intention and good deed (*salih amel*). A behavior which is not desired by God does not count as *ibadet* even if the performer states her intention to do it for the sake of God. As it is explained in the theory chapter, the juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane is called as "ritual transformation" by Tuğal (2006). I analyze this phenomenon, which I came across during my field study, in the religious lives of pious women in Chapter 6.

As it can be understood from the above definition of *ibadet*, the scope of religious action in Islam is very broad since even mundane activities could be counted as *ibadet* with a proper intention. Hence, it is a difficult task to look at all the religious rituals which women do in the scope of a dissertation. In order to determine which religious practices I examine, it is again useful to refer to Graham (2010) and his tripartite model of Muslim ritual practices. He has divided *ibadet* acts into (1) "formal rites" which include major ritual duties of tahara (ablutions), salat (ritual prayer), sawm (fasting), Hajj (pilgrimage) and rites de passage of Aqiqa (sacrifice ceremony for the newborn), Khitan (male circumcision), Nikah (wedding ceremony), and Janaza (funeral ceremony); (2) "ritualized devotional practices" such as Qira'a (formal recitation of the Quran), Dhikr, Sama, Ziyara (shrine visits) and invocations; lastly, (3) "periodic celebrations" of al-idayn (Ramadan and sacrifice fests), Mawlid an Nabi (Mevlit), Laylat al-Miraj, Mawlids of saints, Majalis of Shi'i imams, 10

Muharram, Laylat al-Qadr and other celebrations such as Laylat al-Bara'a[64]. It is understandable that Graham tries to outline the ritual practices of Islam from a holistic point of view without any reference to gender or madhap differences. Although Graham tries to be comprehensive in this categorization, he does not make any references to women's religious practices and women's exclusion from the mainstream ritual practices of Islam.

Denny (2001: 63) states that fiqh books start with ritual duties, especially with the five pillars of Islam[65]. The starting point of this study is also the five pillars, basically salat: the canonical prayers. I will add to the examination of the practice of salat two more rituals from the other two groups of Graham's tripartite model of Islamic ritual: Quranic recitation and rituals done during the periodic celebrations of kandil occasions. In this study, I also examine the practice of *sohbet* which is not in Graham's ritual model.

Another element of religious capital is religious knowledge. Knowledge has been conceptualized as power and capital by social theorists like Foucault (1980) and Bourdieu (1991). Individuals or groups who have religious knowledge can acquire power positions within their everyday life settings. This does not necessarily have to be transformed into political or economic power. What I argue in this study is that religious capital in the form of religious knowledge can be transformed into social and symbolic capital or enhance social status of the "knowledgeable". As I observed in my field work, female preachers of the DRA, self-educated female hodjas and

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[64] Graham's last category of "periodic celebrations" as ibadet is widely discussed by theologians. Whether to count "holy nights" such as Laylat al-Qadr or Mawlid an Nabi as ibadet is also debated in Turkey. A famous theologian, Mustafa İslamoğlu (2012) in a TV program (see the link below) states that Muslims may perform ibadet on these nights but to conceptualize these nights themselves as ibadet is *bid'ah* (bidat). Bid'ah in Islam is an innovation within religion which is not accepted or which is not proper to Islam. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hFQjLIWUgM accessed on 20.04.2014

[65] Five pillars of Islam: Shahadah, sincerely reciting that Allah is the only God and Mohammed is its prophet; Salat, performing daily prayers; Sawm, fasting during Ramadan; Zakat, paying 2.5 % of yearly income to the poor and needy; and Hajj, pilgrimage to Mecca are considered to be the five of the main ritual practices of Islam.

"lay" women in Turkey become prestigious and popular in their immediate social network according to the level of their religious knowledge.

Religious knowledge can be observed in the form of knowledge of chapters of the Quran (sura); verses of the Quran and their grace (*fazilet*) towards certain malice and harm; knowledge of prayers which are believed to have healing effects; knowledge of "tajweed", the art of Quranic recitation; knowledge of religious hymns (ilahi), etc.. I will discuss the issue of status enhancement through religious knowledge in Chapter 5.

As Bourdieu states religious experience can also appear in the form of religious capital. What I mean by religious experience in this study is the experiences of pious Muslim's obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina (Hajj) and voluntary and shorter visit to the holy Kaaba (Umrah). Having performed the ritual of pilgrimage affects Muslim's lives significantly. It has a crucial impact specifically on the lives of pious women. Many women who have been to Hajj or Umrah started covering their heads after they arrived in Turkey; some decided to be more pious than before and some others gained the status of religiously knowledgeable person. I mention the organization of Hajj and Umrah by the DRA in the following sections and discuss whether there is status enhancement through this religious experience in the next chapter.

It is also important to note the sources of the religious rituals, knowledge and experience in women's religious field in Turkish Sunni Islam, that is, how pious women learn about the religious capital and from which sources they can acquire it. These sources are basically the Quran, the Hadith, the Sunnah and the lives of role-model Muslims.

There are also reference books called as *ilmihal* (ilm al-hal which means "science of the present day"[66]) which contain practical information pertaining to the daily applications and principles of Islam such as performance of rituals, ethical and moral issues, and Islamic faith. İlmihal can be equated to the "catechism" books of Christianity. The practical information presented in the form of question and answer in ilmihal books is also derived from the Quran and the Hadith collections. "Mızraklı İlmihal" (literally "ilmihal with a spear") is the oldest known ilmihal book in Turkey. It was prepared and published in the Ottoman Empire in 1842 by an anonymous writer. The *ilmihal* of the DRA and the one written by Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen are other popular ilmihal books read in Turkey. There are also ilmihal books for women called as "hanımlara özel ilmihal" (ilmihal for ladies) or "Kadın ve Aile İlmihali (woman and family ilmihal)".

"Yasin" booklets aka "Güllü Yasin" (referring to the booklets generally with a picture of a rose on their cover) are booklets widely used by women. These booklets consist of popularly recited chapters of the Quran, the Surah of Yasin being the most recited chapter, by pious women in their Friday meetings. There are also prayers in these booklets which women recite for their wishes to come true, against diseases, evil eye and problems of life.

Another important source of religious capital is the female preachers and "hodjas". They give information about daily ethical conduct of a pious woman; correct performance of Islamic rituals and history of Islam and world religions. Pious women listen to this information very carefully and transfer it to their family, kin, friends and neighbors.

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[66] Nişanyan Etymological Dictionary https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?k=ilmihal&x=0&y=0 accessed on 21.04.2014

**4.3. Production, reproduction and dissemination of the religious capital**

Religious capital, according to Bourdieu (1991), is produced and reproduced by a group of religious specialists who are affiliated with religious institutions. He states this argument based on his observations of Christianity. This fact holds true in the case of Islam, too, although it might be argued that there is not a group of Islamic clerics in Turkey. Religious officials of the DRA of the Turkish Prime Minister's Office are one group of religious specialists who produce, reproduce and disseminate knowledge and discourse pertaining to Islamic beliefs and practices. There are also other religious institutions and specialists who make Islamic religious field in Turkey complex and diversified. These institutions include Islamic associations, religious orders and communities and some independent religious organizations which are in fact incorporated companies like the Gözyaşı A. Ş.[67] (Gözyaşı Inc.). Moreover, there are self-educated individuals who do not have formal religious education but who are called as "hodja" by the pious Muslims.

This chapter is a limited account of the women's religious field in Turkey since it is not possible to analyze all the religious orders, communities, associations, companies and all types of religious specialists in the country and the religious services they provide for women. Within the confines of the field work I conducted, some significant religious institutions, specialists and services which I encountered in the field are discussed in this chapter. Thus, in the following parts I firstly analyze the DRA as the official religious institution, its religious specialists, specifically the female preachers, and the religious services it provides for women. Then, I examine the Diyanet Foundation (*Diyanet Vakfı*) as the most prominent religious association in Turkey, its connections with the DRA and its services for women. Then, I make a brief discussion on the *religious order and community* structure in Turkey and the religious events they organize aiming to attract the attention of pious women. Later, I

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[67] *Gözyaşı* literally means "teardrop". The name of this company suits its form of functioning: disseminating the message of God by a live show the aim of which is to make its auidence cry as the pratogonist of the show acts to cry.

try to elaborate on Gözyaşı Inc., as an example of a religious company which is very appealing to and popular among the pious women in Turkey. Lastly, I mention female "hodjas" who serve at women's religious gatherings called as "Friday meetings" and *Mevlit* occasions.

### 4.3.1. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA)

The DRA [68] was founded on March 3, 1924 "to deal with the beliefs and rituals of Islam and to manage religious institutions" (Law No. 429). Its tasks were changed in 1965 with the Law No. 633 which is the present law pertaining to the DRA's foundation and tasks. The tasks of the DRA according to this law are as follows: "to deal with the beliefs, rituals and moral principles of Islam; to enlighten the society about religion; and to manage places of worship". As it can be seen, management of the moral aspect of Islam is added to the tasks of the DRA next to the management of Islamic beliefs and rituals. According to Gözaydın (2008: 221) "this wording is a reflection of the altering politics of religion in Turkey over 40 years, starting with attempts to 'reform Islam' and come to grips with it". In addition to these tasks, some of the DRA's basic principles are stated as secularism, being free of any political views, taking the Quran and the Sunnah as the principal sources of the accurate religious knowledge, serving all the citizens without discriminating on the basis of *madhap*, point of view or performance and providing the "West" with information about Islam (DRA, 2014)[69]. In line with this principle, the DRA is organized abroad, especially in European countries where the number of immigrants from Turkey is

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[68] The Directorate of Religious Affairs is referred to as Diyanet in Turkish. The Turkish name of the Directorate illuminates the organic relations of the DRA with the Diyanet Vakfı which is the most important religious association in Turkey.

[69] The Directorate of Religious Affairs, http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/tr/kategori/kurulus-ve-tarihce/28 accessed on 20.04.2014

high. Çitak (2010) interprets the existence of the branches of the DRA abroad as Turkish government's efforts to use the Directorate as a foreign policy instrument[70].

Despite the principle of being ideology-free, the DRA is an organ of the Office of the Prime Minister and its discourse and services are determined according to the governments in charge. To illustrate, in 2010 the scope of the DRA's services was enlarged to incorporate institutions and places other than the places of worship such as hospitals, prisons, retirement homes, and children's detention centers. This change also led to the foundation of Diyanet Radio and Diyanet TV. I think that with this incorporation, state Islam steps out of religious places to places of everyday life activities. Moreover, radio and television broadcast provides the DRA to reach a wider audience who does not or cannot go out of their homes. I argue that this is especially significant for the disadvantaged groups within the society such as the disabled, the poor and the elderly and affective for women who do not go out of their homes for religious purposes and women of these disadvantaged groups.

The DRA has administrative units each of which deal with different religious services such as control of places of worship, namely mosques and masjids; organization and control of the Quran courses; organization of the Hajj (pilgrimage) and Umrah; publishing of the religious books, the Quran, the Hadith collections, and ilmihal (catechism) books; control of the reading of the Quran in its prescribed way (*Qira'a*); organization of programs on religious days and nights; services of guidance (*irşat*) which include the preparation of Friday sermons (*khutba*), and sermons for the *sohbet* sessions, given especially by the female preachers; and last but not least, family guidance and counseling services[71]. As the state organ which organizes a vast amount of religious services, the DRA covers a significant portion of the religious field in Turkey. Below I try to demonstrate the range of the DRA's services within

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[70] Gözaydın-Savaşır (2010) sees faith-based transnational actors such as Gülen movement and The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) as examples to the use of religion as soft power, in addition to the role of the DRA in countries where people from Turkey live.

[71] For detailed information on the organizational units of the DRA, see diyanet.gov.tr

women's religious field. When available, I give some statistical information on these services like the number of mosques, Quran courses, Quran course attendees and numbers related to the Hajj and Umrah organizations.

### 4.3.1.1. Mosques and women's ibadet

Mosques are public places of worship, often referred as the "house of God". There has been a steady increase in the number of mosques in Turkey from 2004 to 2014. This tendency can be seen in the graph below. While the number of mosques in Turkey was 77.151 in the year 2004, the number increased to 86.101 in 2014. This means that 8950 mosques were built throughout Turkey in 10 years.
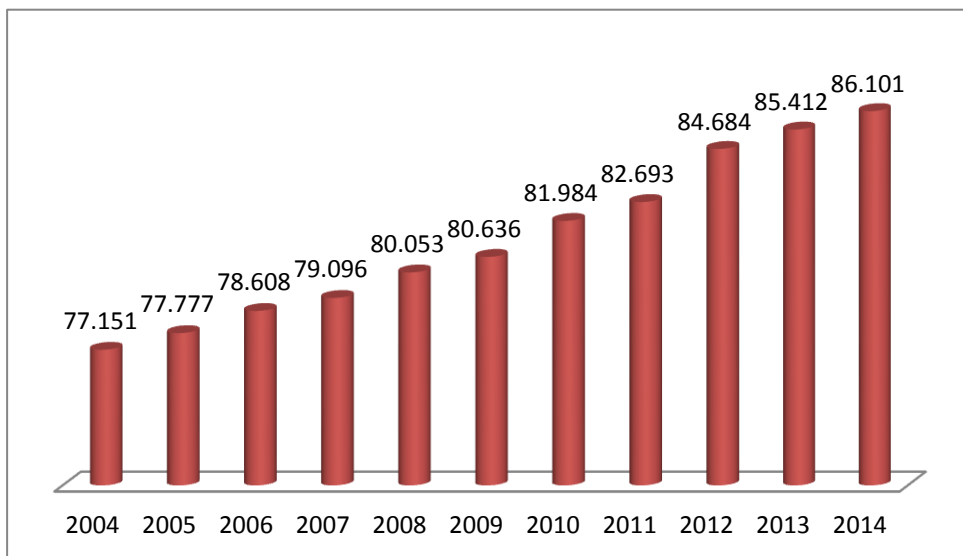


Figure 8:Number of mosques in Turkey between years 2004 and 2014
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

The graph below shows ten most populous cities in terms of the number of mosques. İstanbul has the highest number of mosques (3269); Konya and Ankara follows İstanbul with 3155 and 2955 mosques respectively.

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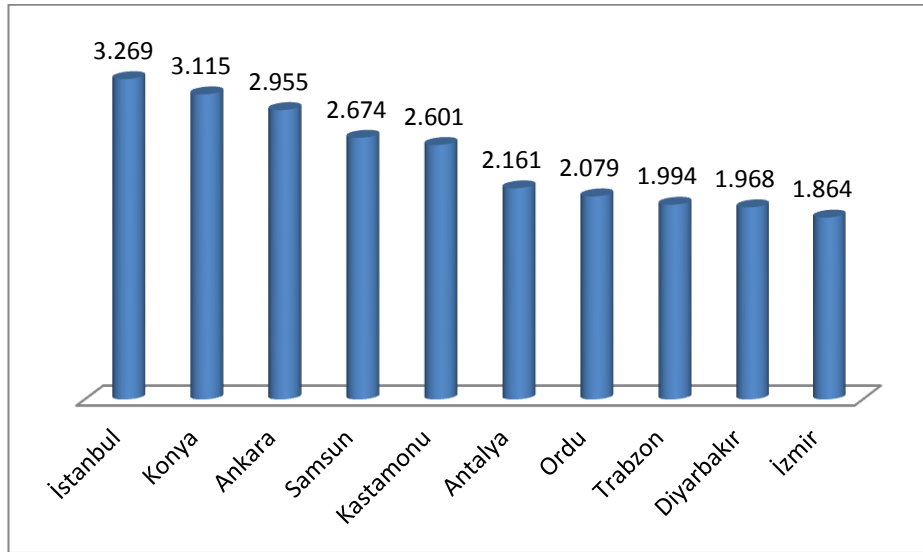
Figure 9: Frequency distribution of mosques according to cities in Turkey in 2014
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

There is no data regarding the number of mosque participants but according to my observations at the mosques in Ankara and in other cities, men are the usual visitors of the mosques for daily prayers, Friday prayers and Eid (Bayram) prayers. Women frequent mosques during Ramadan for the teraveeh prayers and at special religious days and nights. There are also women who go to the mosques for daily prayers and Friday prayers. Although the number of female Friday prayer participants is low compared to the number of male participants, it has been increasing in Turkey in the last decade according to my observations; my interview partners including the DRA's female preachers.

There are two main public areas where one can find pious women in Ankara: Kocatepe Mosque in the central district of Kızılay, Çankaya and Hacı Bayram Veli Mosque and Shrine in the central district of Ulus, Altındağ. These two mosques host crowds of men and women everyday but specifically on Fridays for the communal Friday prayer; on kandil nights; for Eid prayers; during the month of Ramadan; and at weekends basically for touristic reasons. The number of women who visit these

two mosques for daily prayers is very low on weekdays while at the weekends and on Fridays this number rises to a considerable amount. Women who attend the Friday prayers at Hacı Bayram Veli Mosque are more than 500. Pious women in Ankara not only perform salat at the mosques, they also pray and read the Quran individually at the mosques. Besides these religious practices, women also perform mundane activities at the mosques such as chatting with each other, studying for their exams if they are students; asking other women to pray for them; waiting for their friends or husbands within the mosque etc.

There are many neighborhood mosques in Ankara, too. The number of mosques in the city was 2955 in 2014 according to the statistics of Directorate of Religious Affairs. However, most of these are neighborhood mosques which women frequent only during Ramadan days and nights (days for Quran reading and nights for teravih prayers) or when there is a special event within the mosque like a mevlit or kandil celebration. During the month of Ramadan, women gather either at the neighborhood mosques or at their homes to follow the whole Quran recited by the male imam or a female hodja. This is called "mukabele" and it has a significant place in the lives of many pious women. Upon the completion of the Quran reading at the end of the month, a prayer called "hatim prayer" is done. Another ritual which makes women visible especially at the mosques is the "teravih" prayers (supererogatory prayers performed in congregation after the evening prayers) during Ramadan. Women come to the mosque with their husbands, sons or fathers or with their female friends, neighbors or relatives to perform the supererogatory teravih prayers. Women also perform other supererogatory prayers such as *tespih namazı* during this month. Equally important are the religious nights during the sacred three months of Rejab, Shaban and Ramadan which are called "üç aylar" (holy three months) in Turkish. Laylat-al Ragha'ib, Laylat al-Miraj, Laylat al-Bera'a, and Laylat al-Qadr are the nights when women perform religious rituals densely both at the mosques and at their homes. There are special "kandil" programs organized by the DRA at some of the mosques. These programs are also broadcast on TV. There is also Mevlit an Nabi

which is the day believed to be the Birth of the Prophet. There is also another occasion for the Birth of the Prophet which is celebrated on a different date than the Mevlit an Nabi[72]. Many religious events and seminar programs are organized by various religious associations, foundations and communities as well as by the DRA during this week called as "Birth of the Prophet Week". In 2011 the Birth of the Prophet Week which I attended was organized in a sports hall (Arena Sports Hall) in Ankara. Almost 20 thousand people more than half of whom were women took part in the organization. There were Quran recitations, hymn concerts (ilahi), cine-vision shows and speeches given by the President of the DRA and other members of the protocol. Red roses which have become the symbol for the Prophet Muhammad, were distributed especially to women.

Despite the variety of religious activities pious women participate at the mosques in Turkey, women's presence in these "houses of God" has been an issue of debate in the country as it is in other countries with Muslim majority. Women are generally confined to pray at home while men are encouraged to go to the mosques (e.g. Reda 2004; Woodlock 2010). This has been the situation in Turkey, too. The condition of the women's sections at the mosques which have long been neglected in Turkey is an indication of the attitude towards women's mosque participation. Most of the mosques in Turkey have women's sections which are basically spatial arrangements done by the use of curtains, paravanes or some wooden constructions. Some few has the upper floor or the basement as the women's section. The strict separation between men's and women's prayer spaces is very much the case for the mosques in other Islamic countries in general. Mernissi (1987), in an endnote to a chapter, defines women's restricted access to the mosques in Morocco: "Women are

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[72] In addition to Mavlit an Nabi which is the anniversary of the Birth of Prophet Mohammed in moon calendar, there is a Birth of the Prophet Week according to the Gregorian calendar celebrated since the late 1980's. Especially after AKP came to power in 2002, the Birth of the Prophet Week started to be celebrated widely and in some cases it is considered as an alternative for the April, 23rd which is the anniversary of the establishment of The Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Toprak et al. 2008).

especially restricted when in a space they should have a right to: the mosque. In Morocco they may use only a specified area, usually a narrow, marginal, dark corner behind the male space" (p. 191, note 16). The DRA has been trying to improve the quality of women's sections in the last years as part of its general strategy towards the betterment of services provided for the pious Muslim women[73] (Sunier et al. 2011).

### 4.3.1.2. Quran courses and women's sohbet sessions

Quran courses are also important religious places where students are taught how to read the Quran in Arabic. There are also *sohbet* organizations in these courses where religious specialists preach about a certain religious or moral topic. There are both state (approved by the DRA) and private Quran courses (which belong to different religious orders and communities) in Turkey. The Quran courses of the DRA are usually built as a part of the mosque complex. Quran courses of the religious communities are generally organized in flats which are donated to the community by charitable members or friends of the community.

Number of Quran courses in Turkey has also increased between 2005 and 2014 as it can be seen in Figure 10 below[74]. It should be pointed out that these Quran courses are registered courses of the DRA and the Ministry of National Education. There are also unofficial Quran courses of religious orders and communities and courses given by individual women and men voluntarily at homes to the "neighbors". However, there is no statistical data about these unofficial courses.

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[73] For news about the betterment of women's sections at the mosques in İstanbul, see http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/tr/icerik/camilerde-kadin-mekanlari-yeniden-duzenleniyor/6799, accessed on 29.03.2016

[74] There is a substantial increase in the number of Quran courses in 2011-2012. This is due to the Quran Education Project of DRA. In the first year of this project new courses that operate after 6 pm on weekdays or operate at the weekend attracted many working people. After a slight decrease in the next year, the number of courses increased again in 2013-2014. http://www.diyanet.tv/dibin-kurslarina-buyuk-ilgi/
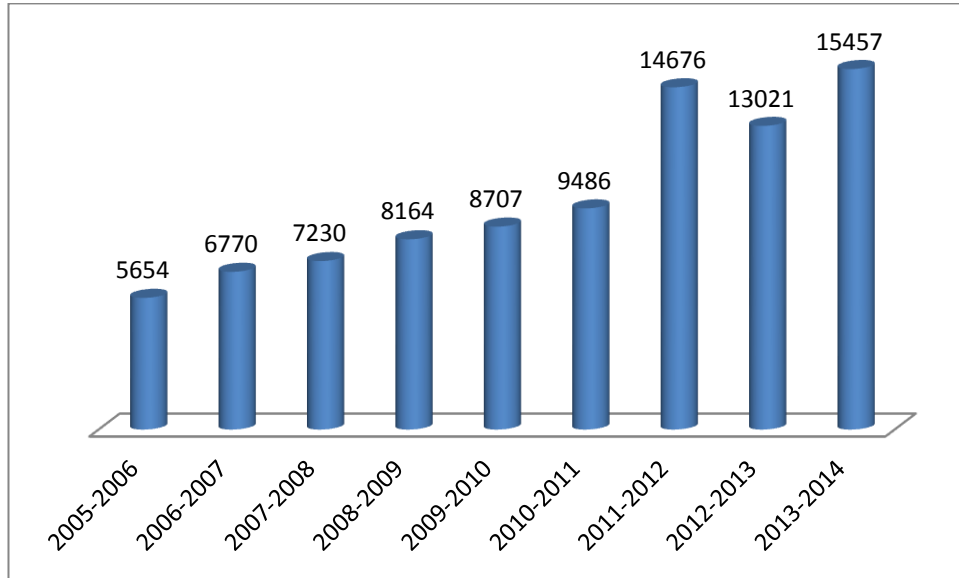
Figure 10: Number of Quran courses in Turkey, 2013-2014
Source: DRA, http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/tr/kategori/istatistikler/136

What is worth mentioning for the purposes of this thesis is that a considerable percentage of Quran course attendees are women. Over 90 % of all the Quran course graduates in 2014 in Turkey were female (1050685 women and 65824 men finished the Quran courses of the DRA in 2014). Figure 11 below shows the number of Quran course graduates according to gender and the ten most populous cities in terms of the number of Quran courses at the end of the educational period 2013-2014.
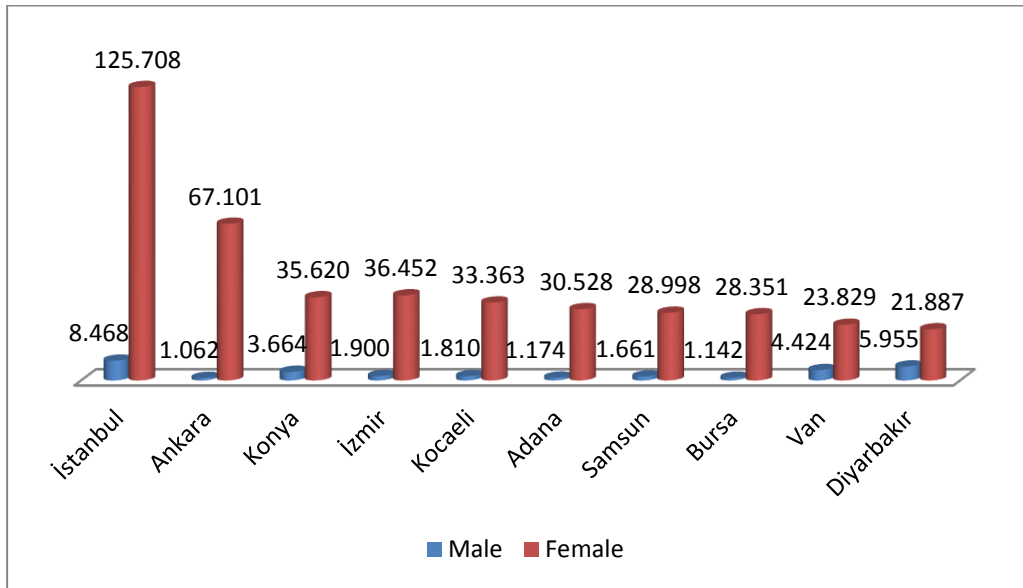
Figure 11: Number of Quran course graduates by gender and city, 2013-2014
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

The figure below shows the age distribution of the Quran course graduates in Turkey at the end of the educational period 2013-2014. While 39 % of all the graduates that year are between the ages of 23 and 44, 40 % are over 45 years old.
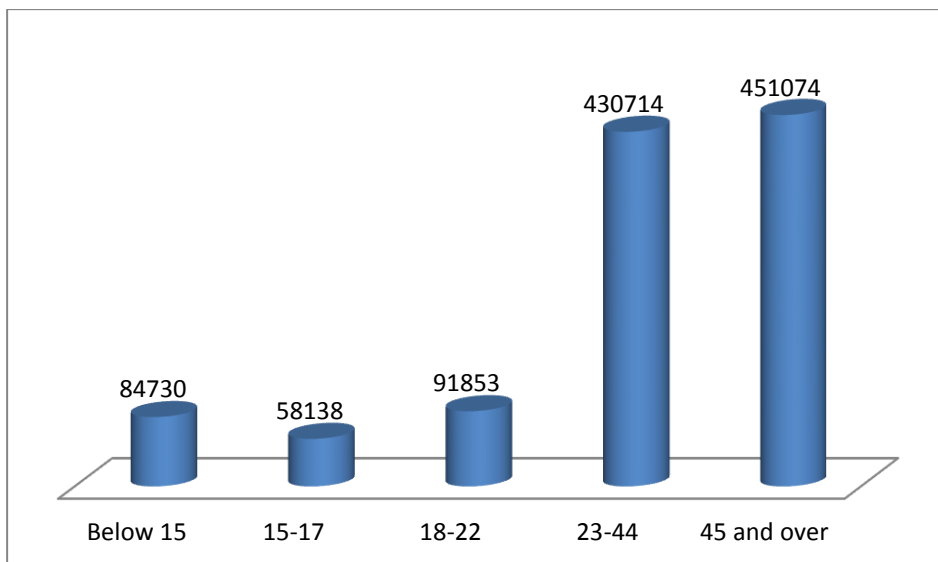


Figure 12: Frequency distribution of Quran course graduates by age in Turkey, 2013-2014
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

116

Quran courses are the places where the Quranic recitation sessions and *sohbet* sessions organized by the DRA and preached by the female preachers are held. There is, however, a recent move by the DRA to move the *sohbet* sessions into the mosques but this is not realized in most of the places. Thus, Quran courses are the second popular places among pious women in Ankara following the mosques. The *sohbet* sessions I attended attracted approximately 25-30 women who regularly attend but this number may change according to the time of the year. During Ramadan, the participants of the *sohbet* sessions increase along with other religious activities and places.

### 4.3.1.3. Hajj, Umrah and women

Pilgrimage to Kaba in Mecca (Hajj) is one of the five obligations of Islam performed during the month of *Zilhicce*, the month which is also the month of Sacrifice ritual according to the Islamic calendar. It is organized by the DRA, too, like many other religious organizations. Umrah is also a visit to Mecca but it can be performed any time of the year. It is organized both by the DRA and by independent tourism agencies which are approved by the DRA. More people in Turkey go to Umrah than Hajj (Figure 13). This is because there is a quota for Hajj applied by Saudi Arabia for the citizens of every country and also because Umrah, as a shorter visit, is cheaper than Hajj. I should here point out that more women than men go to the Hajj whereas more men than women go to Umrah (Figure 13). What I came across during my field study is that having been to Hajj is a turning point in many Muslims' life, especially vital in pious women's lives. Pious Muslim women who have been to the Hajj or Umrah tell their memories with longing for the holy places. That is why I conceptualized the Hajj and Umrah as religious capital under the category of religious experience.
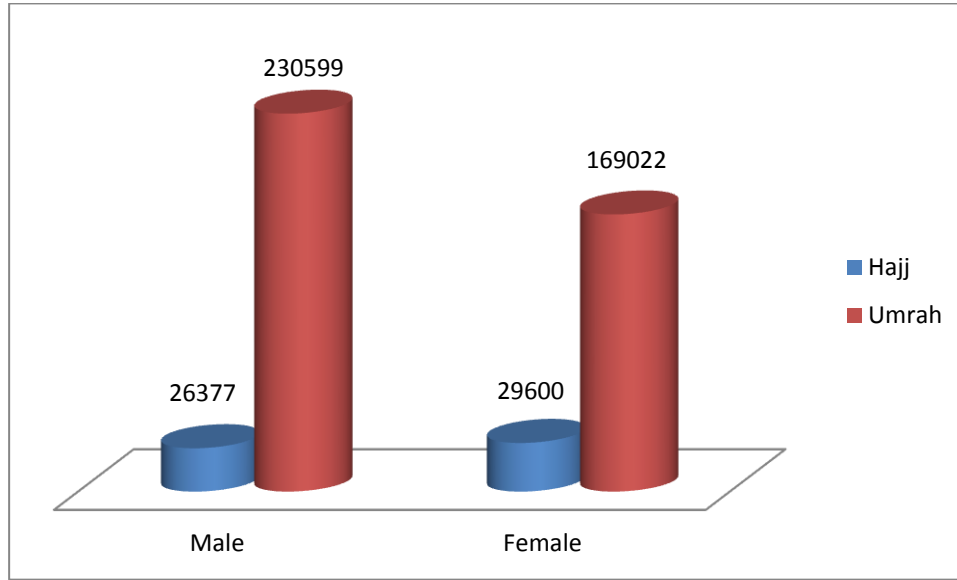
Figure 13: Number of women and men who have been to the Hajj and Umrah by the end of 2014.
Source: Directorate of Religious Affairs, Statistics

### 4.3.1.4. Family guidance and counseling bureaus

Family Guidance and Counseling Bureaus (*Aile İrşat ve Rehberlik Büroları*) are departments of the Muftiates in the provinces and districts. Their aim is explained in the notice of the DRA as "to inform our society about family from a religious point of view and to empower family members who are faced with new problems as a result of social, economic and cultural changes, with religious knowledge and moral support" (DRA, 2013). Although family members are always mentioned, women are the actual targets of the Bureau's services. There are two important indicators of this fact: firstly, the counseling services, conferences, flyers and projects of the Bureau aim at "woman and the family" as these two words go always together. Secondly, the employees of the Bureau are mostly female preachers and personnel. This reflects the discourse which sees women as the "keepers of the tradition". I discuss this discursive stance in Chapter 6 in detail.

### 4.3.2. Religious associations, foundations and women's commissions

I mention religious associations and foundations as important agents of the women's religious field in Turkey mainly for two reasons. Firstly, some of these organizations were founded by and/or for women; some of them have women's branches and some offer specific religious services to women. Secondly, although most of these institutions do not have specific focus on women and women's religious activities, they are vital for pious Muslim women whose lives are devoted to charity and helping the needy. Thus, they play a significant role in the lives of some pious women.

Foundations and associations differ in their founding and functioning principles according to the Civil Law of Turkey. Nevertheless, they provide services based on similar purposes: charity; culture, education, arts and sports; faith based purposes; environmental considerations and townsmanship (*hemşehrilik*).

There are many Islamic foundations and associations in Turkey. These religious institutions have relations to the religious orders, communities, political parties, the DRA and the media so it is not an easy task to group religious institutions without referring to these organic bonds. While outlining the activities of religious foundations and associations directed at women, I will try to highlight these relations between these agents of the religious field.

According to the statistics retrieved from Ministry of Interior, Department of Associations, among 109197 active associations in Turkey, 17853 are religious associations (mosque, Quran course, church associations etc.) by 2015. This is the third most popular category after Occupational associations (33556) and sports

associations (20434)[75] . Mosque and Quran course associations are especially significant within the Turkish religious field since they are the most widespread and the most active associations in the country. They are founded on the purpose of building mosques and Quran courses and collecting money for their construction and furnishing. They are not centers of religious activity other than the purposes mentioned.

There are also religious charity associations which are named as "faith-based organizations". These associations are widely discussed within the academic field (e.g. Aksular 2008; Göçmen 2011; Friedrichs, Klöckner, Şen & de Witte 2012). "Deniz Feneri", "Can Suyu" and "Kimse Yok mu?" are some of the popular faith-based organizations, flyers and activities of which I have also encountered during my field study in Ankara. Deniz Feneri Association was founded in 1998 after the success of the TV show "Deniz Feneri" on Kanal 7, an Islamist television channel with links to AKP. It gained the status of "association for the public good" in 2004 and became popular among the pious Muslims in a very short time. However, it became scandalous because of the corruption in the Germany branch of the association in 2007[76]. "Kimse Yok mu? Charity and Solidarity Association" was founded in 2002. It first appeared as a TV show, like "Deniz Feneri", on Samanyolu TV channel which is the television channel of a prominent religious community. It organizes charity for the needy in Turkey and abroad. Can Suyu organizes help especially for the Muslim countries and it was the charity organization of Felicity Party (SP) which is a conservative Islamist party from the National View tradition[77]. These faith-based organizations do not usually have special religious services for the pious women. However, they are centers of attention for the pious women who want

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[75] https://www.dernekler.gov.tr/tr/AnasayfaLinkler/derneklerin-faaliyet-alanina-gore.aspx, accessed on 27.03.2016

[76] "12 Soruda Deniz Feneri Davası" 11.09.2008
http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/12_soruda_deniz_feneri_davasi-898145 accessed on 13.05.2014

[77] "Beş İslami Derneğin Yükselişi", www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=219537 27.04.2007, 16.01.2013

to help others and who perform their religious duty of obligatory almsgiving (zakat) and voluntary almsgiving (*sadaka*) through the channel of religious associations.

In addition to the charity based religious associations, there was one association called as "Kevser Derneği"[78] the name of which I heard many times during my field work from the female preacher of the Bahçelievler Quran Course. Kevser Derneği was founded in 2007 by retired and working Quran course teachers of the DRA in Keçiören, one of the conservative districts of Ankara. The services and activities of the association cover a wide spectrum. Female undergraduate students of the Theology Faculties of the Open University (AÖF) attend Arabic language courses; women attend Hadith courses; Quranic interpretation (tafsir) courses and tashih-i huruf (correct recitation of the Quran) courses on weekdays. There are also courses at the weekends for women who work and for children; and at nights for men. This association names itself as education, culture, environment, art and social solidarity association. In line with this, there are "ney" (a reed flute used especially during Sufi ceremonies) courses for girls and women and there is a Turkish Sufi Music choir composed of women. There are conferences, seminars and sermons organized on religious days like the "kandil" days and the Birth of the Prophet Week. There was one seminar about Umrah (voluntary pilgrimage) and one seminar about "communication within the family". During the programs on religious days, parts of the Quran, hymns and prayers are recited.

As it can be seen from this brief account of religious associations in Turkey, pious women take part not only in religious activities but also in charity and other non-religious activities organized by religious associations. There are also institutions called foundations (*vaqf*) which provide pious women similar services.

The emergence of foundations (vaqf) dates back to the Ottoman era. Foundations, at the time of the Ottoman Empire, functioned as charity organizations which were usually founded to build hospitals, fountains, caravanserais, and mosques. Today

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[78] http://www.kevser.org.tr/, accessed on 15.05.2014

there are 5465 foundations in Turkey: appendant foundations (264); community foundations (community here refers to the religious minorities) (167); craftsmen foundation (1); foreign foundations (21) and new foundations (5012). However, this categorization is quite ambiguous. Foundations with Islamic background can be seen under the category of new foundations[79].

Pious women visit and volunteer for associations and foundations which are religiously or charity oriented. These foundations organize charity and scholarship to students as well as conferences, seminars, and courses on Ottoman language, Islamic history, the Quran, the Hadith etc. Some of the religious foundations in the Turkish religious field are actually civil society organizations of the religious communities and orders; some foundations have relations to popular theologians or "hodjas"; and some of them have their own TV channels, radio channels or publishing houses.

Most of these foundations have women's commissions. They are called as "hanımlar komisyonu"; which literally translates as "ladies' commission". In these places religious rituals may also take place next to the social and cultural activities such as trip and kermes organizations. One of the most favorite places of this kind is the women's branch of Diyanet Foundation in Kızılay, Ankara: Women, Family and Youth Center (KAGEM).

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı (Diyanet Foundation, Turkey) is the most prominent religious foundation in the country. As its name reveals, Diyanet Vakfı has vital connections to the DRA. It was founded in 1975 with the purpose of "helping the DRA, building mosques and collecting money for the needy (thus organizing almsgiving- *zekat* and *fitre*)". Moreover, its executive committee is consisted of bureaucrats from the DRA.

"Women, Family and Youth Center" of the Diyanet Foundation is the unit which this thesis mentions as an example for the place of religious foundations in the lives of pious Muslim women in Ankara. This center was founded in 1996 as the women

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[79] http://www.vgm.gov.tr/icerik.aspx?Id=192, 16.05.2014

branch of the foundation. It is located in an apartment building in the centre of Ankara. It organizes hobby courses, Quran and Arabic language courses, Hadith and Quranic interpretation (tafsir) classes, conferences, workshops, family education programs and other social activities for women and the youth. There is also religious and psychological counseling provided to women by female preachers of the DRA and psychologists.

Another religious foundation I encountered during my field study is called "Başak Vakfı". It is a charity based religious foundation initiated by women theologians and retired female preachers and Quran teachers of the DRA. I heard of this foundation from the female preacher at the Bahçelievler Quran Course. On one occasion, it organized charity lunch to collect money for the orphanage they are building in Bağlum, Keçiören. There were "celebrity" women of the Islamist society in this event: mothers, wives and relatives of ministers, governors and MPs of the AKP. As Diyanet Foundation has strong ties to the DRA, Başak Foundation has relations to the Islamist "elite".

### 4.3.3. Religious orders, communities and women

Religious order (tarikat) means a religious path or a set of behaviors of those who wish to reach the God[80]. Religious orders are defined as institutional forms of Sufism, a heterodox way of living Islam (Mardin 1995: 94). As a similar interpretation to Geertz (1968) and Gellner (1981), Mardin states that nomadic Turkic tribes who lived outside of the cities accepted Sufi Islam while urban elites chose official Islam (ibid., p. 94). With the foundation of the Republic, religious orders and communities were banned. This ban did not demolish them, instead religious orders continued their life and activities secretly. By time, religious orders and communities started to be lived by the urban inhabitants, too. Bektaşi, Mevlevi,

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[80] Encyclopedia of Islam of the DRA, Turkey, article on "tarikat"

Nakşibendi and Kadiri orders are the most popular religious orders in contemporary Turkey. Religious orders organize dhikr and sema sessions which are generally gender segregated. Female members of the orders also visit dervish lodges (dergah) to learn the Quran and to attend *sohbet*.

Religious communities are religious groups which follow a leader, a hodja. The most popular religious community in contemporary Turkey is Nur Community. Nur Community has many branches which follow the teachings of Said-i Nursi. Within this community Gülen Movement has increased its area of influence in recent years in Turkey and in many countries of the world (e.g. Wood & Keskin 2013; Hendrick 2013; van Bruinessen 2013). However, after the failed coup d'etat attempt by members of the community in the army on July 15 2016, the community's effect has been diminished by the government. Another popular religious community is Menzil which is a community related to the Nakşibendi order. Semerkand Group is the name of the Ankara branch of this community. Other popular religious communities in contemporary Turkey are İskenderpaşa Community, Erenköy Community, İsmailağa Community and Süleymancılar Community.

Religious communities use media channels very effectively to reproduce and disseminate their religious discourse to broader sections of the society. Many religious communities have their own TV and/or radio channels and their magazines or newspapers. For example, while Samanyolu TV, a national television channel, is owned by Gülen Community, Semerkand TV is the television channel of Menzil Community. Ensar TV belongs to Ensar Foundation which is the religious foundation of Erenköy Community.

Religious orders and communities are mostly closed groups. Thus, it is not easy to observe their rituals unless you are a member or they open their activities for the public. Since the focus of this study is on the public religious rituals of the Sunni Muslim women, I did not aim to personally observe performances of the religious orders or communities. On the other hand, I could observe and participate in the

124

*sohbet* sessions and religious lessons of a self-educated female preacher who adheres to a religious community in a masjid in Sincan. It was basically because the religious services provided to the pious women by this masjid were open to anybody who is interested. While it is not a coincidence to run into an activity organized by a religious community within the Turkish religious field, a researcher should create her own chances of taking part in religious activities of the closed orders and communities.

### 4.3.4. Religious celebrities and companies: example of Gözyaşı Inc.

Pious women within the Islamic field in Turkey have a variety of choices to experience their religiosity. As this chapter tries to demonstrate, there are religious services organized by the state, religious foundations and associations, and religious orders and communities. In addition to all these, there are religious events provided by companies and "religious celebrities" which indicate that there is a religious market targeting especially pious women.

Erul (2013) categorizes this kind of religious events by religious celebrities into four forms: poetic presentations, theatric presentations, hall sermons and media sermons. He states that these events use and address the emotions of the believers so "they are embraced with warmth and positive reactions" (pp. 140-141). In the last decade, hall sermons and media sermons of religious celebrities have become very trendy in Turkey. These religious "celebrities" include theologians like Prof. Dr. Nihat Hatipoğlu and Prof. Dr. Mustafa Karataş. They not only appear on television shows where they answer religious questions usually posed by women spectaculars, they also give hall sermons to a mass composed mostly of women audience. This phenomenon is similar to the hall sermons organized by evangelists in the USA.

I mention the "Gözyaşı A.Ş." here as a striking example for the existence of a religious marketplace within the religious field. "Gözyaşı" is a brand name of an

incorporated company which organizes religious events and products. The company includes the "Gözyaşı Geceleri" theatric show played in various cities and districts of Turkey and abroad; "Gözyaşı Turizm" travel agency which organizes pilgrimage to Mecca; Gözyaşı Press which publishes books and DVDs of the shows and last but not least "Gözyaşı FM", the radio channel of the company[81].

Gözyaşı Geceleri show was played in 24 cities in Turkey and 24 cities in Europe in 2013[82]. The tickets for the show were sold for 15 Turkish Liras in 2013 and they could be bought in Tekbir Clothing Store which sells religious attire especially for covered women. Tekbir was also one of the sponsors of the show; the other sponsor was Erpiliç Chicken, a halal food company. Taking all these relationships into consideration, Gözyaşı may also be interpreted as the interaction of economic and religious fields.

### 4.3.5. Women's religious gatherings at homes

Until now, I tried to demonstrate the wide variety of pious Sunni Muslim women's public religious activities within the Turkish religious field. However, performance of religion in the public places is a relatively new phenomenon. Pious Sunni Muslim women generally practice their religion at their homes, either alone or together with their kin and friends. There are certain events called Thursday or Friday meetings where women come together to practice religious rituals of Quranic recitation (aloud), praying, and dhikr (zikir) in the house of one woman each week. During the month of Ramadan, women gather at homes for mukabele and teravih prayer which they can perform, alternatively, at the mosques.

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[81] www.gozyasigeceleri.com accessed on 05.04.2014

[82] https://tr-tr.facebook.com/gozyasigeceler accessed on 05.04.2014

Women also organize mevlit events at homes (sometimes at mosques) for special rites de passage such as when a baby is born, for the circumcision of a boy, for the newly-wed couple and for the deceased. It can also function as a "thanksgiving" event when a family buys a new house or car or when somebody survives an accident or a serious illness. Mevlit, in these contexts, refers to a program containing Quranic recitation, hymn (ilahi) singing and praying. Self-educated female hodjas usually lead these occasions where participant women themselves also recite the Quran and religious hymns on a voluntary basis.

Women's gatherings in the privacy of the home do not mean that they perform religious practice privately. Keeping in mind that every ritual is a communal act, at least because it refers to an imagined community of the believers, "umma" in Islam, Friday meetings at homes are also public acts of worship. However, women's religious practices at homes do not make them as visible as performing rituals in the public places of the mosques, shrines, foundations (vaqıfs) and associations within the city. Moreover, women's public religious activities make them encounter men in the same religious space. This encounter reveals certain conflicts and antagonisms regarding women's presence in the public religious space.

This chapter is an endeavor to outline Sunni Muslim women's religious practices; the institutions and actors involved in the provision of religious services to women and the interrelations between state, media, religious foundations, associations, orders and communities. Next chapter aims to demonstrate how the performance of women's religious rituals and these complex relations within the Turkish religious field affect the dynamics of pious women's status within religious practices of Sunni Islam and women's social status and prestige in Turkish society.

**CHAPTER 5**

**WOMEN'S STATUS IN ISLAMIC RITUALS**

It has been widely discussed that women have been excluded from orthodox religious rituals and religious leadership positions of world religions including Islam (cf. Holy 1988; Ahmed 1992; Torab 1996; Sered 1999; Mattson 2008; Charrad 2011). Furthermore, the rituals within which women are involved are regarded as "pseudoreligious" by Islamic fundamentalists and official religious specialists. Sered (1999) gives various examples of this exclusion from different contexts. For example, women are attacked by Muslim men because of their traditional dancing on the sheikh's birthday in Sudan (Kennedy 1978); disappearance of female puberty rituals and increasing seclusion of women in Sri Lanka (McGilvray 1982; Bowen 1992; Karim 1992) and criticism of women's *sofreh* rituals as nonorthodox and pseudoreligious by male religious specialists in Iran (Jamzadeh and Mills 1986).

However, despite these attempts of the orthodox religious agents, in recent years women's religious agency has been expanding as a result of their access to certain resources (e.g. Davidman 1991; Sered 1999; Mahmood 2005; Avishai 2008), such as female religious specialists and religious knowledge. A similar development can also be observed in the Turkish case and it helps to understand current dynamics of women's status within the Islamic rituals. By referring to different forms of women's agency in gender-traditional contexts, which I discussed in the theory chapter, I try to

demonstrate pious women's agency through their undertaking of Islamic rituals in three religious places in Ankara, Turkey in this chapter.

I point out here that Islamic ritual practice is conceptualized under two categories: "worshipping practices of Islam" such as daily prayers and Quran recitation and "culturally Islamic rituals" such as *sohbet*, *ziyaret* (shrine visiting) and *mevlit*. I borrow the second term from Hart (2013) who categorizes rituals in Turkish rural context into two: "cultural rituals" such as wedding ceremonies which are not directly connected to the religion and "culturally Islamic rituals" such as *mevlit and ziyaret*. However, I claim that these two components are not always mutually exclusive: in some occasions Quran recitation comes together with *sohbet* sessions followed by the performance of daily prayer. Likewise, mevlit practices embed Quran recitation, worshipping rituals, *sohbet* and *zikir*[83]. Nevertheless, I use this categorization as an analytical tool to ease the understanding of women's social status within Islamic ritual practices.

## 5.1. Challenging orthodox Islam: resistance or compliant agency?

Some pious Muslim women challenge the orthodox discourses such as "a woman's place of worship is home", "a woman cannot be an imam" and "women do not need to attend communal prayers" by their participation in Islamic rituals at the mosques, Quran courses and masjids and by actively taking part in religious practices which they have traditionally been excluded in the public religious places. These are points which we may interpret pious women's agency as resistance agency. However, these very same pious women reproduce, at the discursive level, the ideas and practices they challenge by their religious actions. When we think together Mernissi's (1987) account on the difference between what Muslims actually do and what they say they

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[83] *Zikir* (dhikr) is the utterance of the names of Allah and other prayers stating repentance (*tövbe*), shahada (*kelime-i şehadet*), God's oneness (*tekbir)* etc. in religious ceremonies. http://www.diyanetislamansiklopedisi.com/zikir/, accessed 24.10.2014

do as a strategy to define their identity as Muslim selves; and the basic premise of "doing religion" or compliant agency framework, that is, women conform to the norms of gender-traditional religions to form pious selves, we may argue that it is compliant agency which these pious women exhibit. Below I analyze my field observations regarding pious women's actions and attitudes during rituals via resistance agency and compliant agency frameworks.

### 5.1.1. Women's exclusion from public congregational prayers

Muslim women are usually excluded from public congregational prayers by the orthodox Islamic discourse. It is often told that: "Women do not have to pray communal prayers". However, there are pious Muslim women who challenge women's exclusion from public prayers. They confront negative experiences at the public religious places. Many pious men are against women's presence at the mosques. These men demonstrate their discomfort with their oral confirmation of this discourse. Many Muslim feminist women all around the world are actually fighting for their right to prayer in and with the public. While some of the pious Muslim women in Turkey internalize the situation and do not prefer praying in the public; many others are claiming participation in public congregational prayers in increasing numbers. While the agency of Muslim feminist women is analyzed under the category of resistance agency, the agency shown by pious Muslim women in my case study cannot be interpreted only as resistance agency because it is not usually an open struggle with the authorities or with male congregants like that of the Muslim feminists. It is an attempt to live their piety according to the "true" precepts of Islam experienced in Mecca of today and Mecca of the Prophet's time but still within the confines of orthodox Islam in Turkey. Many of the women I interviewed were introduced to public congregational prayers such as Friday prayer and festival prayers during their Hajj or Umrah experience. Some of them even tried to organize their close social networks such as family and neighbors to attend festival prayers at

the neighborhood mosques. Thus, I think that their agency is a combination of both resistance and compliant agency.

We come across news more often than in the past which depicts women who attempt to attend funeral prayers-which are also traditionally said to be performed only by men- or Friday prayers at the mosques. Attendance in both of the prayers is discouraged by male religious authorities as not being a must (*farz*) for women. On the other hand, men must pray on Fridays with the congregation at mosques. This condition of 'religious obligation' gives men more visibility in the Muslim public sphere while Muslim women are confined to the borders of the home to practice their rituals as well as to perform social and economic activities.

In Turkey, while women are expected and encouraged to attend the *teravih* prayers at the mosques during Ramadan, they are not expected, even discouraged and in some areas not allowed to take part in Friday prayers. This is especially the case in small cities, towns and villages. However, in bigger cities the number of women who want to take part in publicly performed religious rituals has been increasing (together with the number of women whose rate of participation in all areas of public life has been rising). Througout this section I give examples of resistance agency and compliant agency in various public Islamic rituals of devout Muslim women in Ankara.

*5.1.1.1 Funeral prayers*

In Turkey the first discussions on women's challenge to religious authorities to use male-dominated public religious spaces started with the discussions of women's attendance in funeral prayers. In a social setting where women were not even allowed into the cemeteries, women's will to perform funeral prayers was a crucial step.

Some women performed funeral prayers behind men. This was accepted to a certain extent by religious authorities and by the Muslim public. However, when there were

attempts by some Muslim women to perform funeral prayer (which is a male-only prayer) side by side with men, it attracted a lot of attention[84].

By the help of these attempts and the popular discussions on the television channels, women today perform funeral prayers without much questioning. Many pious women in my sample did not question whether it is appropriate for a woman to pray funeral prayers: when they come across a funeral ceremony, they attend the prayer, but usually at the back of the congregation:

> I attend funeral prayers as much as possible. Here, if I come across… For the sake of Allah… Ladies used to perform it before anyway. Later they started not praying. Festival prayer, funeral prayer… It has its own merit (*sevap*), both to us and to the deceased. I participate in the prayer at the back of the congregation. I act on my own way. I don't mind anybody. Prayer has to be performed modestly. It is nonsense to stay in the same line with men at the front. (Seher, 59, Çukurambar)

As it can be seen in this quotation, despite their will to take part in public congregational prayers, pious women have their own restrictions, modesty being the first and foremost principle of women's public presence. A similar comment came from Habibe, a middle aged pious woman who is an amateur practitioner of healing with bio-energy. She added that women do not, in fact, have to perform the funeral prayer since:

> When men perform the funeral prayer, the responsibility lifts up from women. It lifts up but there is a prayer recited for somebody whom you don't know, recited for the sake of Allah. I participate in order to join that prayer; I don't

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[84] "Kadın Ön Safta" (Woman in the front line), Hürriyet, 09.01.1998
http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/1998/01/09/23600.asp, accessed 27.10.2014

know the person, well I don't know, where would I know him? But I never pray at the front line like those celebrities… This might affect people's opinions badly. If you do things by sticking it into the eye, you, of course, get reactions. There is no need. (Habibe, 50, Çukurambar)

She continues her argument that since she is a woman, her religious rituals do not necessarily have to be seen by everybody. "Everybody" here seems to designate men:

> I mean, at the very end, I am a woman. There is no need that everybody sees my *ibadet* at the front… But still I pray behind men if there are any, if necessary I move more to the back. I mean I do not mess anything up. I should make my conscience (*vicdan*) peaceful. I withdraw myself to a region where I can worship in a peaceful way above in the sight of Allah. This is my principle. (Habibe, 50, Çukurambar)

I also observed one funeral prayer at the Kocatepe Mosque where an old woman prayed between two columns of the mosque building while some other women prayed at the back of the male congregation. She was seemingly hiding herself while performing the prayer. There are also women who prefer praying inside the mosque instead of praying in the courtyard where the funeral prayer takes place. One of these women, Necmiye, is an adherent of a religious community and she obeys the teachings of Nazife Hodja who is against women's mosque attendance for congregational prayers. However, even Nazife Hodja performs funeral prayers:

> I once prayed the funeral prayer. We stayed inside the mosque. We conformed to the prayer line of men and prayed inside. (Necmiye, 50, Sincan)

133

I go to funeral ceremonies in the mosques, I like it but I do not pray the Friday Prayer. It is not a must on women. I want to be engaged in what I am obliged to do." (Nazife Hodja, 48, Sincan)

These quotations from different pious women show that there are different levels of resistance agency. While some women resist to the orthodox Islamic norms regarding women's secondary status in public rituals by praying side-by side with men, some others pray almost secretly.

These differences can also be observed across my field sites. As I mentioned above, resistance agency is mostly an urban phenomenon. Thus, it is not surprising that the women who resist patriarchal religion the most are mostly from more urban sites, namely Bahçelievler and Çukurambar; while women from Sincan exhibit compliant agency more.

*5.1.1.2. Friday prayers*

Another controversy regarding women's performance of public rituals is on Friday Prayer. One news article reporting an incidence which occurred in January 2006 exemplifies the dominant view against Muslim women's mosque attendance in Turkey during Friday prayers. A group of women on a snowy day went to the Hacı Bayram Veli Mosque in Ankara to attend the Friday prayer. However, they were not allowed into the mosque by the mosque officials because they were told that there was not enough space in the mosque. The women who could not enter into the mosque prayed outside on the snowy ground. This incident was given plenty of attention in the media. The officials who were interviewed afterwards stated that women were not taken inside the mosque because they are not obliged to pray on Fridays in the mosque but men must attend the congregational Friday prayer. Moreover, they think that the women's section should be given to the men on

134

Fridays. What is more interesting is the testimony of the Mufti of Altındağ. He stated that women who want to perform the Friday prayer should do it either at their homes or at the Kocatepe Mosque[85].

Similarly, in 2006, some women performed Friday prayer with their heads uncovered standing in the same line with men in Subaşı Mosque in Istanbul. There was also great interest in this event in the media because the opposition towards the mixed congregation was so strong that even the police forces were ready in front of the mosque in order to prevent any possible conflict. There were female officials from the Üsküdar Muftiate to inform the women who came to the mosque for Friday Prayer and they distributed headscarves to them. However, the group never showed up again in this mosque[86].

During Friday prayers, women's sections of the central mosques in Ankara such as Kocatepe Mosque and Hacı Bayram Veli Mosque are occupied by men. As far as I observed, women are squeezed in a smaller part of the section reserved for them. The women who come to pray on Fridays are not welcome by the male attendees. It is also the case that when women are greater in number than the usual on a regular Friday, they can occupy more space. Thus, there is a competition between women and men on the use of the space in the mosque which is also a challenge for women who want their religious right to pray with the congregation and to be in the public religious space.

I argue that women show a certain extent of agency by taking part in Friday prayers at the mosque which is not wanted by the majority of the male mosque attendees. However, they are subordinated within the borders of the male dominant public sphere of the mosque and they have to renounce their own space within the mosque:

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[85] "Cuma eziyeti sürecek" (The Friday maltreatment will continue), Milliyet, 29.01.2006 http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/01/29/siyaset/axsiy01.html accessed 12.09.2013

[86] "Subaşı Camii kuşatıldı" (Subaşı Mosque is besieged), Sabah, 28.01.2006 http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2006/01/28/siy102.html, accessed on 26.10.2014

Vallahi for years they did not let us perform the Friday Prayer. They did not devote any place to us in the mosques; always on a corner… why don't they let us pray, why don't they let us in, while men do pray? I felt really sorry when they said 'today is Friday, men will come, it will be crowded; there is no place for you, women, go out'. I was always angry asking why can they get the merit (*sevap*) and energy of that Friday and why can't we, women get it? In the last 5-10 years, they started not excluding women from the mosques and I started participating in the Friday prayer. I liked it a lot. (Habibe, 50, Çukurambar)

I have been coming to the Friday prayer since I started the Quran course. There was no Quran course and no place in the mosque, no place allocated to women before. Our men are against ladies. Why? Let's say it is because of ignorance. Why is Friday Prayer not obligatory to women when it is to men? Inshallah, we will accomplish it, too. (Zeynep, 62, Çukurambar)

When I asked women why they perform Friday prayers, they pointed out the discussions around women's participation in the prayer with a protesting tone. One of the participants of Bahçelievler Quran Course refers to the Quranic verse on Friday prayer and states:

Friday Prayer is a controversial issue. It says in the Surah of Friday 'run to the prayer, catch it.' It does not say that it is a must (*farz*) only for men or that women should not perform it. (Halime, 57, Bahçelievler)

Moreover, Friday Prayer is seen by pious women as a sign of male piety. If a man performs Friday Prayers, he is considered as pious by the women in my sample. This point appeared when I asked the question whether the women thought there were significant differences in the religious lives of women and men:

136

> Women are more sensitive, sensitive yes, they are more warm-hearted towards religion than men. We have many students who pray but their spouses do not come closer to prayer in any way. They may hardly go to the Friday prayers… (Necibe Hodja, 51, Çukurambar)

> My dear, it is so different, how can I tell you? My husband never prays. From Friday to Friday, well if he goes, I mean. (Hüsne, 66, Sincan)

One of my respondents even said that a good Muslim woman should lead her husband into religion by sending him to the mosque on Fridays:

> There are things about which we should be careful… She must lead her children and her husband to prayer… to religion. Friday prayers, for example, she must send "her man" to the Friday prayer after she dresses him up clean. (Remziye, 50, Bahçelievler)

This last point clearly demonstrates that Friday prayer is a very crucial religious ritual in the eyes of the pious women who participate in this communal ritual in increasing numbers.

### 5.1.1.3. Religious Festival Prayers

Similar to Friday prayer, women do not have to perform religious festival prayers according to Sunni Islamic precepts. There are two festival prayers: the first one is on the first morning of the Ramadan Festival, after the fasting month is over and the second one is on the first morning of the Sacrifice Festival. Like Friday prayer, festival prayers are also reclaimed by women all around the world. In South Africa, for example, Muslim women who wish to take part in the festival prayer with the congregation challenged the public authorities to perform this ritual. This attempt in South Africa was to a certain extent successful although the reasons for women's

137

allowance in the congregation were political. The number of women who attend this prayer grows every year (Ismail 2002).

In Turkey, women do not usually perform festival prayers but there are also women who take part in this congregational prayer especially in the mosques of big cities. There are also neighborhood mosques where women perform festival prayer. Around 60 women performed festival prayer in a district of Bursa, one of the big cities of Turkey[87]. Women do not usually come into the main part of the mosque: they pray in the Quran course buildings adjacent to the main building. This is the case in Bahçelievler Quran Course in Ankara, too. 10-15 women come together in the classroom of the Quran Course. In order to go into the building without men seeing and disturbing them, they arrive quite early, way before the time of the prayer. There is another reason of this early arrival: to occupy the religious space so that men cannot exclude women from the prayer. Halime, one of the initiators of women's performance of festival prayers at the Bahçelievler Mosque, describes this experience as follows:

> Sakine *Abla* and I started women's festival prayer performance here. I had seen it during Umrah and I liked it a lot. We started praying the festival prayer after the Umrah. Now we are around 15 women praying festival prayer together. (Halime, 57, Bahçelievler)

When I asked her whether male members of the congregation tell them anything or show any objections to their performance of festival prayer, she says "that's just how it is" accepting the male domination over this particular ritual practice and mosque usage:

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[87] "Kadınlar da bayram namazı kıldı" (Women also performed festival prayer) http://www.haber7.com/guncel/haber/1085148-kadinlar-da-bayram-namazi-kildi, accessed on 12.09.2014

Since the current Director of the Religious Affairs support it, the hodjas here also keep silent. Since it is from the top… There is reaction not from the officials but from the people. Nothing can be achieved without struggle. That day two gentlemen, without saying anything, came and sat down in the women's praying area. There is no word but an action. We approached them and said that this place is allocated to women. Then they left the place. While we were sitting there, some men wanted to pass through. We told them to go upstairs. (Halime, 57, Bahçelievler)

Women like Halime are actually exceptional in the case of festival prayers because most of the women do not attend the prayer on festival days. However, their "struggle", to use Halime's words, and efforts to claim a public congregational prayer reflect not only the agentive capacity of pious women to resist patriarchal orthodox norms of Islam but also display how religious field in Turkey, with its political and institutional bases, sets the conditions for women's participation in public religious activities.

### 5.1.1.4. Teravih Prayers

*Teravih* prayer is a supererogatory prayer which is performed with the congregation after the night (*yatsı*) prayer every day during the month of Ramadan. It is consisted of twenty genuflexions. Since it takes long to perform this Sunnah of the Prophet, pious Muslims spend more than an hour at the mosque at nights. Despite staying out late at night, many pious women prefer praying the *teravih* at the mosque with the congregation. What is more, when I asked the question whether women should pray at home or at the mosque, women who thought that women should pray at home mentioned *teravih* prayers as an exception:

Praying at the mosque is not convenient for women, I prefer praying at home. The mosque is not always available for women because woman also takes the responsibility of her home. For me, women's praying at home is better. She doesn't have to go to the mosque except on special days such as holy *kandil* nights and *teravih* prayers. (Amine, 42, Sincan)

There are some mosques the imams of which recite one "*cüz*" (twenty pages of the Quran) during each *teravih* prayer throughout thirty days of Ramadan. This means whole Quran is recited, called as "*hatim*", during the *teravih* prayers. These teravih prayers take about two hours. Some women in my sample stated that they especially look for these mosques and go there every night in Ramadan. One woman even warned her husband:

I never miss *teravih* prayers. I told my husband: 'if you don't want to perform it with *hatim*, don't hinder me, I myself go and perform the *teravih*' (Saliha, 60, Çukurambar)

Women go to the neighborhood mosques for *teravih* prayers. They usually do not go to the central mosques of Ankara. Because after the *iftar*, the breaking of the Ramadan fast, there is not much time left to commute to the city centre for the *teravih* prayer.

Although *teravih* prayer is usually performed with the congregation at the mosque, there are also women who perform it at home. Their reason for this is that women should not pray outside of their homes:

140

> It is not licit for women to pray in places other than their homes. We also pray at our home during Ramadans. We perform *teravih* at my home. We perform it just us, women, among neighbors. (Necmiye, 50, Sincan)

*Teravih* prayer, as demonstrated above, is performed by many women and men at the neighborhood mosques. Women's presence at the mosques for *teravih* is not contested like Friday and Festival prayers. I think this is an indication of the fact that the problem is not directly and solely women's public presence but women's claiming of a traditionally men's Islamic ritual. However, although women's undertaking of *teravih* prayer is not contested, mosque officials and male participants still complain about women talking and making too much noise at the mosque, even during the prayer. The *imams* and lay men can even warn women in the middle of the ritual performance. Women are also frequently warned by other women, especially the elderly women.

### 5.1.1.5. Reasons for non-participation in communal prayers

Some women state that they do not prefer practicing the communal prayers at public religious places. Their reasons of non-participation can be grouped under three headings. Firstly, some women claim that they do not attend the festival prayer because it is not in tradition or culture or that they are not used to this practice. The following quotation below addresses this issue of habit as well as pious men's domination of women's public religious rituals:

> I have never prayed the funeral prayer. Possibly because it is not a habit. We do not come to the mosque even for the daily prayers. And when we pray, we offend the eye. Some ulama are against it. My father-in-law is an imam and

he is against women's performing prayer with the congregation. But the ideas are changing. (Melahat, 51, Çukurambar)

I have never prayed the festival prayer. It is because of tradition, I mean. For us, I say it is due to tradition. We have never performed it. I mean, since it was said that it is not for women, it stayed like that. I don't know (Emine, 59, Sincan).

The second reason is a general statement made by women for all the communal public prayers: it is not an obligatory ritual (*farz*) on women.

The third reason women give for their non-practice of communal prayers deserves a deeper analysis since it indicates the way everyday Islam is lived and conceived by pious women. It is the idea that it is God's permission (*ruhsat*) to women to be exempt from congregational practices such as Friday Prayer since women have responsibilities at home like child care and household chores. If a woman is employed, her responsibilities multiply. A young woman who works at one of the think-tanks of the current government of Turkey has an in between stance towards women's Friday prayer performance:

And the Quran in the Surah of Friday says: 'O you who have believed, be occupied with *ibadet* and leave trade.'… Hence, I think this command is to all of us. For this reason, I think women should go… Well, Allah gives really *ruhsat* to women, in some special occasions, some… you are a mother, you have a load of work at home and outside… Thus, God does not oblige women with this practice. Yes, it is also obligatory (*farz)* but women shouldn't go. (Mümine, 23, Bahçelievler)

142

Similarly, some of my respondents who do not take part in festival prayers claim that women have many responsibilities and work on festival days so they are not supposed to go to the mosque for the prayer:

> I haven't performed the festival prayer. It is morning time, we rush, and we send men (to the mosque). My God did not order it on women in the first place. Do women take advantage of this? It is both OK if she performs it or not. (Necmiye, 50, Sincan)

> I have never been to the festival prayer. There is no reason for that. I get up very early and send my husband and son to the prayer. Then, I prepare the breakfast. Sacrifice Festival is also like that, very busy. (Neva, 44, Çukurambar)

### 5.1.2. Gender segregation in Islam

The orthodox Islamic discourse excluding women from public rituals offers home as the main place of worship for women. However, most of the pious women stated that praying at a mosque has a special importance in Islam since a ritual performed with the community in the public is believed to raise feelings of solidarity and togetherness. It has a value assigned beyond being a religious act; its social basis is emphasized. Moreover, rituals which are done with the congregation are said to bring more religious merit. Besides the daily prayer (salat), there are different occasions when devout Muslims, mainly composed of male followers, come together at mosques to pray.

Islam has become a gender segregated religion within the course of time in the disadvantage of women. While women could attend mosques and pray in the same congregation with men without gender segregation in the early years of Islam (e.g.

Reda 2004), today women are segregated in many mosques. In countries like Tajikistan, women are not even allowed to enter into mosques[88] (Bakhtiyor 2014). There are objections to these applications from pious women in forms ranging from sharing the same space with men during prayer to the founding of women's mosques[89] (e.g. Jaschok 2012; Samatar 2005).

Women's presence in mosques has been a very contentious issue even during the early years of Islam when the Prophet Muhammad allowed women in mosques without any gender segregation (e.g. Woodlock 2010). He allowed and encouraged women to take part in congregational prayers such as the Friday prayer and the religious holiday (or festival) prayers. It was important because mosques are not merely sacred places for performing rituals. They have been public places where crucial decisions about the society and the politics are taken. Reda (2004: 78) summarizes this aspect of the mosque as follows: "The early mosque was not only a place for prayer, but also a center for many other activities as well… In short, it was the hub and center for public life for the emerging Muslim nation." Thus, when women are banned from the mosques, they are in fact banned from participation in public life. An interesting note of Reda (2004) on the confinement of women at homes as a punishment for fornication is worth mentioning at this point.

However, after the Prophet's time, the tolerance towards women's public visibility in every sphere of life, politics and in mosques started to diminish. According to Reda (2004), the first signs of gender segregation in the mosques, multiple entrances, were also seen during this period. Today, in many parts of the world women pray in

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[88] The Council of Ulama in Tajikistan issued a ban on women's attendance in mosque services in 2005. The reason the Muftiate gives for this decision was the lack of space at mosques. However, some people argue that the ban was due to the fear of the government that women would take part in illegal Islamic groups.
http://iwpr.net/report-news/tajik-women-fight-mosque-exclusion, accessed on 24.10.2014

[89] Samatar (2005) thinks that the main aim of the founders of the women's mosque in the town of Gabiley in Somalia was to create a space to pray adjacent to men "without transgressing on Islam's tenets" (p. 227). Since the women's mosque in Somalia was built adjacent to the men's mosque in a way that the male imam could be heard by the women practitioners, it was not an independent women's mosque as the ones in China (Jaschok 2012).

segregated areas in many mosques. These sections are usually separated from the main prayer hall by walls, curtains or paravanes. For example in Turkey in some bigger mosques, such as the Kocatepe Mosque in Ankara, there are galleries allocated to women. If there is no place for women to pray in the mosque, women should pray at the back of the congregation: the first lines belong to men and male children; women line behind them. The rules regarding gender segregation in mosques and even women's non-acceptance into the mosques among different Islamic societies and cultures is based on the juridical controversy over women's access to mosques[90].

In Turkey, especially pious women are expected and encouraged to pray at home while men's religious ritual place has been public mosques. Orthodox Islam views women, first and foremost, as mothers and wives, whose primary task is to raise children, care for their husbands and households. Thus, women do not attend mosques as much as men. Today most of the pious women in Turkey accept the argument that "a woman's place of *ibadet* is her home". I also encountered this view during my interviews with pious women in Ankara. They think that especially younger women should not go to the mosques since they have children and a household to look after. Their household responsibilities come before their religious responsibilities which they can realize within the borders of the home. What is more, a young woman outside of her home can lead to gossip, thus social *fitna*:

> Of course it brings more merit (*sevap*) to go to the mosque. But for a lady when she is young, it is perhaps not right or let me put it this way, I mean, you are young when you have children, it is said that it is better to appropriate one corner of your home as the place of worship. I mean the hodjas say so. When you get old, it is easier, it does not lead to any gossip and it hinders other people to gossip about you, doesn't it? (Hüsne, 66, Sincan).

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[90] According to Barazangi (1996), most of the (Sunni) Islamic jurisdictions seemingly base their argument on an extrapolation of Al-Ghazali's interpretation of the Sunnah and the Hadith which point out that women can go into the mosques. While Al-Ghazali admits that the Prophet allowed women into the mosques, he stated that in his day's circumstances women should be protected, thus they should not go out of their homes.

The pious women who think that women should pray at home state that women can go to the mosques on holy nights such as *kandil* nights and for *teravih* prayers. Even some women who argue strictly that "the place of women's *ibadet* is their home" go to masjids in donated apartment flats for *sohbet* sessions and pray in those public religious places. It is probable that they do not see these masjids as public places although they are open to any woman who wants to attend the *sohbet*. They see these masjids as private places of worship, like their "home". This also demonstrates that pious women are not only concerned with going out of home but also with encountering men at religious occasions.

Despite all their reservations, the pious women whom I talked have been to a mosque many times. Most of them first went to the neighborhood or village mosques when they were children. "Mosque hodjas" were the religious specialists with whom most of the children in Turkey meet at the mosques, especially during the summer vacation, to learn how to recite the Quran and acquire first formal religious information about Islamic rituals such as how to pray the daily prayer, salat, and how to fast. These were different from the formal Quran courses of the DRA since they were not controlled by a central religious agency and they did not have a formal curriculum. Every hodja had his own style of teaching the Arabic alphabet and the Quran. Today, children usually go to the Quran courses of the DRA at the mosques. There are also Quran courses organized by different religious communities and some families choose to send their children to these courses.

Another occasion when my respondents visited the mosques was to clean these religious places. Every week or once in a month, women of the neighborhood or village used to come together and clean the mosque as a voluntary communal activity. I also remember from my childhood that as girls of the village we used to sweep the carpets of the village mosque and remove the dust of the mosque furniture after the Quran course at the mosque courtyard.

In addition to the Quran courses, women used to go to the mosques with their mothers at Ramadan nights when their mothers prayed the *teravih* prayer at the mosque. There they met their friends, played with them and tried to imitate their mothers praying. Women brought their children to the mosques to make them get used to the religion and to learn the "manners" of the mosque (*cami adabı*):

> The children must know mosque manners. Now, for example, they bring children to the mosque so that they get used to the place. But you have to teach them these manners. We also grew up at the mosques. We grew up with the "dust of the mosque". We swept the carpets of the mosque. We learnt the Arabic alphabet (*elifbe*) there; I mean we learnt the manners (*adab*). You cannot make noise at the mosque; uncles pray there, aunties pray there, quiet, it is a quiet place (Habibe, 50, Çukurambar).

Another respondent describes how women should behave when they are at a mosque:

> No, it is a sin to utter worldly issues at the mosque. It should not be uttered. Even the word "amin" after the prayer should be said inwardly according to the Hanafi School. You will not say 'amin amin' loudly. You will say it silently. I warn women who talk; I tell them not to talk (Hüsne, 66, Sincan).

### 5.1.3. Changing leadership roles of women in Islamic rituals

In addition to this discourse of "women's place of worship is her home", "women cannot be prayer leaders" is another strong argument among religious specialists and pious groups in the Islamic world. This discourse is also challenged by an increasing number of pious women in the Turkish context. This section analyzes women's leadership in Islamic rituals in Turkey.

Men have traditionally dominated religious leadership positions in Muslim countries throughout the world and mosques and madrasahs have been the central places where this authority is established and exercised. Muslim women have usually been kept out of religious authority ranks. However, recent decades witnessed changes in Islamic authority structures within which Muslim women also hold religious authority positions (e.g. Mattson 2008; Kalmbach 2012). Women claim Islamic authority by being prayer leaders, by interpreting Islamic texts during mosque lessons and by being Quran teachers. Women religious leaders have a significant effect on the female congregation's attendance in public prayers and *sohbet* sessions within the mosques, Quran courses and masjids. Moreover, women religious authorities have a crucial place in the social lives of many pious women as advisors on religious as well as psychological matters.

The leaders holding Islamic authority positions have been the caliph, the scholar (*alim* or the *ulama* in plural), the mufti who is to issue fatwa, the qadi (the judge), Sufi *shaykh* and the imam (mosque preacher) (Kalmbach 2012: 4). As the *ulama* in many Muslim countries argued to base Islamic interpretation only on Islamic texts (the Quran, the Sunnah and the Hadith), new leaders who do not have traditional religious learning experience like the *ulama* had, have emerged and started interpreting Islamic texts.

In Turkey, women religious leaders are either state-sponsored preachers of the DRA or self-taught preachers of certain religious communities. The role of DRA's female preachers as female religious leaders perpetuates the orthodoxy of the state Islam through the *sohbet* sessions at the mosques and Quran courses. Likewise, the self-taught preachers of religious communities such as the Nur and Kadiri Community teach an understanding of Islam through the *sohbet* sessions, Hadith and tafsir lessons at the community masjids and homes of the pious women who are adherents of these certain religious communities. Despite this perpetuation of existing Islamic power and knowledge structures, female preachers in Turkey contribute to the transformation of pious women's perceptions towards female leadership in Islam. I

148

analyze female leadership in the context of Turkish Islam under two headings: female preachers and female imams in the following pages.

### 5.1.3.1. Female preachers

The study of female preachers in Muslim countries has become very popular during the last decade (e.g. Hassan 2011; Bano & Kalmbach 2012; Hoover 2015; Maritato 2015). There are also studies on female preachers (*vaize*) of the DRA in Turkey. One of these studies was done by Tütüncü (2010). By focusing on the changing policy of the DRA towards integrating women as preachers and muftis and making them preach about Turkish sovereignty and illuminate the ordinary Muslim women, Tütüncü tries to show how the religious practice of preaching is turned into a political act related to gender, ethnicity and different religiosities in Turkey. Their role, for Tütüncü, is domestication of Kurdish demands by channeling religious faith and fraternity for the sake of state security (2010: 611).

Another study is Hassan's (2012) work of "state-sponsored" female preachers in Turkey. She focuses on the activities of female preachers and their endeavor to shape the ordinary women's understanding of Islam and to establish a new model for female religious authority. She also mentions the difficulties female preachers face when they preach at the gender-segregated space of the mosques and male discontent towards the idea of having women at the mosque.

I observed both female preachers of the Turkish state and a female preacher of a religious community during my field study. What they share in common is the respect they are shown by the participant pious women. They are the role models of the women who attend their *sohbet* and Quran recitation sessions. For instance, when I asked how a pious woman should be, one of my respondents said:

> Like my Hodja. If a person reminds you of Allah when you see her, beware that she has become mature, gained her "other world", her heaven. I feel ashamed of myself when I am with her (Necmiye, 50, Sincan).

This hodja is an adherent of a prominent religious community (Nur Community) and this kind of bond between the hodja and the student is an expected behavior in religious communities. But the same relationship develops between the female preachers of the DRA who are civil servants and Quran course/*sohbet* attendees.

These woman religious specialists might have roles as diverse as psychological counseling and dream interpretation in addition to their religious teaching and preaching duties. During the *sohbet*, women ask the preachers for advice regarding their family or personal problems next to religious questions. The woman's branch of the Diyanet Foundation in Ankara organize counseling day for women every week when a female preacher from the DRA answers questions regarding the practice of Islam and other familial and psychological issues in women's lives.

### 5.1.3.2. *Female imams*

Whether a woman can be an *imam*, a ritual leader during prayers, is a debated issue among Muslims throughout the world (c.f. Mattson 2008; Elewa & Silvers 2010). While orthodox Islam opposes the leadership of women during prayers, some intellectual Muslim women activists lead prayers to point out the need to move away from traditional Islamic beliefs and stance against women being imams. Professor Amina Wadud, for example, led a mixed Friday prayer in Oxford in 2008. She had also led a prayer in New York in 2005. Her actions in the UK and in the USA were protested by both Muslim men and women as being against Islam[91]. Similarly,

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[91] "Woman leads Muslim prayers in UK", 17 October 2008
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/oxfordshire/7676239.stm, accessed on 20.05.2014

Raheel Raza who is a Canada-based Muslim writer and feminist led a mixed congregation during Friday prayer in the UK in 2010[92].

The DRA in Turkey handles this problematic under two headings: women's ritual leadership to an "only female" congregation and to a mixed congregation. Hadiths report that Prophet Muhammad's wives, Aisha and Umm Salamah, did lead prayers in congregations with only women. Thus, three of the Sunni Islamic schools of law, except Maliki School, and some Shi'a allow women to lead women-only congregations in prayers. However, despite the existence of Hadith regarding the prayer leadership of women to men, Hanafi and Shafii Schools of Law do not accept female imams in gender mixed congregations[93]. The fatwa of the DRA seems to allow female imams in female-only congregations but according to my observations during my field study, both the female officials of the Directorate and women from the congregation are hesitant about women's ritual leadership unless it is of necessity. When women lead prayers, both the congregant women and the ones who lead the prayer do not accept that they are being imam.

I witnessed women, both female preachers and "lay" women, leading prayers during my field study. One of these prayers was *tespih namazı*, a superoragotary prayer which is usually performed in Ramadan and lasts nearly half an hour. Since the performance of this prayer is not well-known by women, hodjas lead the prayer and read out the verses. On a Ramadan afternoon after the *sohbet* in Bahçelievler Quran Course, a female hodja invited the women to perform *tespih namazı* in the women's section of the mosque. She stood in the front line (*saf*) in the middle of the women. An imam stands also in the front line but he forms a line by himself. This female

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[92] "First woman to lead Friday prayers in UK", 10 June 2010
http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/first-woman-to-lead-friday-prayers-in-uk-1996228.html, accessed on 20.05.2014

[93] "Kadının İmameti", Fatwa of the DRA, 22.01.1998
http://www2.diyanet.gov.tr/dinisleriyuksekkurulu/Sayfalar/KadininImameti.aspx, accessed on 13.02.2014

hodja read out all the verses and the participant women just did the necessary moves of the prayer. When she got tired, Halime from the congregation led the prayer. However, they never said that they were female imams or leading the prayer. For them, they were easing the performance of a long and difficult prayer. One of my respondents from Sincan also says "our hodja reads out loud the prayers during the *tespih namazı* in case the praying women don't know how to pray. But of course our hodja does not act as a hodja" meaning she is not an imam. One woman at the Çukurambar Quran Course asked "can a woman be an imam?" when the female preacher was preparing to lead *tespih namazı*. The preacher said "don't say 'I follow the imam' when you are uttering your intention (*niyet*) in the beginning of the prayer and say the prayers loud". She implied that the women would not be following a female imam by this way.

Another occasion where women led a prayer was an obligatory noon prayer on a Ramadan day after the mukabele session at the Çukurambar Quran Course. The Quran course was on the basement of the Çukurambar Central Mosque on the first floor of which men perform their prayers. Although the second floor of the mosque is reserved to women, the participant women prefer performing their prayer at the Quran course on the basement of the mosque building since they feel more comfortable there. This is because they do not encounter any men there and they do not want to hurry to the second floor just after the Quran recitation. On that day women had just formed their lines for the noon prayer and they were waiting for the voice of the mosque imam to come from the loudspeaker in order to start the prayer. Because women were on the basement of the mosque and they could not see the imam and the male congregation, there were loudspeakers in the room where mukabele took place. But the electricity went off hindering women to hear the *imam*. The preachers told women to wait for some time. After 15 minutes of waiting, one of the female preachers offered to lead the prayer and we prayed together with her leadership.

All these examples indicate that women actually lead prayers in Turkey but it is not openly stated. On the contrary, female prayer leadership is restated by the preachers themselves as helping the women perform communal prayers. Self-taught hodja of the Sincan masjids is strictly against the idea of women's prayer leadership although she does lead supererogatory prayers as one of her students stated. The hodja, situating women into an inferior position vis-à-vis man, says:

> Women can't live the religion like men do, of course. Men can perform daily prayer everyday during the month. Women are powerless compared to men. A woman can't be a leader. She can't be a prophet. If she were, who would receive the revelation (*vahiy)* during those ten days when she menstruates? Can a woman who has her period (who is sick) lead a prayer? A woman can't be like a man (Nazife Hodja, 48, Sincan).

This female preacher of Sincan masjid, an adherent of Nur community, is referring to the gender differences which are thought to be natural (*fitrat)*. This is one of the discourses of Islamists who legitimize women's secondary position within religion by biological differences. Although she is a prominent leader among her religious community, as part of her religio-political discourse she preaches that women cannot be leaders. I think that her leadership to large groups of pious women cannot be named as resistance agency but as compliant agency.

## 5.2. Gaining non-religious ends by religious practices: instrumental agency?

Women, by undertaking Islamic practices, also gain extra-religious ends, that is, they turn their religious capital into other forms of capital such as social capital. I consider pious women's gaining prestige and respect as one form of extra-religious ends and I analyze this issue thoroughly in Chapter 6. Here in this section, I analyze non-

religious benefits, such as socialization with friends and neighbors, going out of home, and building solidarity with other women, which pious women receive by practicing religious rituals.

In this section, I am analyzing women's public rituals like Quran recitation and *sohbet* with respect to their non-religious benefits to women. Women's participation in public communal rituals can also be discussed as bringing instrumental agency to women. However, I think that devout Muslim women exhibit different levels of resistance and compliant agency more than instrumental agency with their undertaking of public prayers and women's leadership in rituals.

Instrumental agency approach suggests that religious practices provide women with an agency that brings about non-religious benefits to women. These non-religious benefits are usually related to women's going public and may include socialization with other women; building solidarity and a sense of community; going out of home and being visible in the public; and reciprocal relationship with God (undertaking religious acts and making wishes). This approach assumes that pious women are confined to the private sphere and subordinated by patriarchal religious practices. What is more, pious women do not perform Islamic activities for these benefits only. They do not necessarily instrumentalize religious rituals in a pragmatist manner. However, when women perform rituals in the *public* (for example, *sohbet* and Quran recitation), some women might do so for some instrumental ends or extra religious gains such as being visible as part of their religious community, gaining some economic benefits such as collecting help in cash, socializing with other women and having a pastime activity (especially for the elderly) etc. Hence, it is significant to underline that instrumental agency might also take different forms under certain circumstances. While some women who live under oppression from their husbands or family members may benefit from their public religious practices, others might be content with the non-religious beneficial consequences of their religious acts. In the following pages, I analyze some forms of extra religious gains which women receive through their undertaking of Quran recitation and *sohbet* rituals at the mosques,

154

masjids and Quran courses and shrine visiting. While doing this, I give detailed information about these three popular public religious activities of pious women in Ankara.

While some religious scholars[94] and some pious women believe that mosques are actually this-worldly places and they were so at the time of the Prophet, majority of the ulama and pious Muslims are against this profane character of the mosques. At the discursive level, most of the pious women claim that there should not be any worldly activity at the mosque. However, all kinds of this-worldly activities take place at the mosques in practice: women talk, even gossip, eat, breastfeed their babies, change their clothes and sell small hand-made stuff like hand-knitted socks. While some women prefer to be alone and not disturbed in the mosque, some others go to the religious places with their neighbors, relatives and friends or make friends at the women's section of the mosque. In this manner, mosques and masjids become places of socialization for women. However, one can always come across a dispute between proponents of these two groups at the women's section. Women, especially elderly women, warn other women not to talk and laugh. One of my respondents who does not prefer praying at the mosque gave as a reason of her preference women's gossiping:

> For me praying at home is more comfortable. Last time I went to a mosque, it was like a beehive during the prayer. Well, women, they came to pray but they were mostly gossiping. That is why I do not prefer mosques (Rukiye, 31, Bahçelievler).

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[94] The President of the DRA, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Görmez, tries to change the strictly religious character of the mosques. In his talk during the Week of Mosques and Mosque Officials in October 2014, he stated his suggestion to the youth: "let's talk this-worldly issues at the mosque" http://t24.com.tr/haber/diyanet-baskani-gormez-gelin-camide-dunya-kelamini-konusalim,274296, accessed on 26.10.2014

One of the central religious Islamic practices through which women come together is the recitation of the Quran. Graham (2001) has written extensively on the Quran and Quran recitation. He emphasized the "oral" and "aural" character of the Quran which had usually been studied as a scripture, as a text, by the orientalist scholars. "The Quran as a spoken word", in his definition, has a significant place in everyday piety and practice in Muslims' life. The Quran is a text meant to be recited during the daily prayer; during "rites de passage" and nearly every action of the pious Muslims (such as marriage, birth, circumcision, death etc.), during *zikir* sessions and last but not the least, recitation of popular Surahs accompanying every action. Thus, pious Muslims face the need to be able to recite from the Quran without difficulty and by heart if possible. For this end, pious men and women go to the Quran courses to learn how to recite the Quran with *tecvit*[95], to memorize the Quran and become *hafiz*[96].

Although Graham's contribution is significant for the studies of Islam, he doesn't refer to any gender differences or to the practices of women. As the previous chapter shows, more women than men attend the Quran courses in Turkey. This is especially because pious women are the ones who organize Quran recitation meetings for important family events, for a vow and for socialization purposes. Likewise, Werbner's study (2012), looking at the Quran recitation practices among the Pakistani labor migrants in Manchester, shows that primarily women gather at homes to recite the whole Quran communally. The purposes of this ritual may vary from thanksgiving to blessing. According to Werbner, what is common in all these purposes is that those women believe that the Quran has an immense power on mundane acts. The reason for reciting the whole Quran is women's assertion that they cannot know which passage is appropriate for their certain situation. Thus, they recite all of the Quran to guarantee the desired effect of blessing, forgiveness or thanksgiving.

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[95] *Tecvit* is both the science of Quran recitation and the application of the rules pertaining to the perfect recitation of the Quran.

[96] *Hafiz* is a person who has memorized the Quran.

Pious women in Turkey recite the Quran individually and communally as well. There are women who recite the holy book of Islam on a daily basis. There are others who recite the Quran mainly on Fridays. They predominantly recite the Surah of Yasin. Thus, there are booklets called as "Yasin Booklets" which are very popular in Turkey. During "Friday gatherings" when women meet at homes, Surahs of the Quran are recited next to *zikir,* prayers and conversation accompanied by tea and food prepared by the host. Friday gatherings are organized weekly or monthly among a small group of women who know each other. *Mevlit* rituals are other occasions where Surahs from the Quran are recited along with prayers, *zikir* and *mevlit* recitals. *Mevlit* refers to the poem describing the life of the Prophet Muhammad. The *mevlit* rituals analyzed by Tapper and Tapper (1987) include the performance of certain parts of this poem regarding the Birth of the Prophet. However, *mevlit* today is the general name given to religious occasions which are organized by women and men alike to celebrate life events like marriage, circumcision of a boy, birth of a new baby and commemoration of death. Moreover, there are also *mevlit* programs at the big mosques on holy *kandil* nights (Birth of the Prophet or *Mevlit Kandili/Mawlid an Nabi* is just one of these holy nights) and they are broadcasted on television. Despite these differences, the contemporary structure of a *mevlit* ritual is quite similar to a Friday gathering. Thus, pious Sunni women usually refer to Friday meetings or *mevlit* when they say they go to "Quran recitation". These gatherings share certain rituals in common: recitation of the Quran, saying prayers, daily worshipping rituals, *sohbet, zikir* and religious hymn (*ilahi[97]*) singing.

Women also recite the Quran by a system of "*cüz*" sharing. Especially during Ramadan but also at other times, reciting one part (*cüz*) composed of twenty pages of 30 chapters of the Quran is an Islamic tradition in many Muslim countries including Turkey. This system of Quran recitation can be performed for the sake of reciting the

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[97] *İlahi,* as a form of religious hymn, developed together with the religious orders (*tarikat*) in the Ottoman Empire. Mardin (1969) defines these hymns as an element of a heterodox culture and folk Islam. Today, *ilahi* is a motive used during the rituals of both state Islam and religious communities (*cemaat*). What is more, some pious people use *ilahi* as the ringtone of their mobile phones, that is, *ilahi* is a part of the popular culture of the pious Muslims.

whole Quran (*hatim*); as an element of a reciprocal relationship with the God, through which women expect their wishes would come true; and as a sacred gift sent to the deceased family members, relatives and acquaintances. Firstly, women who are relatives, friends or neighbors share *cüz* in order to practice *hatim*. *Hatim indirmek* (the act of reciting all the Surahs of the Quran from its Arabic) is an essential performance in the lives of Muslims since it is an indication of firm intention on the way to become "pious" Muslims.

Secondly, a woman who has a wish, who wants to give her thanks to God or who has lost a close relative, asks her friends, neighbors or relatives to recite one *cüz* or the Surah of Yasin for her so that her wish might come true; her thanksgiving is done or her grief is relieved. Other women volunteer to recite one, two or even more "*cüz*" or *Yasin* until a loose deadline. The woman who requested this saves the numbers of "*cüz*" or the Surah "to be recited" and in some occasions also the names of the volunteer women. This system of Quran recitation strengthens feelings of "Muslimness" and solidarity among pious women and reinforces their piety:

> I recite the Quran for the sake of God (*Allah rızası için*). She is a Muslim sister, too. Let her wish come true and let our wish also come true together with hers. A Muslim always needs another Muslim. (Huriye, 50, Çukurambar)

> Well, I heard that a prayer one Muslim prays for another Muslim is as acceptable (*makbul*) by Allah as the prayer which our Prophet prayed for his *Ummah*. That's why I don't decline any request when they ask me to recite the Quran. (Nazik, 66, Sincan)

Another incentive for pious women to recite the Quran when it is requested from them is to gain merit. The women believe that the effect of reciting the Quran for somebody else is twofold: first, it helps the "requester" to realize her wish or intention and brings her merit. Secondly, it brings merit to the women who recite the Quran for somebody else. Women state that they do not engage in any reciprocation

from the act of Quran recitation other than their belief that they get merit. However, whether gaining religious merits is also a reflection of instrumental agency or not is a question to be discussed:

> I mean I recite the Quran for another person to gain religious merit (*sevap*). For instance, *hatim* is distributed, for example, in our funerals. Perhaps you also do this. 2-3 *cüz* for you, 2-3 *cüz* for you… I mean, I immediately say I would recite. If anything I can do brings religious merit to her, if it brings merit to me, too, I don't refuse. Why would I? I recite the Quran like this, a lot. I have done this many times. May Allah accept it. (Emine, 59, Sincan)

Shrine visiting ritual is also a ritual through which women get extra religious ends. It is an activity for women when they can go out of home and spend time with their friends and/or relatives. What is more, it is a ritual for some women to make wishes from God through the deceased sheikh. All of the women I interviewed stated that they visited shrines at least once in their lives. Some of them even said that they often go to the shrines and like the atmosphere of these sacred places. However, they all rejected that they engaged in any kind of superstitious act during their visits. While some women wish peace for "the spirit of the deceased" (*ölmüşlerin ruhu için*) but do not request anything for themselves from God; for some of the women, shrines are places to pray God for their wishes. They underline the fact that they do not request anything from the dead body of the sheikh or saint but they request from God "with the medium of the saint", a holy person who is "a friend of God". As Tapper (1990) suggests the notion of respect is the dynamic which structures the whole interaction behind the practice of shrine visiting. My respondents also underlined the fact that they visit shrines out of respect to the deceased saint:

> We go to the shrines but we don't expect anything from them. Out of respect for the saint/for his fair face (*yüzü suyu hürmetine*), we request our wishes from God (Nazik, 66, Sincan).

159

> I recite the Quran when I visit shrines. If there is a place to perform prayer, I perform a supererogatory prayer, two genuflexions for the sake of God. I don't believe in tying pieces of cloth or offering vows. I don't believe in superstitions like turning rocks etc. (Rukiye, 31, Bahçelievler).

What is common in the testimonies of pious women regarding *ziyaret* is that they perpetuate the discourse of the DRA: they do not believe and involve in superstitious acts but they pray to God at shrines. However, as a participant observer at various religious places in Ankara, I came across many instances where pious women distributed loafsugar and bonbons around shrines. This way, they believed, their wishes could come true. Moreover, even within the mosques which are the places of orthodox Islam, women distributed rosaries and told other women to say a certain prayer for a certain time so that their wish could be realized. Once I saw that somebody wrote on one column of the Kocatepe Mosque in Ankara: "Please God, I wish I could pass the KPSS exam[98]"

Another central religious practice in which devout women take part is communal Quran recitation. Pious women gather either at homes or at mosques to recite the Quran communally. Ramadan is the month when women's performance of Quran recitation intensifies along with other religious rituals. One common form of the ritual of Quran recitation during Ramadan is mukabele. Women who participate in the mukabele do not recite the Quran themselves but they *follow* the Quran which is recited by a hodja or by a person who does this without any mistakes. Mukabele is usually performed at mosques, masjids or at homes consisting of a group of women. However, there are also women who prefer following the hodja who recites the Quran on the television or on internet. Men also "follow" mukabele at mosques but it is not as common as women's mukabele groups. Whatever form it takes, it is

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[98] KPSS is a central exam organized to select state officers.

necessary to explore the meanings of this practice for the large population of women who engage in this Muslim ritual. Since I am interested in the public religious activities of the pious Sunni women, I did not focus on *mukabele* performances at homes but I examined the mukabele sessions at Çukurambar Quran Course during the Ramadan of 2013 for a month every weekday.

The pious women believe that it brings more religious merit when they recite the Quran with the congregation (*cemaat*) than when they recite the Quran individually. One of the DRA's female preachers from Çukurambar Quran Course acknowledges the merit-bringing nature of the communal worshipping practices such as mukabele but what she emphasizes is the social dimension of these religious rituals: to create a sense or spirit of community:

> Mukabele aims to constitute a sense of community. In fact, the aim is the same in communal prayers… People come here –you were also here and saw it- for mukabele and they ask each other how they have been doing. If anyone is in need of help, she has the opportunity to meet that need. This is in fact what is aimed. Well, of course, communal rituals bring more merits than others. It causes synergy and this makes people get more inner/spiritual pleasure. But next to this, it has such a social dimension which is the actual goal of the mukabele (Necibe Hodja, 51, Çukurambar).

One of my respondents, a school teacher in Çukurambar neighborhood, who could participate in the mukabele since it was summer time when the schools are closed, emphasizes this social role of communal Quran recitation. She stated that mukabele gives her the opportunity to know who her neighbors are:

> You get to know the people and their faces in the neighborhood by this way. When I don't come to mukabele, I go from home to work and I don't know anybody (Selma, 45, Çukurambar).

161

Most of the women in Çukurambar Quran Course knew each other: some of them were neighbors and came to the mukabele together; others got to know each other during their Quran learning classes or at the mukabele during Ramadans.

If we look at the profile of the women who take part in the mukabele sessions, we see that it changes according to the occupational and age status of women. Working women in my sample stated that they do not attend mukabele meetings since they are at work at the time of the occasion or they do not have time for that. Most of the mukabele participants were housewives and retired women. It is also crucial to point out that the housewives who attend mukabele sessions have grown up children so that they do not have to look after them. Some women bring their small children to the Quran course so that they do not have to worry about them and they can take part in the mukabele:

> I used to perform mukabele at home before since my child was little. I came here this year. This year my daughter comes to the Quran course so we are coming here together. My friends always told me that the ambiance here is nice. This community here with the hodja and everything is nicer. I complete my duty in Ramadan in a better way. We spend the time to its fullest extent, with various speeches, on the lives of the Prophet, for example (Neva, 44, Çukurambar).

There were some young girls who are students and children who took part in the Quran course just before the mukabele started every weekday. There were also old women in the mukabele sessions but their number was very limited. Some of these old women cannot read Arabic; some of them are even illiterate. Since they cannot recite the Quran themselves or "follow with their eyes" while it is being recited, they are present in the mukabele just to listen to the recitation. At the meantime, they

162

count their beads (*tespih çekmek*) and say their prayers. It is a pastime during which they believe they gain religious merit and some inner peace.

Another religious ritual providing women with non-religious gains is the ritual of *sohbet* which is usually juxtaposed with the practice of Quran recitation. This practice is performed at homes, masjids, mosques and Quran courses. Pious women often gather at homes for *sohbet* sessions. But they also go out of their homes, in increasing numbers, to the "masjids" (which are, in fact, flats in the neighborhood donated to the religious communities by pious philanthropists) and to the Quran courses and mosques to attend *sohbet* circles and religious lessons.

*Sohbet* ritual is an urban religious phenomenon and it is closely related to the development of political Islam and the increasing influence of religious communities throughout the Muslim world as well as in Turkey. *Sohbet* circles have been organized by religious communities such as Nakşibendi, Kadiri, and Nur community in Turkey. Schimmel (1975) sees *sohbet* as the second important characteristic of Nakşibendi education after silent dhkir. Schimmel (1975: 366) describes *sohbet* as "the intimate conversation between master and disciple conducted on a very high spiritual level". According to van Bruinessen (2008), a sense of solidarity is built through the practice of *sohbet* in informal gatherings of the Nakşibendi and Nur communities. Silverstein (2008: 121) describes *sohbet* as "companionship in conversation" as a means of "cultivating an ethical self". After their popularity became acknowledged by large populations of pious women and men, the DRA also started to organize *sohbet* sessions at the mosques and Quran courses in the city centers and peripheral districts of the cities. The television shows and seminars of the "celebrity hodjas" I mentioned in the previous chapter are also called as *sohbet*. As I stated elsewhere my main aim was not to follow religious activities of a certain community or order, so I basically attended the *sohbet* sessions of the DRA at open access public religious places. In addition to this, I encountered *sohbet* and Hadith lessons of a religious community in a masjid in Sincan.

*Sohbet* sessions, whether it is organized by a religious community, by the DRA or by the "lay" pious women, are composed of common rituals. The hodja, either the university educated female preacher of the state or a self-taught hodja in a masjid, starts and ends the session with saying prayers. Then, the Quran is recited and *ilahis* are sung in some sessions. During the *sohbet* sessions at homes, women perform dhkir (*zikir*) in addition to the Quran recitation. Some *sohbet* are in the form of a religious lesson where the hodja gives a lecture on Hadith, tafsir (interpretation of the Quran), or Sunnah. Women usually follow a course book in this kind of *sohbet*. Pious women of the Sincan masjid, for example, were following a Hadith compilation called as "el-Cami'u's-sağir'" written by Celaleddin es-Suyuti (911/1505). Women read out the numbered Hadith one by one in turn. If the hodja has something to say, an anecdote to tell or if the participant women have any question or comment, they tell them in between the Hadith readings.

During the *sohbet* of the DRA at the Quran courses, the female hodja gives a talk on a certain topic each week. This includes religious as well as ethical issues such as important points to consider about religious rituals, telling lies, stealing, being good to one's neighbors etc. Familial conflicts and wife/husband, parent/child and mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relations are also very popular topics in these *sohbet* sessions.

The participants of the *sohbet* in Sincan masjid are working women who come to *sohbet* during their noon break, and middle-aged and old women who are housewives. On the other hand, the participants of the *sohbet* in Bahçelievler Quran Course are mostly housewives and retired women. Pious women seemed more comfortable during the *sohbet* of the DRA than the women in *sohbet* in Sincan masjid. It might be because the female hodja in Sincan masjid is stricter than the female preacher of the DRA. Secondly, the *sohbet* in Sincan is in the form of a religious lesson where women have to prepare "homework" and be attentive during the lesson. Thus, the female participants of the *sohbet* of a religious community were in the status of a "student", a learner. The participants of Bahçelievler Quran Course, *sohbet* of the DRA, were there to listen to the preacher, comment on the topic of the

day with examples from their own lives and ask questions which tackle their minds. The questions asked by the participants of both *sohbet* groups are usually on minute details of religious rituals: worshipping rituals such as daily prayers, fasting and pilgrimage and culturally Islamic rituals such as sacrificing an animal for a newborn baby or for a vow. The other set of questions are ethical questions on women's daily conduct and familial relations. The preachers also functioned as psychological counselors who give advice to the women based on reference texts of Islam.

The *sohbet* sessions are channels of communication for women. Women discuss matters related to local, national and global politics as well as moral and religious issues. Likewise, these places are tools to spread and share news within the neighborhood. They are also places of socialization for women like mosques. But we can say that *sohbet* environments are more intimate than mosques. Many women make new friends at the *sohbet* sessions:

> Most of my friends are from the Quran Course, my Friday Prayer friends and friends from Gamze Hodja's *sohbet*. Because I have been coming here for 15 years. These are the places where I am the happiest. I think I can't live if I don't come here (Sakine, 70, Bahçelievler).

While *sohbet* is a medium for making new friends, it can lead to termination of friendships as in the case of Necmiye from the Sincan masjid. When I asked her who her friends were, she first named her relatives and then her "*sohbet* friends":

> I had one close friend but we have become estranged, I don't know why. Since she doesn't attend the *sohbet* circles like me. But thanks God I have a lot of *sohbet* friends. My friends from the *cemaat* (religious community) are very open hearted. I don't know why, they have made me forget brother and

sister. But we all treat each other like this because they know *ilim* (scientific approach to world and religion) (Necmiye, 50, Sincan).

Pious women who attend *sohbet* sessions perform this ritual with devoutness. Some of them even organize their daily lives according to the times of these sessions. These women see themselves in a socially fulfilling position: like that of a woman who works outside of her home in a paid job:

> On Monday mornings there is *sohbet*; I have *sohbet* in the afternoons, too. I do as much housework as I can during the time left from the *sohbets*. I cook. I am like the working women. I clean the house on Tuesdays. There is *sohbet* in the afternoon around 1:30. We have *sohbet* on Wednesday mornings. I can't attend the *sohbet* in the afternoon because chores pile up. There is *sohbet* with my hodja on Thursday afternoons. On Friday mornings there is Çiğdem Hodja's *sohbet* and in the afternoon *sohbet* of my hodja. Morning's *sohbet* is with Çiğdem Hodja. On Wednesday afternoons, we have a retired teacher who delivers *sohbet*… Then we come home and see that all the chores are piled up (Necmiye, 50, Sincan).

> I generally go to the mosques and Quran courses. On Mondays and Tuesdays, I have tafsir and memorization courses in Emek; on Wednesdays and Thursdays I have Quran recitation and memorization in Bahçelievler and on Fridays I have *sohbet* with Gamze Hodja in Bahçelievler… I don't go out much, well I do but I try to organize my life according to this order (Halime, 57, Bahçelievler).

Moreover, *sohbet* rituals are juxtaposed with charity acts of pious women. Women collect help in money and in kind for the needy people in their neighborhood. This fact also makes the participant women fulfilled since they realized their mission as good Muslims.

As I stated in the beginning of this section, there are more extra-religious gains of religious rituals to women other than the ones I demonstrated in this chapter. Turning of religious capital into status and prestige is one of the significant non-religious gains. Pious women who participate in *sohbet* sessions and public Islamic rituals receive respect and prestige through their religious actions. The forms and manifestations of this social status and what pious women get out of this status is the topic of next chapter.

# CHAPTER 6

# GAINING RESPECT, PRESTIGE AND STATUS THROUGH RELIGIOUS RITUALS

## 6.1. Relationship between Islamic practice and pious women's status

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated the subordinated status of women within public religious rituals, different forms and levels of women's agency to challenge their secondary status within public Islamic practices and the reasons why women undertake Islamic rituals within the light of pious women's agency discussions. This chapter explores the dynamics through which pious women's social status is affected by their Islamic ritual performance. To put it another way, I demonstrate how a pious woman becomes prestigious, receives respect and thus a higher social status from her closer social network: her family, neighbors and members of the religious congregation. I also examine what pious women do with the social status they receive, that is, the other forms of capital gained out of social capital. But at the same time I show how a woman's status as a wife and a mother is perpetuated through her practice of Islamic rituals. Bourdieu (1991: 19) claims that "the *structure of the systems of religious representations and practices*" reproduces the social order which is composed of dominant and dominated classes. We can appropriate Bourdieu's understanding of the religiosity of the dominant classes to the conservative AKP government's and the most prominent state apparatus of the religious field, the DRA's understanding of orthodox Islam in Turkey. These actors try to justify a

secondary position to women, both in women's practices of religious rituals, as I tried to show in Chapter 5, and in their roles within the family as mothers and wives.

The relationship between piety and status has rarely been studied (e.g. Tong & Turner 2008; Mahmood 2001; Mazumdar & Mazumdar 1999; Delaney 1990). It has to be noted that the relationship between a believer's piety and her status has a reflection in the Islamic discourse. This reflection can be exemplified in the story told by the self-taught preacher of Sincan masjid. The hodja mentioned this story, which is a Hadith, when she was giving me advice about doing our best whatever work we engage in and about "elevating", meaning achieving a higher status in our occupations and in society. She said "May God include us among the slaves whom God loves, then we can elevate". I quote the Hadith as it is told by the female preacher below:

> If God loves somebody, God commands the Angel Gabriel: "I love this servant, you love her, too". Then the Angel Gabriel tells this to the skies and the angels. Next, the angels spread the news to the earth and to the other living beings to love this slave of God[99] (Nazife Hodja, 48, Sincan).

When I asked women why they practiced daily prayers, fast, and go to the Hajj or Umrah, their response was "because it is God's command". This response is not unexpected but it demonstrates the fact that pious women do not have such a direct rationale to instrumentalize their religious practices to gain a higher status in life.

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[99] The original Hadith related by Muslim is as follows: "If Allah has loved a servant [of His] He calls Gabriel (on whom be peace) and says: I love So-and-so, therefore love him. He (the Prophet) said: So Gabriel loves him. Then he (Gabriel) calls out in heaven, saying: Allah loves So-and-so, therefore love him. And the inhabitants of heaven love him. He (the Prophet) said: Then acceptance is established for him on earth. And if Allah has abhorred a servant [of His], He calls Gabriel and says: I abhor So-and-so, therefore abhor him. So Gabriel abhors him. Then Gabriel calls out to the inhabitants of heaven: Allah abhors So-and-so, therefore abhor him. He (the Prophet) said: So they abhor him, and abhorrence is established for him on earth."
http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/hadith/qudsi.php, accessed on 21.12.2014

However, as it can also be illustrated by the quotation above, for Muslims it is important to be loved by God and by people. Hence, religious ritual becomes a medium of gaining love and respect and so acquiring an enhanced status in life. This is in line with "doing religion" framework mentioned by Avishai (1998). I agree with this framework's argument that pious women perform religious practices firstly because they are prescribed by God. Nevertheless, I also argue that performing religious practices contributes to the status of pious women and their agency.

In addition to this, Muslim people may associate piety and status achievement to create hierarchical differences between different groups within the society. Mernissi (1987) points out the need to differentiate between what Muslims actually do and what they say they do. This is a strategy developed by Muslims themselves to define Muslim identity. Tong and Turner (2008: 43) highlight the same point for the case of Malaysia where pious and secular groups are in a competition to "demonstrate their superior worth within the religious field". According to them, piety, especially women's piety becomes a tool to define community membership. Tong and Turner (2008: 42) argue that "a person's inspirational worth in terms of acts of piety" can be measured and that piety, within this framework, creates "a hierarchy of values or grace". This fact of piety creating social differences is in line with Bourdieu's notion of transfer of different capitals into each other. This case can be an example of religious capital turning into symbolic capital in the form of prestige ad status. In this chapter, I attempt to demonstrate how women understand different degrees of involvement in religious rituals and of religious knowledge as indicators of piety and further as differences in the status of pious women.

In this chapter, I conceptualize "status" as prestige and respect that pious women receive from their close social networks. I consider status as a subjective evaluation of an individual's standing within the society by others and I employ "piety" as the indicator of this subjective evaluation since "superiority in piety" is vital in the lives of pious Muslims. The evaluators of a woman's piety and status are also pious women in this study. I should also note that piety and status in this context are

measured according to the performance of religious practices; level of religious knowledge; and ability to negotiate mundane activities (such as managing household chores, child-rearing and husband care) and religious rituals in the course of pious women's everyday life. This chapter analyzes these three dynamics which have an impact on the status of pious women in the case study of Ankara.

As I tried to demonstrate in the previous chapter, women's status in Muslim societies has generally been discussed within the context of Islamic beliefs pertaining to the place of women vis-à-vis men in the society. The effects of Islamic practices on women's social status have usually been analyzed in terms of the practice of veiling and gender segregation. Although I did not ask pious women directly whether veiling brings prestige to them among their closer social networks, most of them stated that being veiled does not necessarily mean being pious. Nevertheless, I should mention that all the pious and high status women in the three field sites were all veiled women. For example Amine from Sincan, a newly veiled, middle-aged, working woman said:

> If daily prayer, fasting and other religious rituals don't prevent you from committing sins, I don't think that you are a pious person. If this headscarf (pointing her veil) hasn't changed anything in me; if it doesn't hinder me from touching a taboo, I think that I am a conspicuous Muslim, performing rituals visually (Amine, 42, Sincan).

Although Amine states that veiling is a force which should change a Muslim woman into a pious person, she did not define herself pious since she does not fulfil the basic obligations of Islam like praying five times a day. Amine proposes that veiling does not bring prestige to a Muslim woman but after the ban on veiling in public offices had been lifted she started wearing a headscarf with the influence of her colleagues. Veiling may have brought her prestige in a political and social environment where being a veiled woman is valued.

171

Likewise, gender segregation as an Islamic practice has been conceptualized as a factor which can either degrade or enhance the status of women depending on the context (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1987; Mernissi 1987; Moghadam 1988; Moghadam 2003). Within the confines of this study, the practice of gender segregation is examined in its relationship with the performance of prayers at the mosques.

The relationship between Islamic rituals and the place of women within the family, neighborhood and larger society has not been considered as noteworthy as the topics of headscarf and seclusion, except a few studies about the impact of Muslim pilgrimage and daily prayer on the status of pious women (e.g. Delaney 1990; Mahmood 2001). The significance of this dissertation lies in the fact that it analyzes the relationship between Sunni Muslim women's "ordinary" acts of worship and their standing within their close social environments. Hence, this chapter first starts with the juxtaposition of religious rituals with other elements which has an impact on the social standing of pious women. One of these elements is the negotiation of daily life and religious rituals. Hence, I examine how balancing of the domestic and familial chores and performance of religious rituals makes pious women prestigious and gives them an enhanced status as both respected and pious women in their families, neighbourhoods and friendship circles, especially within their religious communities.

Then, I include religious knowledge and expertise as an important factor determining who a prestigious pious woman is. Although religious knowledge is not a ritual, it is a vital component which accompanies religious ritual performance and deeply affects mundane activities within the pious women's religious field. Religious knowledge, as a factor affecting pious women's status and prestige, appeared and reappeared in my field study during which I observed religious ritual performances of the women.

Lastly, I discuss the direct relationship between the performance of religious rituals (including the pilgrimage, daily, congregational and supererogatory prayers, Quran recitation and *sohbet* participation) and pious women's status enhancement and

172

prestige gaining. In the final part of this chapter, I demonstrate how symbolic capital is converted into other forms of capital by pious women.

## 6.2. Negotiation of the sacred and the profane as a status enhancer

According to my observations in the field and interviews I conducted, I argue that if a woman can balance her performance of Islamic rituals, especially the daily prayer, and everyday activities including work and household responsibilities such as child rearing, household chores and service to her husband, she is regarded as pious and respected by other women in her social network. This contributes to their status as Muslim women within their closer social environment. Since most of the women I talked were housewives and retired women, they referred to domestic chores and caring for their husbands and children when they mentioned everyday life activities.

There is a crucial point to be highlighted in this negotiation process: if a woman devotes most of her time to religious rituals and neglects her "duties" towards her house and family, her religious devotion is not necessarily appreciated, so she is not prestigious in the eyes of her family and friends. Likewise, if a woman devotes most of her time to household chores and family service and performs the minimum requirements expected from a Muslim (like performing the five times daily prayer), she might be regarded as a pious woman but her status is not elevated. Then, when does a pious Muslim woman become "pious and prestigious" simultaneously and achieves a higher social status? A woman who manages her household and family duties practically and performs not only the required religious rituals but creates time for supererogatory religious practices is regarded both pious and prestigious by her closer social circle and by herself.

Although pious women give priority to religious activities in their lives, many of them share the idea that daily activities should not be ignored for the sake of performing religious rituals. This point of view reflects itself on one particular weak

Hadith which was cited by one of the women in Çukurambar Quran Course: "work for this world as if you will never die; work for the other world as if you will die tomorrow"[100]. Halime from Bahçelievler Quran Course also refers to this Hadith but continues with the primacy of religious rituals in her life:

> Both this-worldly acts and religious duties have to be performed. We have our kids and husband, it is the reality. They tell me "the Quran and your prayer come first for you". Even when I go out, I first perform my prayer. When we go out for dinner, I say "let's go to the mosque first and pray" or "let's first perform our prayer and then go out" (Halime, 57, Bahçelievler).

In the previous chapter, I mentioned women who devote considerable amount of their time for religious activities and plan their everyday lives according to religious rituals. I demonstrated that some of these women even liken themselves to women who work outside home in a paid job. One of these women, Necmiye from Sincan, apologized continuously about the "messy" condition of her house where we did the interview. She stated that there is no time left after her religious activities to look after her home. What is noteworthy is that she compared herself to her "hodja", Nazife, whose schedule of religious activities is tighter than hers but whose house is perfectly clean:

> If you could go to the house of my hodja and see it: spotless and sparkling. Her advantage is that she does not have to care for manly jobs. My shopping and bazaar work never ends. Pay the bills, visit daughter's school… These take a whole day. For weeks I just come home and go to bed like a man (Necmiye, 50, Sincan).

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[100] This hadith is regarded as weak by many religious scholars including Sancaklı (2001).

In her opinion, a pious woman is somebody exactly like her hodja and she has to be respected since she can manage her household responsibilities and religious performances. This is something Necmiye cannot acquire in her own life. Nevertheless, there is a dynamic which is not to be neglected here: Necmiye does not have a husband so she has to deal with the house alone by herself. Here she compares herself with "men". Her hodja, on the other hand, does not have to look after "man's jobs".

Hüsne, an old-aged woman whose husband lives in the village and who lives with her 30 year old daughter in Sincan states that she is free in terms of deciding what she would do during the day. Hence, she prefers spending most of her time with praying and involving in religious activities instead of doing housework. She points out that:

> I leave whatever I am doing as soon as I hear the call for prayer, *ezan*. After I perform my prayer, I do the housework. If I cannot finish my work, sweeping the house, for example, it is left for tomorrow. I say "aman, if I don't do the sweeping now, will my mother-in-law beat me?" (Hüsne, 66, Sincan).

These quotations underline the fact that women, who do not have any authority figures, like their husbands or mother-in-laws, to whom they would have to obey, are freer to concentrate more on religious practices than daily chores. While this situation bothers Necmiye, Hüsne seems content with her situation.

Another respected pious woman who places her *ibadet* before serving her husband and before the household chores is Emine from Sincan. Emine's sister-in-law regards Emine as a pious woman because she gives priority to her prayer instead of mundane housework but she never gives up this-worldly activities, either: she can still finish up what she has to do. Emine's sister-in-law even gives the example of a woman who fulfills her religious duties despite her drunken husband:

> What is important is being patient as my sister says. To be able to fulfill your religious duties, worshipping rituals, although your husband comes home drunk. My sister (meaning her sister-in-law), for example, while we are painting the house, she performs her daily prayer as soon as the call for prayer is recited. We don't. But we all finish the work at the same time. Although she does an additional performance, we both finish the work at the same time. My sister is way better than us, I mean" (Emine's sister-in-law, 55, Sincan).

In another anecdote, Emine's sister-in-law underlines the fact that Emine both "prays and prepares the meal". She manages to "get the job and ritual done on time". Emine herself also points out her performance of daily prayer as a priority in her life.

The respected pious women who balance their everyday lives and the performance of religious rituals, place *ibadet* in the first place before their children, too. Sakine from Bahçelievler Quran Course indicates her starting the course as a turning point before which her priority had always been her "kids and the family". Here it should be noted that she has three grown up children and she started the course after her husband passed away:

> I live all my day according to my prayer and worship. Before I started the Quran Course, I used to perform my worshipping rituals in a fragmented fashion. I raised my children, I faced many hardships… But I have never quit uttering the name of Allah. With Allah's will, my life is planned according to *ibadet* after the course. My children are of secondary importance. (Sakine, 70, Bahçelievler).

Nazife Hodja, likewise, seems proud of herself on the grounds that she has brought up her three children "better than the other children outside" in spite of the fact that

176

she spends most of her time in performing religious rituals and preaching sermons in different parts of the city:

> My day starts with prayer, with the Morning Prayer. Then I go to sleep again because my day would be very busy. When I wake up, I start the day with prayer again. I perform at least two, at most six genuflexions. The chores at the house are done very practically. There is no lunch. The courses are given. As soon as I go inside from outside, I become the servant (*hizmetli*) of the ones at home. Servant (*hizmetli*) but not the maid (*hizmetçi*)... All day long I am the servant of the people, when I go inside, I am the servant of the family and fondly i*nşallah*. Since I think this way, the day and night pass positively. I don't say "I am already tired, am I going to wash the dishes on top of it?" This is thanks to the beauty of *my way*. Since my cause, *dava*, is beautiful, with the permission of Allah... I am somebody who can't take care of her children too much but many thanks to Allah, my children are better than the ones outside. I have a family at my hand and they are my soldiers (*hizmet eri*) (Nazife Hodja, 48, Sincan).

As the quotation above demonstrates, Nazife Hodja puts forward multiple arguments which legitimize her cause, *dava*[101], as a self-taught preacher who spreads the word of Allah on behalf of one particular religious community, Nur community, and more importantly, which legitimize her "drawback" as a mother. One of her emphases is on the practicality of pious women. In order to be a good Muslim woman, "one has to be practical, clean and intelligent". She criticizes other hodjas on this ground:

> The hodjas, teachers are very good outside but they quarrel with the ones inside, with their husbands and families. Or vice versa. They can't combine

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[101] *Dava* is a concept widely used by leading AKP figures to define their ideal/cause. It refers to a covert agenda related to their Islamist ideology (Aktoprak, 2016). Similarly, the concept of hizmet is used by the Nur community members to define their work. The use of these concepts in her talk indicate that Nazife Hodja is standing close to both AKP and Nur community and feel confident to express her political engagements.

these three features in their persona. If she can integrate all the three, she is the one who can manage everything (Nazife Hodja, 48, Sincan).

Another feature of pious women who receive the respect of other women within their families and religious community is that they plan their everyday lives according to Islamic daily prayer. These women are respected and even envied by other women who want to be as pious as them. Gamze Hodja, the female preacher of Bahçelievler Quran Course, argues that in order to be able to plan daily life according to the Islamic prayer, women have to be practical. She gives her audience suggestions on how to be "always ready for daily prayer" even out of the home. During one of our conversations at a café near the Bahçelievler Mosque, Yelda, a young woman who works as a sales representative in one of the big supermarkets of Turkey, complained that she cannot perform her daily prayers even though she intends to do. Gamze Hodja asked her: "do you go out without your money purse?" She continued with her suggestions on how to plan one's life according to daily prayer*:*

> Always have ablutions before going out of the home; always carry in your bag a calendar page which shows the hours of each prayer; a thin piece of cloth as prayer mat, *seccade*; a thin headscarf and skirt; and a small pocket of sand[102] to get ablutions in case there is no water. This set of things constitutes your spiritual purse (Gamze Hodja, 64, Bahçelievler).

Mahmood (2001) also touches upon the interdependency of daily life activities and religious rituals. According to her, desire to perform prayer is a skill to be developed by the Muslim women. This desire can be cultivated in the course of women's daily routines resulting in the cultivation of a pious self. Hence, according to Mahmood (2001: 832) "ritual prayer is interdependent with activities of daily life". While the preachers in my field study give practical and material suggestions in order to overcome difficulties of negotiating mundane and religious actions (such as carrying

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[102] There is a particular type of ablutions which is called as "*teyemmüm*" in Islam. It is to get ablutions with clean sand or aything of this kind when there is no clean water.

the "equipment" necessary for prayer), the women in Mahmood's study on Egypt focused on the cultivation of the ethical self and advised each other to think about God while engaging in any action including the mundane ones. Mahmood (2001) mentions the example of two women discussing ways to overcome the difficulty of getting up for the Morning Prayer. More knowledgeable of the two women advised the other one to think about God anytime during the day, even when she is engaged in mundane actions and withdraw from acts which are forbidden (*haram*), then she can perform her prayers regularly and strengthen her piety. Unlike them what Gamze Hodja tells the women who cannot get up for the Morning Prayer about how many alarm clocks she sets up in order to be able to get up at dawn.

Similar to my observations, Henkel (2005: 489) claims that prayer "inserts a sequence of practice into everyday life…" He further states that Durkheim's binary opposition of the sacred and the profane cannot be properly applied to the case of daily prayer. For him prayer "introduces a break between the flow of everyday life and a time-space ideally characterized by pure Islamic practice" (Henkel 2005: 497). I partially agree with what he argues based on the data I acquired during my field study with the pious Muslim women. On the one hand, if the testimonies of the women on their negotiation of the religious ritual and daily chores are taken into account, there is an opposition between the sacred and the profane in their lives. Two examples from Sincan masjid and Çukurambar Quran Course demonstrate the opposition between the sacred and the profane in women's religious field. In one of the rooms of the masjid in Sincan, it is written "Let's forget the public while uttering the name of God" (*Hakkı anarken halkı unutalım*) just above the warning "switch off your mobile phones". Likewise, Behiye from Çukurambar states that the whole process of prayer, starting with ablutions, is an intention to leave the material world behind:

When we put our hands and feet into water for God, the daily life, stress etc. change in seconds. As if you pass from one life to the other… All the negativities go away… We hold our hands upwards[103] when we start the prayer. This means we leave everything, the past and this world behind us (Behiye, 64, Çukurambar).

This quotation indicates an important dilemma in the lives of pious women. Above I showed that to be a prestigious pious woman one should fulfil all the household chores and religious duties at the same time. However, while praying, these very same women are expected to leave the mundane activities behind, which is quite hard according to the women I interviewed. Thus, they have to be practical not only while doing their profane chores but also during their sacred activities.

Moreover, most of the pious women in my field sites differentiate between domestic chores, kids, family and religious rituals. When they refer to a respected pious woman, they mention the skill of managing religious and domestic duties. These examples indicate that there is a distinction between the sacred and the profane in the lives of practicing Muslim women. However, this conflicts with the idea of seeing mundane activities such as caring for the house and family as *ibadet*. This is again a continuation of the dilemma which pious women have in their balancing of sacred and the profane.

When we analyze pious women's ideas about whether mundane household chores could be counted as worshipping rituals, we see that most of them see serving to the husband and the children and doing household chores as *ibadet*. Tuğal (2006) calls this process as "ritual transformation". In order to highlight the relationship between the sacred and the profane, I conceptualize this process as "valuation of the profane as sacred" or "sanctifying this-worldly practices" in general. Hence, the distinction between the sacred and the profane becomes blurred. Many of the pious women

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[103] The Islamic prayer starts with an intention followed by raising the hands up at the level of the chest for women (hands close to the ears for men) accompanied by the phrase Allah-u Ekber (God is Great). The palms of the hands face the *Kıble* (the direction of *Kabe*).

whom I interviewed believed that some mundane acts including domestic chores, both men's breadwinning out of the home and women's service to family members at home can be thought of as having a sacred value as *ibadet*.

To begin with a more general example, according to the female preacher of Bahçelievler Quran Course, being pious does not only refer to the performance of religious rituals. Obeying the traffic rules is also a pious act according to Gamze Hodja. Similarly, Necibe Hodja from Çukurambar Quran Course mentioned taking care of the needy and being good to the neighbors as *ibadet*. Most of the examples which my respondents used to support their argument were about household duties: serving to the family, keeping the house clean, preparing legitimate, *halal* meal for the children, men's and (women's) working out of the home to provide *halal* livelihood for the household etc. Nevertheless, when I asked them whether religious and worldly matters differed, most of them thought that the two categories were different:

> Me: Do you think of everyday chores as *ibadet*?
> Melahat: Of course, you are providing your family with a service, it is an *ibadet*.
> Me: Are religious and worldly matters different?
> Melahat: Of course worldly matters are different. But now I am conflicting with my previous answer, aren't I? When it is time for the prayer, you are already doing something. I used to say "first I finish my work and then I pray". Later I learnt that if you die before you perform the daily prayer at its time, you die with debt. Now I am really careful about this. First prayer, then work (Melahat, 51, Çukurambar).

A possible outcome of this view "first prayer then work" could be that the burden of housework and family care is somehow lessened in pious women's lives. On the contrary, the fact of sanctifying mundane practices to the level of religious ritual perpetuates the role of women as mothers, wives and housewives. This process

reinforces women's traditional status in the family/within the household when they involve in these practices such as cleaning the house, caring for children and cooking for the family. If women regard these practices as *ibadet* embracing them as religious duty, they see themselves and other women as pious mothers, wives and housewives. Hence, pious women attribute sacredness to their roles within the family through this discourse and legitimize their subordination through religious discourse. This is connected to the Islamists' idea of women as "keepers of tradition and religion" (e.g. Yazbeck Haddad 1982; Saktanber 2002; Raudvere 2012).

This idea of Islamist discourse on the status of women as "keepers of tradition" conflicts with its emphasis on the public visibility of Muslim women. According to Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1999: 60), as more and more women pray at home "even in the midst of hectic household activity", Islam becomes a domestic religion and women become the "guardians of the faith" by home-based Islam. This can explain why Islamist groups do not openly challenge the idea of home as women's religious place even though they challenge customary Islamic practices and struggle for the "purification" of religion through which Islam at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (*asr-ı saadet*) could be lived. This is critical because women prayed at the mosques during the Prophet's time. Although there is a will to return to *asr-ı saadet*, Islamists in Turkey still confine women's religious rituals with home while they agree to support women's public presence. Islamists in other parts of the Muslim world, encourage women to use mosques for religious lessons (e.g. Mahmood 2001). In Turkey, as mentioned before, some pious Muslim women take part in *sohbet* circles and communal prayers at the mosques in increasing numbers. However, this is not supported by Islamist groups or by Muslim men. Women's participation in this kind of communal religious activities in the public sphere provide pious Muslim women with religious knowledge and expertise on rituals, the Quran, the history of Islam, and gives them a religious perspective on women's and men's roles within the society and on other profane and ethical matters. The field study I conducted demonstrated that acquiring religious knowledge and expertise have a positive

impact on the status of pious women. The following section is an account of the relationship between women's social status and religious knowledge.

## 6.3. Religious knowledge and expertise

I found out that having religious knowledge and expertise results in an increase in the respect that pious women are shown by other pious women; thus leading to the enhancement of their social status. I analyze two groups of religiously knowledgeable women (or religious experts) according to the data I obtained during my field study: the first group of women consists of religious specialists who are official female preachers and self-taught female preachers; and the second group is comprised of prominent women from the *sohbet* congregations which are led by the preachers. I also examine the relationship between these two groups of pious women. Since I gave information on the role of the female preachers in the previous chapter, I briefly mention their status enhancement in this chapter. Here my focus is more on the "lay" women whose knowledge and expertise in religious matters and rituals bring them a respected status and prestige among the participants of the *sohbet* circles.

Scholars like Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1999) demonstrate that young women as "a new cadre of religious experts" have emerged during the Islamic revivalist project in countries like Egypt and Iran. These experts have formal religious education. In Turkey, women with formal religious schooling become state preachers. Next to the official female preachers, there are self-taught preachers in Turkey as in many other Muslim societies. The self-taught preachers acquire religious knowledge or "religious expertise" as Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1999) calls it, through other, more experienced women.

Female preachers of the state and the self-taught preachers do more than preaching as I mentioned in the previous chapters. First of all, they gain status and prestige among

the pious women since they are the ones with religious knowledge and skills. They are the role models for a number of pious women who attend the *sohbet* rituals of these female preachers. Secondly, they also act as psychological counselors and dream interpreters. These additional roles help the preachers build intimate relationships with the participant women. As a result, they gain the status of a friend among their students.

If we examine the second group of knowledgeable women, we see that lay women among the participants of a *sohbet* group can also gain social status and become prestigious on the basis of their level of religious knowledge and expertise. In all of the public religious gatherings including *sohbet* and mukabele groups I visited, there were one or two women who were called as "hodja" by the other women despite the fact that they did not have any formal or informal religious education. They gathered religious knowledge through their long years of Quran course and *sohbet* participation and through their own efforts to read religious books, attend any possible religious occasion and practice religious rituals as much as they could. Sakine and Halime from the Bahçelievler Quran Course; Saliha from the Çukurambar Quran Course and Fadime and Elif from the Sincan masjid are such women whom I came across in the three field sites. Here I demonstrate, with the help of anecdotes from my field notes, how religious knowledge and expertise bring the woman owners of these assets a higher social status and prestige.

To begin with, all of the women who are mentioned above are regular, successful and ambitious students of the preachers. During the *sohbet* and mukabele sessions, they assist the preachers by doing various works such as reciting the verses of the Quran related to the topic of the sermon and reminding the preacher of which subject they were going to discuss. These prestigious women are eager to share their religious knowledge with the other women in the congregation. They have dedicated themselves to the mission of illuminating women who ask them questions and ask for advice about religious as well as moral issues. When they spot a newcomer in the *sohbet* circle, they approach her with warmth and try to make friends with her. For

example, I first met Halime in Bahçelievler Quran Course even before I could introduce myself to the official preacher. She asked me questions to learn who I was. The next woman I met after the preacher was Sakine. After learning that I was a Ph.D. researcher, Sakine gave me photocopies which contain Quran verses and prayers which are to be recited either on holy nights or in the face of certain life events such as sickness, poverty, dispute within the family and for the success of children. As I visited Bahçelievler Quran Course and other field sites in Çukurambar and Sincan, I understood that distributing prayers in Arabic and Turkish, reproduced and photocopied by these women was a common pattern within the *sohbet* groups. I had not seen this behavior pattern at the mosques. The women themselves finance the cost of these photocopies which give the other women an impression that these "hodjas" have all of the religious knowledge written on the photocopies and this perpetuates the respect for the lay women.

Another dimension of religious knowledge sharing is pious women's teaching how to recite the Quran to other women. Most of the women in my sample stated that they learnt how to recite the Quran first from the "mosque hodja" and then from a knowledgeable woman in their neighbourhood. This woman with no religious education but who is able to teach the proper recitation of the Quran exist in the memories of my respondents who call out her with great respect and who pray God for the wellbeing of her although years have passed and they do not have any contact.

The participant women show great respect to the religiously wise women on the basis that they have more religious knowledge than themselves. One of the irregular *sohbet* participants of Bahçelievler Quran Course, Müzeyyen, points out that Sakine is "more knowledgeable" than "them". She continues by stating that she and her friends "pray five times a day, sometimes recite the Quran and fast during the month of Ramadan". Likewise, Birgül, another resident of Bahçelievler district and attendee of the *sohbet* circle, makes a similar statement: "we don't go extreme: we just pray our daily prayer, recite the Quran and fast". What is noteworthy here is that the adjective

"knowledgeable" (*bilgili*) which describes the respected women of the Bahçelievler Quran Course is replaced by "*ilim sahibi*" indicating those women who have religious knowledge in Sincan masjid. For example, after one *sohbet* session, an old aged attendant of the masjid in Sincan told Nazife Hodja that she loved her too much. She continued with the reason why she loved her: "who wouldn't love such an *ilimli* person?" The women in Sincan masjid use the word "*ilimli*" as their preacher belongs to Nur community, one of the central concepts of which is "*ilim*". This distinction between *bilgili* and *ilimli* is one of the marks which point out the differences between the three field sites of this study. *İlim* means "science" like the word *bilim* which shares the same linguistic root with the word *bilgili*, knowledgeable. The reason why women in Sincan masjid prefer using the word *ilim* instead of *bilim* is a discursive choice. *İlim* is the Arabic equivalent of the word *bilim* which is Turkish and *ilim* is consciously used by the Islamist groups in Turkey, especially by religious communities such as Nur community. On the other hand, in Çukurambar and Bahçelievler where pious women are from more secular and urban backgrounds prefer using the word *bilgili*.

What is also remarkable during the *sohbet* and mukabele sessions is the choice of seat of these "knowledgeable" women. They sit very close to the female preacher. This is quite notable in Sincan masjid where the preacher sits on an armchair whereas Fadime and Elif sit on the floor like other women do; however, they sit right beside the armchair of the preacher. These two women are workers at Sincan Municipality and the Local Government and they decided to organize a *sohbet* session at lunch time for the working women. Hence, they mobilized their workmates and the preacher for this ritual. They are among the most active women in the congregation organizing the purchase of religious books for the group and organizing charity for the needy in the neighborhood. Likewise, Saliha, a retired primary school teacher from the Çukurambar Quran Course, also sits in the front seat near the preachers. She is a respected woman among the mukabele participants and in her neighborhood. She persuaded nearly all of her neighbors in her apartment

186

building to attend the Quran Course. Saliha and her neighbors told me that she is the "hodja" in the apartment where they themselves organize Friday meetings at homes during which Saliha recites the Quran and prayers. Saliha highlighted that one of her motivations to come to the Quran Course was to be able to lead their own religious meetings held at homes. Similar to Fadime from Sincan masjid, Saliha is also a charity organizer along with Seher who is also a retired teacher[104]. The same pattern of physical proximity of the respected pious women to the preacher can also be observed in Bahçelievler Quran Course. This physical proximity reflects itself in the social proximity between the lay women and the preachers. These women spend time together as friends out of the religious space; invite the preachers to their homes and know each other's private lives.

On another note, there are some siginificant differences between these religiously knowledgeable women across my three field sites. In Sincan, the leading women of the *sohbet* session are younger and working women who, in spite of their tight schedules, put extra effort to organize and attend these *sohbet* sessions. They apparently have political motivations which can be tracked in their discourse containing concepts of *dava* and *hizmet*. On the other hand, knowledgable and prestigious women in Çukurambar and Bahçelievler are older and/or retired women who started attending and organising these sessions more as a hobby or pastime activity.

To sum up this section, the ethnographic field study I conducted shows that having religious knowledge and expertise enhances the status of lay pious women who do not have any formal religious education like the way this factor elevates the status of the female preachers. This is clearly seen in the fact that the participants of *sohbet* groups call these women as "hodja". It means that they are shown a similar level of

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[104] Organizing charity is another indicator of elevated status among the pious Muslim women. Piety and status are evaluated according to the charities organized. They are not determined according to how much you give but according to how you mobilize women. What is more, if you are a respected and prestigious woman, you can mobilize more resources: it is a two-way process.

respect shown to the preachers by the participant pious women. This is one of the ways how religious capital- as a form of cultural capital- is turned into social capital. In the following part, I discuss whether the performance of religious rituals on its own affects the social status of pious women like having religious knowledge.

## 6.4. Religious ritual performance

Some scholars indicate that religious rituals are spheres for pious women to assert their agency and to socialize with other women[105] (e.g. Hegland 1998; Hutson 2001; Osanloo 2009; Tewari Jassal 2014). The Islamic pilgrimage (Hajj) to the holy Kaba and the non-compulsory short visit to the sacred places of Islam (Umrah); daily, congregational and supererogatory prayers; Quran recitation; and participation in *sohbet* circles are crucial rituals which I examined in relation to their impacts on the social standing of pious Muslim women.

Islamic pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca and Medina and its relationship to women's status has been discussed in scholarly works (e.g. O'Brien 1999; Cooper 1999; Delaney 1990). Equally important is the optional and shorter visit to the holy Kaba, Umrah, in the Turkish religious field. It is demonstrated in previous studies that having been to pilgrimage elevates the status of the Muslims who performed the ritual[106].

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[105] One example to this is the study of Hegland (1998) who examines Pakistani Shia woman's mourning rituals. Peshawar women are highly secluded in Pakistan and they remain silent and controlled under strict patriarchal family structure. Hence, they choose to express resistance through their body by taking part in Muharram rituals of mourning. However, this resistance is not an implicit one: pious women acquire "religious permission to enjoy an active life outside their homes" by participating in this particular rituals of commemoration (p. 253).

[106] For example O'Brien (1999) claims that *bori* (traditional healer) women of Nigeria utilize the symbolic and material capital they bring back from Mecca to better their status and prestige and to show that they are more pious than other women who have not performed pilgrimage. One of the ways these women enhance their status is distributing gifts from Saudi Arabia to their friends and clients. Cooper (1999), in her analysis of Maradi (one of the largest cities in Niger) women who

In the Turkish religious field, having performed the pilgrimage brings status changes into the lives of pious men and women. For instance Delaney (1990), in her analysis of pilgrimage in Turkey, states that after having been to the Hajj, men acquire an elevated status as "*hajji*" and they are treated with respect. Delaney's study, however, demonstrates that the Hajj does not bring any visible differences to the lives of women and that being "*hajji*" does not carry any privileges for women in Turkey. Contrary to Delaney's findings, I argue that there are significant changes in the lives of women who have been to the Hajj and Umrah in the Turkish context although pious women do not mention any status differences brought by this performance.

I did not have the opportunity to observe the effects of the Hajj or Umrah on women's status since I did not follow women before and after their experience of pilgrimage. Nevertheless, I asked my respondents about their Hajj or Umrah experience and understood that this Islamic ritual is very crucial in pious women's lives. I observed that this is frequently a matter of conversation in the religious sphere: during small talks in between the prayers at the mosques and before, during and after *sohbet* at the Quran courses and masjids. Many women have been to Umrah and some women have been to *Hajj*. Others are willing to perform *Hajj* or Umrah. Hence, women talk about either their experiences in Mecca and Medina or their plans and dreams about going to the "holy Islamic lands".

When I looked at the relationship between pious women's social status and the performance of the Hajj or Umrah in the testimonies of my respondents, I found out that there are not any visible differences in the social status of women except the fact that they are being called as "*hajji*". However, not all of the women are called with this title. One of my respondents even thinks that it is vanity if somebody calls

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narrate their experiences of Hajj in an oral genre, argues that these women make their piety publicly visible through this particular narration of their pilgrimage. Otherwise, women's piety would be neglected because most of the women, especially the elderly, in that society have no access to Islamic capital and their religious practices are seen by themselves and by men as "innovation and particularity" (p. 104). She also finds out that having completed the Muslim pilgrimage is a sign of "commercial success" since it is an expensive ritual for many Hausa people in Niger.

herself and others as "*hajji*" and she further explains why there is no elevation in the status of the Hajj and Umrah performers:

> You know, everybody says "aunt *hajji*", "uncle *hajji*"… It is said that this would be classified as vanity, don't call people like this. And also, today there are too many people who go there. Perhaps it was more acceptable before since there were a few people who performed it. Now, too many people, nearly everywhere… (Nazik, 66, Sincan).

Although my respondents did not mention any status elevation or decline after pilgrimage, they stated that there have been changes in their lives. Some of them started covering their heads while most of them said that they began daily prayers and applying auto-control to their own behaviours and in their relations with others. We can say that there is a move towards a more pious life in the lives of women who have been to Mecca and Medina. What is more, some of the women started performing congregational prayers such as Friday prayer, funeral prayer and festival prayers after they see that women also perform these public congregational prayers in Mecca. Some women stated that there was no change in their lives after they had been to the Hajj. For instance there are "hajji" women who do not cover their heads. One of these women was the sister of a state preacher. The preacher came to one of her tafsir classes with her sister and she called her "my modern *hajji* sister". There was another woman whom I met at the Kocatepe Mosque. I had a small talk with her who called herself a "modern *hajji*", too. She stated that:

> My sister started wearing a headscarf after pilgrimage. I can't wear a headscarf. There is a whistle in my ears when I cover my head. I am a modern *hajji* (Friday Prayer, Kocatepe Mosque Ankara).

As it can be seen, the definition of "modern *hajji*" can either be used to legitimize one's own behavior or ironically criticize behavior which is not as pious as the one expected from a "*hajji*". Here, it is important to note that the modern hajji notion is unique to my central Ankara sites, Bahçelievler, Çukurambar or Kocatepe as in the above quotation. I have not seen any pious woman defining herself as modern hajji in Sincan. While being hajji may be prestigious for a pious woman in Sincan, it seems that it does not bring status enhancement for a woman in Bahçelievler. Women from secular backgrounds may feel the need to define themselves as modern. A similar example is from a prominent pious woman, Saliha, from Çukurambar. After giving her answers to my interview questions about her living Islam, she felt the need to add many times that she is a modern Muslim:

> Don't think of me as an Islamist reactionary (*irticacı*) by looking at what I said. I am a Kemalist (*Atatürkçü*) and modern retired teacher. But I don't allow anybody to speak ill of Islam. (Saliha, 60, Çukurambar)

The women who haven't been to the Hajj or Umrah yet state that they have been waiting for either a family member to be ready for the holy journey; their children to grow up; not to have any responsibilities and worries to leave behind or to save enough money for the journey. Hence, Muslim women in Turkey perform the Islamic pilgrimage usually at later ages. Here a joint effect of the respect for the elderly and for the pilgrims might be thought as status enhancer for pious women (and men). However, a detailed study might give further insights on the relationship between Muslim pilgrimage, age and pious Muslims' status within the Turkish context.

One of the main hypotheses of this dissertation is that performing religious rituals, namely prayers, Quran recitation and *sohbet* session attendance bring pious women respect and prestige in their closer social networks. The field study I conducted

demonstrated that the effect of religious ritual performance on the status of pious women does not operate *on its own*. As I discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, the interaction of religious ritual performance with other factors such as religious knowledge and negotiation of everyday life and religious activities and as I mention below, the interaction of religious practice with factors such as display of emotions during prayer, have an impact on pious women's status enhancement.

At the discursive level, pious women quote and believe in the power of reciting certain Quran verses and performing supererogatory prayers to bring prestige to the performer. Hüsne, a respected pious woman from Sincan states that her hodja told her "Sister Hüsne, you are a woman whose hands have to be kissed, you are different" and adds immediately afterwards:

> There are some particular chapters (*surah*) in the Quran. When you recite them, both angels and human beings respect you as you walk by. They show you respect without being conscious, without knowing you. It is written in the Quran (Hüsne, 66, Sincan).

A similar reference is made about the effect of supererogatory prayers, especially the supererogatory night prayer, on a Muslim's prestige:

> "A believer's honor and prestige lie in spending her nights with worshipping; her dignity and self-respect lie in her fullness of the heart and in not asking anything from others[107]". (Nazife Hodja, 48, Sincan).

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[107] Müminin şeref ve itibarı gecelerini ibadetle geçirmesinde; izzet ve haysiyeti de, gönül tokluğu içinde bulunup insanlara el açmamasındadır.

This Hadith quoted by the female preacher of Sincan masjid during the *sohbet* demonstrates that pious Muslims *believe* that they would gain prestige when they perform supererogatory prayers at night. Nevertheless, most of the women in my field study do not refer to any status elevation as a result of their ritual performances. Some of them mention that they are shown respect by other pious people but they do not link this fact with their religious ritual performance or with their being pious. In effect, pious women intentionally avoid mentioning themselves as respected and prestigious since they think it is a sin to praise oneself and one's performance of worshipping rituals. In sum, despite mentioning in the *sohbet* sessions the prestige gained through spending nights with worshipping, pious women reject that their undertaking of religious rituals brings prestige to them. As a rule of manner, they do not want to be seen to instrumentalize religion.

In addition to the performance of supererogatory rituals, display of emotions during prayer is a factor indicating the relationship between ritual and status. According to Mahmood (2001: 830), "excellence and virtuosity in piety" are measured based on certain attitudes and emotions during the performance of prayers such as "sincerity" (*ihlas*), "humility" (*hushu*) and "feelings of virtuous fear and awe (*takva*)". These standards were named by my respondents, too, when they evaluated the characteristics of a pious woman. What they underlined was the difficulty achieving these qualities and making them into habits in their ritual practices. Thus, if a woman prays in accordance with these virtues, she is regarded as a highly devoted Muslim. Eventually, a pious woman gains respect and prestige in the eyes of other women who want to have these qualities in their worshipping and religious rituals.

However, these virtues cannot be observed easily and assessed properly. It cannot be known whether a Muslim really has sincerity, humility and fear while she is praying. Hence, regarding religious ritual performance, a Muslim's piety can be measured on the basis of the frequency of her ritual performances and other observable acts during religious rituals. If you cry during prayer, for example, you are regarded as a pious woman who cries out of fear and love of God. One young woman I met during my

field study in Bahçelievler Quran Course, Yelda, told the female preacher that she cannot pray regularly but when she prays, she cries a lot during prayer. There were also women who cried while a religious hymn, *ilahi*, was being sung at Çukurambar Quran Course by a female preacher whose voice was so touchy. This state preacher was a respected and loved woman by the Çukurambar congregation. The fact that women who can recite the Quran and *ilahi* well can gain a higher status among the congregation of pious women is something that I also encountered during my field study.

Although pious women do not become prestigious directly through their performance of Islamic rituals, I think that they might receive the respect of their family members by their religious practices. I develop this argument based on my observation in the field that many of the pious women pray and recite the Quran on behalf of their husbands and children. When I asked my respondents whether they prayed and recited the Quran for the wellbeing, success and salvation of their children and husbands, nearly all of the women answered this question positively. I claim that this may enhance the status of pious women within the family in the eyes of the family members. Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1999: 59) argue that "women make up the laxity of other family members" with their religious acts. According to them, pious women, as mothers and wives, are seen as the signifiers of the family's piety and protectors of "the religious identity of their family" (p. 59). What is noteworthy here is that pious women perpetuate the traditional status of women as "keepers of tradition and religion" through their religious practices, especially performance of the Quran recitation on behalf of the family members, in addition to their role as mothers whose duty is to teach Islam to the children.

Another reason why women perform religious rituals on behalf of their family members was stated vividly by a state preacher when I asked her about women's shrine visiting in Turkey. This female preacher points out the importance of social roles given to the women by the society:

194

> If a mother is held responsible for her kid who is unsuccessful at the school, she will of course visit shrines and recite the Surah of Yasin 40 times… Or there are many women who phone us to ask for a happiness amulet (Female preacher, Ankara Muftiate).

This explanation underlines the fact that pious women try to do anything they can within the confines of religious rituals, in order to protect their status as "good mothers" and "good wives".

## 6.5. Transformation of social status into other forms of capital

Until this point, I showed how pious women gain prestige through their religious performance. This prestige is mainly used again in the religious environment of these women. Though it is limited, women use this prestige in other spheres, too. Family and the private sphere of the home is the other most visible area pious women use their social status gained through religion. In a sense, they gain prestige in the public sphere and use it in the private sphere.

One of the most common uses of this pattern is women who cannot go out of their homes easily use religious activities as their excuse to go out. In one occasion I go to Hacı Bayram Mosque with Fadime, who is a 65 year old woman from Çukurambar. She normally does not go out. However, on some Fridays she goes to Hacı Bayram Mosque to attend Friday prayers. On these visits, she visits the shops in Ulus, buys stuff for herself and her grandchildren, feeds the pigeons, etc. In other words, she experiences the city on these Friday visits.

Bourdieu (1986) proposes that different forms of capital can be converted into each other. In my field study I observed conversions of religious capital into symbolic

capital (as social status) - which I explained above- and of this symbolic capital into social and cultural capital. An example of the conversion of prestige as symbolic capital into another form of capital, in this case cultural capital and even economic capital- although her aim is not to make money- comes from Bahçelievler Quran Course. One of the religiously knowledgable pious women of the congregation, Sakine, who had a tough life full of material difficulties, has a religious poem book published. She never thought of having her own book published. As a result of her active involvement during the *sohbet* sessions, photocopying pieces of paper on which there are Quranic verses, hadith and some prayers and distributing them to the women who come to the Quran Course, she received the respect of participant women and their families. These people encouraged her to publish a book composed of her religiously motivated poems. She is now thinking of publishing her second book which she will name as "Light" with the aim of illuminating people.

Another common story among women I met in public religious activities is that their husbands are negative to their religious activities. After some time, when men see the perseverance of their wives, they start to feel more positive towards their piety and in some cases women transfer some of the religious knowledge they gained to their husbands.

The most obvious example of the conversion of symbolic capital into social capital is charity organization activities of pious women with high religious capital. In all of my three field sites, both the preachers and the prestigious pious women of the congregations invite the participants of the *sohbet* sessions, Quran recitations and communal prayers to donate money to individuals, religious associations or faith-based organizations. It is very typical that the leading pious women from the congregation collect donations before or after the meetings either for people from their neighbourhood or for other needy people in remote parts of Ankara. They sometimes invite women to attend charity events ranging from visiting the people in need, to attending charity lunchs or sales of religious associations. For example, one of the female preachers of Bahçelievler Quran Course announced that she would visit

the earthquake victims of 2011 Van Earthquake who were offered shelter in Ankara and asked the women whether someone would like to accompany her. One woman from the congregation agreed and they left together after the *sohbet* session.

Another striking example is from Bahçelievler Quran Course. In one of the *sohbet* sessions, the female preacher, Gamze Hodja, invited the participants to a charity lunch to be held in Keçiören, a conservative neighbourhood of Ankara. As several members of the congregation did, I also attended this lunch organised by Başak Vakfı, which is an association founded by the retired preachers of the DRA and which has ties to AKP elites. To exemplify this connection, the first office flat of the association in GOP district of Çankaya, an upper class neighbourhood, was donated by the mother of Ali Babacan who was among the founding elites of AKP and who was the Minister of Economy and Deputy Prime Minister. During this visit, I observed that wives of several ministers and MPs from AKP attended this event. Although there was not a direct praise of any political organization during the *sohbet* sessions in Bahçelievler, through these charity events pious women get in touch with political groups.

Unlike Bahçelievler or Çukurambar, I can say that the preacher in Sincan and the *sohbet* attendees were more politically engaged. During *sohbet* sessions, the female preacher praised leading AKP figures and prayed for their lasting power.

In this chapter, I tried to explore the impact of religious ritual performance on the social status of pious women in three field sites in Ankara. An analysis of the ethnographic field study based on participant observation and the interviews I conducted with pious women from three districts of Ankara displayed that performing religious rituals such as Hajj and Umrah; praying daily and supererogatory prayers, attending the *sohbet* sessions and reciting the Quran, does not *directly* bring prestige and respect to the practitioner women in their social circles. What I argue is that, firstly, religious rituals in conjunction with elements such as daily life activities and religious knowledge have a prominent impact on the

social status of pious women. Women's ability to manage daily life chores and religious rituals enhances their status as both pious and prestigious women within their closer social environments. Performing prayers on its own is not enough to make a pious woman prestigious: a pious woman gains prestige and respect when she both prays regularly and does not neglect "her duties" at home which are assigned to her by patriarchal values. Secondly, I claim that religious knowledge and expertise which are embedded in the performance of religious rituals, determines the social status of pious women within a *sohbet* group. The women with more religious knowledge are named as "hodja" and they are shown great respect by other pious women. Lastly, I argue that Muslim pilgrimage does not bring any status enhancement to the pious women whom I observed during my field study despite the fact that it leads to significant changes in the lives of pious women.

# CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation I investigated the relationship between pious women's Islamic rituals and their social status by using the data I obtained from an ethnographic field study in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. My purpose was to outline the characteristics of women's religious field via the case study of Ankara; to find out the status of pious women within the Islamic practices provided to them by the religious field; discuss their levels of agency, and to explain the motives of pious Muslim women to practice Islamic rituals. These basic purposes led me to broader theoretical concerns about the social status of women in Muslim contexts; the relationship between pious women's agency and their performance of Islamic practices; and their negotiations with the patriarchy and patriarchal interpretations of Islam which subordinate them.

Firstly, I aimed to examine the status of Sunni Muslim women within the religious practices of Islam in the Turkish religious field via an ethnographic field study in three districts of Ankara. After discussing the secondary and subordinated status of women in the orthodox religious practices of Islam, I demonstrated that pious Sunni Muslim women in Turkey still choose to be followers of the orthodox religious practices performed in the public with a congregation despite a variety of other practices and rituals offered in the Turkish religious field. The religious field in Turkey includes religious activities such as worshipping at home; Quran recitation

meetings of women at homes or at mosques; Quran learning and other theological courses offered by the Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Turkish state; *sohbet* circles of religious communities; ceremonies performed by religious orders; and seminars and performative activities of "pious celebrities" in big halls and on TV. In the last two decades, these religious activities and religion in the public sphere have become more visible as a result of the transformation of the political field and society in general under the influence of the Islamist governments of AKP. During this time, women's participation in public religious practices are supported and encouraged by the DRA the influence of which has been increasing gradually parallel to the influence of Islamist politics in the country.

Despite these developments in the religious and political field which made it easier and preferable for women to become religiously active, I argue that pious Muslim women challenge their subordinated status within these practices even though it is not a direct struggle with doctrines and actors of religious orthodoxy. Pious Muslim women's claiming of public communal rituals and prayer leadership is a phenomenon which has been experienced in other contexts such as South Africa (Ismail 2002). Although most pious women challenge patriarchal interpretations of religion within the limits of patriarchal bargains, there are also direct struggles in other parts of the world by Muslim feminists who lead Islamic congregations and undertake communal rituals which they are not supposed to perform (e.g. Mattson 2008; Hassan 2001; Wadud 1999).

Women and men have the same status as believers before God in Islam. However, the reflection of this statement does not have this egalitarian attitude in practice. One of the ways through which gender inequalities are created and recreated is shaping and controlling women's performance of religious practices. Women are excluded from the most important religious rituals of Islam and from the religious leadership positions. These are often rituals performed communally at the public religious places. In Islam, women are excluded from Friday and festival prayers based on an orthodox interpretation of Islamic scripts and tradition although the Quran does not

discriminate between women and men in its commands. For example, women's performance of shrine visiting which is also a public religious act performed outside home, is even conceived as heteropraxy and superstitious by religious specialists of official Islam. By use of the discourse "a woman's place of religious practice is her home", pious women are expected and encouraged to pray at home. This secures the fact that Muslim women do not interact with men in the public religious places. Instead they stay at home, pray at home and look after the household and family members as "good and pious" mothers and wives.

The orthodox Islamic tradition argues that public prayers are not obligatory (*farz*) to women. They are exempt from these practices because they are mothers and housewives who have numerous responsibilities within their households. Thus, it is a permission (*ruhsat*) given by God to women. This argument is supported both by pious men and women alike. This issue is put forward by pious women regarding their mosque attendance and Quran recitation practices which are occasions out of the home. An interesting observation regarding women's communal public prayer participation is to be highlighted here. While women are discouraged to attend Friday and religious festival prayers, they are encouraged to attend teravih prayers which are not obligatory but supererogatory night prayers. Teravih prayers take place during Ramadan after the night prayer usually at the mosques and take longer than other communal public prayers. Hence, I think that the problem is not directly and solely about women's public presence. This fact indicates that women's responsibilities which are generally fulfilled by the time of the teravih prayer play a more determining role in which rituals women should perform and which they should not. The example of women's performance of teravih prayers also shows that women's exclusion from certain religious rituals is also about men's discomfort with pious women's reclaiming of religious practices and places which have been regarded as belonging to men's sphere of religion.

Another exclusionary practice is that women cannot hold leadership positions in Islam according to orthodox precepts. A woman cannot be a prayer leader (*imam*)

because of her biological and "emotional" deficiencies. What is more, when women take part in public religious rituals, they are segregated performing the ritual in a separate section of the mosque or at the back of the mosque, church and the synagogue (Davidman 2001). All of these facts demonstrate that pious women have a subordinated status within the religious rituals of Islam. However, pious women are not equally subordinate in every religious ritual. While women are subordinate and secondary in the Islamic rituals at the mosques which are traditionally male religious spaces, pious women act more comfortable at the Quran courses and shrines. In my opinion, this might be because these places are constructed as women's places of religious practice like mosques are conceived as men's places of worship (e. g. Woodlock 2010; Reda 2004; Tapper 1990).

I also argue that pious women's religious rituals are controlled and devalued in addition to their being secondary and excluded. The control of women's ritual practices by the DRA officials, religious communities, pious men and pious women themselves results in control and subordination of pious women. Sunni Muslim women's religious practices are devalued as "heterodox", "folk Islam" or "customary". What is more, the way women perform orthodox practices is also devalued. This indicates that the definitions of what is Islamic and what is customary are not stable over time and space; they are shifting (Johnson 2009).

The process of devaluation of certain rituals are conceptualized and legitimized as "purification" of Islam and Islamic practices by Islamist groups (Johnson 2009). Holy (1988) demonstrates that among the Berti in Darfur men's Islamic rituals are seen as "*din*" and "orthodox" whereas women's religious rituals are classified as customary so not as prestigious as men's. This is further internalized by women. Torab (1996) argues that women agree with the idea that some of their religious practices are superstitious (*hurafe*) or un-Islamic novelties (*bidat*) in order to be regarded as "good Muslims" in the eyes of male Islamic scholars and pious men. Pious women in my field study also internalize the fact that the way men perform

202

Islamic rituals is the appropriate way of Islamic performance. Hence, they also value and at times mimic men's performance.

Pious women, although they are subordinated within religious rituals of Islam through processes of exclusion, segregation and devaluation as exemplified in my study, continue to be adherents of patriarchal interpretations of Islam and perform Islamic practices. What is noteworthy here is that number of women who perform public religious practices increase considerably despite the orthodox idea that women do not have to take part in public communal prayers. There are challenges all around the world to claim women's right to participate in and lead public congregational prayers. Increasing numbers of women's Umrah and Hajj visits, which introduce pious women different ways of living Islam and performing Islamic ritual, have a vital impact on pious women's will to take part in public prayers in Turkey. Women's access to religious resources like female preachers' *sohbet* circles and religious knowledge attainment through channels of mosque participation and mass media also play significant role in this transformation.

However, pious women's claim to public religious practices is still within the confines of Islamic modesty and manners (*adap*). Women's traditional role as housewives and mothers determine the extent and form of women's religious ritual performance. Hence, we should highlight the discrepancy between the discourse and practice here. At the discursive level, women state the popular traditional belief that a woman's place of worship is her home. Nevertheless, at the level of practice, devout Muslim women go out of their homes and pray at the public religious places and some of them even challenge their husbands and male congregants to pray the male-dominated communal prayers.

What Mernissi (1987) writes in the "Introduction to the Revised Edition" of *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society,* seems valid for this apparent dilemma between what pious women say and what they actually do:

When analyzing the dynamics of the Muslim world, one has to discriminate between two distinct dimensions: what people actually do, the decisions they make, the aspirations they secretly entertain or display through their patterns of consumption, and the discourses they develop about themselves, more specifically the ones they use to articulate their political aims. The first dimension is about reality and its harsh time-bound laws, and how people adapt to pitilessly rapid change; the second is about self-presentation and identity building (Mernissi 1987: viii).

Following this quotation of Mernissi, I think that what pious women say reflects their will to identify themselves as pious Muslim women who are obedient to God, their husbands and families, whereas what they do reflects their agency to act as pious Muslim women who question the unequal treatment of orthodox Islamic precepts towards their living Islam.

Here it is important to note that women's participation in the public orthodox religious practices does not necessarily indicate that they are subordinated by Islam itself. It does not simply indicate that pious women are empowered by their public presence at the mosques and Quran courses and by their struggle with religious orthodoxy, either. Pious women show different forms and levels of agency as they undertake Islamic practices in the public religious places. When pious women challenge orthodox Islam's norms hindering women's presence at mosques, praying communal prayers and prayer leadership; their agency takes the form of resistance agency but they also exhibit compliant agency as they "do religion" to form pious selves by complying with these very norms which they challenge. The "doing religion" framework of Avishai (2008) is one of the central theoretical viewpoints which I employed while I tried to build connections between piety and agency of Muslim women within the Turkish religious field. Pious women in my fieldsites in Ankara also have instrumental agency when they gain extra-religious ends such as socialization, going out of home and building solidarity with other Muslim women.

Secondly, in this study I draw connections between pious women's social status which I conceptualized in terms of prestige and respect and their performance of religious practices. I found out that performing Islamic practices does conditionally bring prestige to pious women. Initially, pious women need to be socially active in religious occasions, particularly knowledgable in religious matters and active in disseminating this knowledge they have in Islamic rules and manners. Moreover, they also need to fulfil traditional gender roles attributed to "proper womanhood" such as being clean and practical in organizing household chores and child rearing, and being planned in everyday life, both in sacred and profane matters. Hence, there are multiple burdens on women who are pious and prestigious.

Pious women acquire intensive religious knowledge either through university education as in the case of state preachers or through self-education as in the case of self-taught female preachers of certain religious communities and self-taught lay women. There are studies about female preachers in the Turkish context but they do not examine the relationship between religious knowledge and preachers' social status. They often concentrate on female preachers' role in shaping Muslim women and their relationship with secularism. Maritato (2015), for example, focuses on the development of female preachers' work in Turkey as an occupation. She claims that Turkish state via the female preachers not only provide women with the correct religious knowledge but also with moral support. One of the central findings of this study is especially crucial in understanding the relationship between pious women's social standing and their religious practices. I found out that attendees of female preachers' *sohbet* circles who increase their level of religious knowledge by themselves acquire the status of "hodja" (religious teacher) and are shown respect by other participants. Hence, this thesis contributes to the studies which examine the importance of religious knowledge in pious women's lives.

Excessive performance of religious practices which include elements such as display of emotions during religious rituals; practicing supererogatory prayers next to the obligatory daily prayers and having qualities like reciting the Quran or a religious

hymn properly also contribute to pious women's social status. For example, Mahmood (2005) who conceptualizes rituals as methods of developing pious selves demonstrates that women in mosque movement in Egypt during the late 1990s consciously utilized emotions such as modesty, humility and fear of God in the way to become docile Muslim women. Pious women of my study also regarded emotions such as humility and fear of God- displayed in the form of tears during prayer- as signs of piety and parallel to Mahmood's (2005) finding, cultivating a moral self was also crucial to the piety of pious women in my field study.

According to my findings, pious women's balancing of mundane and religious responsibilities in their everyday lives is one of the striking aspects of the relationship between prestige and Islamic ritual performance. A woman who manages the household chores and family care and creates time for extra Islamic activities such as supererogatory prayers, *sohbet* attendance or Quran recitation in addition to fulfilling the obligatory rituals of Islam, is respected by individuals in her close social environment. This woman is regarded both pious and prestigious; she is a "good and pious" wife, housewife and mother. Modern pious woman who, as a mother and wife, provides the needs of the household and the family (and if she works outside home, who is expected to earn money) has to fulfill the duties of her religion and is expected to be the keeper of Islamic tradition and culture. This is a reflection of how Islamist agenda pictures women (e.g. Yazbeck Haddad 1982; Saktanber 2002; Raudvere 2012). In her efforts to balance these duties and expectations, her status is affected by her abilities of negotiation. My field study showed that in this negotiation process pious and prestigious women are attributed some characteristics such as being practical. Moreover, most of them count mundane chores of the household and family care as *ibadet*, that is, an Islamic worshipping ritual, when it is performed with a proper statement of intention which indicates that you are performing that act for the sake of God.

While giving these reasons for their religious ritual performance, pious women in my sample underlined their belief in the idea that Islamic action is not instrumental, that

206

is, they practice Islamic rituals for the sake of God. However, they also named gaining religious merit and other social benefits of practicing Islam. Their answers show that religious action can also have an interest-oriented nature. Following Bourdieu, I argue that discourses such as "practicing religion for the sake of God" hide the interest in religious action and that they help religions achieve legitimation by the invisibility of their interest-oriented characteristics. Hence, religions become strong media of domination.

Here it is important to underline that this study does not claim that pious women instrumentalize, in a pragmatic manner, their performance of religious practices in the way to become high-status and prestigious Muslims. What pious Muslim women do is a part of the strategy called as "patriarchal bargaining" by Kandiyoti (1988) while they are performing their religion, that is, while they are "doing religion" (Avishai 2008). Hence, Muslim women become prestigious and respected through their performance of religious rituals combined with certain factors mentioned above but it also perpetuates their subordination by strengthening women's traditional roles of motherhood and wifedom according to the patriarchal Islamic precepts and doctrines.

The testimonies of pious women along with my observations on their treatment towards the pious and prestigious women support this argument. They also reveal the fact that pious women in my sample think of the sacred and the profane as binary oppositions. However, they contradict with their attitude when asked a question about whether a mundane act such as preparing the meal for the family could be counted as a worshipping act, *ibadet*. This sanctification of the profane acts is a reflection of the Islamist politics on the everyday life practices of pious women. The valuation of some of women's mundane household chores as *ibadet,* that is, as "sacred" is consciously done by Islamic revivalists all over the Muslim world. The teachings of Hasan al-Banna in Egypt, Ruhollah Khomeini in Iran and Abu al-A'la Mawdudi in India/Pakistan are examples to this attempt to bring together the sacred and the profane, in the case of the mosque and the politics (Abu-Rabi' 1987). What is

critical here is that by valuing the profane acts of domestic chores and service to husband and children, they are valuing the traditional role assigned to them by patriarchal society and Islam as a tradition.

As Bloch (1974) suggests, rituals misrepresent reality so they can be instrumental in controlling individuals and groups (cited in Bowen 1989). Characteristics which define who a pious woman is (such as practical in negotiating the sacred and the profane; obedient in serving her husband and children etc.) cover the reality of women's domination within the family and society. These two mechanisms at work surrounding women's Islamic ritual performance are interdependent and utilized by Islamic patriarchal ideologies to legitimize men's domination over pious women. On the other hand, pious women perpetuate the Islamic patriarchal system by taking part in religious rituals.

My methodological stance is consisted of an interpretative approach focusing on understanding the meanings women attach to their religious practices and a feminist approach aiming at uncovering patriarchal power relations which lie behind pious women's performance of religion. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews were the methods I employed in order to be able to observe women in their everyday settings and to gain a deeper insight into their experiences of religion. I think that these methods and the methodological approach of this study were very beneficial for the study of pious women in a Muslim context. Interviews alone would not expose the power dynamics restricting women believers of orthodox Islam and struggles and negotiations of pious women against and with the patriarchal religious structure.

This field study which lasted more than two years covered women's religious practice performances in the central mosques of Ankara and in the neighborhood mosques and Quran courses of three districts in Ankara namely Bahçelievler, Çukurambar and Sincan. As my aim was to examine pious women from middle class backgrounds, I chose these three districts. Hence, the findings and discussions of this

dissertation focus on the experiences of middle class pious women and the piety investigated throughout this dissertation is an urban piety. What is more, pious women in my study belong to Sunni Islam and do not differentiate along ethnic lines. Still, there are various differences between the piety experiences of women across my fieldsites. The major difference is linked to the level of urbanization between my fieldsites. While Bahçelievler and Çukurambar are at the more urban end of an urban-rural scale, Sincan lies at the more rural end. Firstly, I observed resistance agency more in Bahçelievler and Çukurambar which is an urban phenomenon. For example, resistant practices such as attending Friday and festival prayers exist in these two sites especially in Bahçelievler Quran course. On the other hand, I have not observed such experiences in Sincan. This is related to the profile of attendees of Quran courses and *sohbet* sessions in these sites. In Bahçelievler and Çukurambar women I met are older women who are mostly retired or wives of state bureaucrats and they do not have young children whom they have to look after. Most of them stated that they started attending public religious rituals after a certain age. What is more, they are more accustomed to living in the city. On the other hand, in Sincan there are younger women in *sohbet* sessions. Many of these women are working women and they attend these sessions in their lunch breaks or at the weekends. In Sincan pious women seem to have stronger political and religious motivations. In line with this, the *sohbet* sessions in Sincan are more formal than Bahçelievler and Çukurambar. These differences can also be observed in the political motivations of women. In Sincan, pious women I met are more politically engaged. Most of them feel themselves close to the ruling AKP and feel confident to declare their engagement. On the other hand, in Bahçelievler and Çukurambar attendees of *sohbet* sessions and Quran courses are from secular backgrounds, avoid disclosing their political views and from time to time feel the need to tell that they are modern pious women. This can be tracked in their discourses. As I mentioned above, while women use the term *ilimli* in Sincan, they use *bilgili* in Çukurambar and Bahçelievler; or in Çukurambar and Bahçelievler several pious women underlined that they are secular Muslims. This can be exemplified in some women's preference of the label "modern

209

hajji" when they want to distinguish themselves from those Muslim women from more religious backgrounds who have performed the pilgrimage. Other than differences between sites, I believe the similarities between Bahçelievler and Çukurambar are also significant. At the beginning, I was expecting to meet a more conservative sample in Çukurambar since this neighbourhood is known to be popular among AKP elites. However, I realized that Çukurambar neighbourhood is consisted of middle class families majority of which have secular political motivations. In fact, this result can be tracked in election results I presented in Chapter 4. On the other hand, I admit the presence of conservative elites in this neighbourhood but obviously they do not attend the neighbourhood mosques frequently. The only occasion I met women who can be regarded as conservative elites such as wives of MPs or high ranking bureaucrats are the charity meetings I attended with the invitation of the DRA preachers.

Finally, I have to underline two commonalities across my fieldsites. The first one is that the political and social context in the last 10-15 years seems to have enabled women to join public religious activities more in all three sites. The second commonality across my field sites is about the construction of prestigious and pious woman. A prestigious pious woman is a woman who can fulfil both mundane duties expected from a wife and mother in a gender-traditional context and religious duties of Islam. This is, however, not easy and women point out their drawbacks as mothers and housewives. In all of my three field sites, women who manage both to be pious and "proper" mothers, wives and housewives are either retired or do not work outside home, have grown-up children and do not have a strong male authority in their lives such as an authoritarian husband or a mother-in-law.

An enhanced social status as a result of confirming to religious rules within one's own religious community is an expected outcome. The contribution of this study is to demonstrate that Islamic practices do not always and only dominate women; on the contrary, they might have an elevating impact on the social status of pious woman practitioners within their closer social networks under certain circumstances and in

interaction with different factors. What is more, pious women might convert the status they gained via their performance of Islamic rituals into other forms of capital such as social, economic and cultural capital.

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# APPENDICES

## A. TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tezde Ankara'daki dindar kadınların dini pratikleri örneğinde, ibadet etmek ile dindar kadının konumu arasındaki ilişkiyi 2011-2013 yılları arasında Ankara'nın üç semtinde yaptığım etnografik saha çalışmasının bulgularını kullanarak inceliyorum.

Müslüman toplumlarda kadının ikincil konumu ve kısıtlı sosyal katılımı, toplumsal cinsiyet, İslam ve Orta Doğu araştırmacıları tarafından etraflıca tartışılmıştır (bkz. Mernissi 1987; Lazreg 1988; Kandiyoti 1991; Ahmed 1992; Saktanber 2002; Keddie 2007; Charrad 2011). Araştırmacılar, Müslüman toplumlardaki kadınların bu baskılanmış konumuna rağmen İslamcı siyasette aktif rol aldığına da dikkat çekmişlerdir (Türkiye örneği için bkz. Göle 1997 ve Arat 2012; Mısır örneği için bkz. Mahmood 2005 ve İran örneği için bkz. Afshar 1996 ve Mir-Hosseini 1996). Müslüman kadınlar yalnızca siyasi arenada aktif olmakla kalmazlar aynı zamanda İslamcı kimlik ve hayat tarzı inşa projelerinde de merkezi rolleri vardır. Kadınlara İslamcı hareketlerin sosyal, siyasi ve kültürel programlarında yer verilmesinin, kadınların İslami gelenek ve kültürün koruyucusu olarak görülmesi olduğu iddia edilmiştir (Yazbeck Haddad 1982; Saktanber 2002; Raudvere 2012). Bu noktada, birbiriyle bağlantılı üç tartışmalı konu vardır: Müslüman kadınların İslami bir hayat tarzı inşasına aktif katılımlarının onlara faillik kazandırıp kazandırmadığı; bu failliğin özelliği; ve kadınları baskıladığı addedilen bir dini harekete kadınların

236

destek veriyor olmasındaki paradoksal durum (örneğin bkz. Mahmood 2005 ve Lazreg 2009). Bu çalışmanın amacı bu bilmecenin bir katmanını, yani dindar kadınların kamusal dini pratiklere katılımlarının onlara statülerini iyileştirme anlamında herhangi bir faillik sağlayıp sağlamadığı ve eğer sağlıyorsa bu failliğin doğasını, analiz ederek bu paradoksal durumu anlamaktır.

Dindar kadınların dini pratiklerdeki konumu, İslami toplumlarda kadının konumuna dair genel resmi yansıtmaktadır. Bourdieu'nun (1991) kullandığı anlamda farklı aktörlerin dini sermayelerini kullanarak iktidar için yarıştıkları bir arena olarak "alan" kavramı üzerinden gidecek olursak, Müslüman toplumlardaki "dini alanda" dindar kadınların belli başlı ritüellerden dışlanarak İslami pratiklerde ikincil bir konumları olduğu gösterilmiştir (bkz. Smith 1985; Marcus 1987; Reda 2004). Buna rağmen, İslami yaşam tarzı bazı kadınlara- "dini sermaye"ye sahip olmaları koşuluyla- belli bir faillik sağladığından bu kadınların bilinçli bir tercihle dindar Müslümanlar olmayı seçtiklerini iddia ediyorum. Burada kadının failliği "bağımsız eylem kapasitesi" olarak kavramsallaştırılmıştır (McNay 2000). Fakat bu faillik, ataerkil iktidar ilişkileri ve İslam'ın ataerkil yorumları tarafından öne sürülen "makbul kadın" fikrini pekiştirdiğinden sınırlı bir failliktir. Bu tezin amacı, dindar kadınların gündelik hayatlarındaki İslami ibadet pratikleri ile bu kadınların aile ve komşuluk çevreleri ile cami ve Kuran kursu çevrelerindeki sosyal konumları arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi keşfetmektir. Kadınların ibadet pratiklerinin aile, arkadaş ve komşular gibi yakın çevrelerinden gördükleri saygı ve itibar seviyesi göz önünde bulundurulduğunda sosyal konumları üzerinde bir etkisi olduğunu varsayıyorum.

Dini (özelde ise İslam'ı) ve ataerkiyi, birinin diğerinden daha etkili olduğunu iddia etmeden, birbirini etkileyen sistemler olarak kavramsallaştırıyorum. Kandiyoti'nin (1997: 14) belirttiği gibi, Orta Doğu ülkelerinde görülen erkek egemenliği şekillerinin İslam'a atfedilmesi, çeşitli uygulamaları ve yorumlamaları olabilecek olan evrensel bir din olarak İslam'ın klasik ataerki olarak tanımlayabileceğimiz bir erkek egemenliği tarzı ile karıştırılması temel yanılsamasına dayanır. Bu tez, dindar kadınları baskılayan bu ataerkil sistemin ve İslami pratiklerin, kadınları "dindar ev

237

kadınları, dindar anneler ve dindar eşler" rolleriyle sınırlamada nasıl beraber işlediğini anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Özellikle bu tez İslam'da ibadetler yoluyla üretilen ve yeniden üretilen ataerkil toplumsal cinsiyet hiyerarşisinin incelemesine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın ana bulgularından bir tanesi, dindar bir kadının sosyal konumunun dini ritüel yapmasından etkilendiği ve dini bilgi, ibadet sırasında duyguların dışavurumu, nafile ibadet yapma ve dini görevlerle gündelik işlerin dengelenmesi gibi etmenlerle ibadet etmenin bir araya gelmesiyle dindar bir kadının konumunun iyileşiyor olduğudur. Bu bulgu, geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet bağlamlarında dindar kadınların belli faillik şekillerini belli seviyelerde nasıl gösterdiklerini yansıtmaktadır. Aynı zamanda bu bulgu, kadınların baskılanmasında, bu baskının devamlılığının sağlanmasında ve kadınların ataerkil toplum tarafından kontrolünde toplumsal cinsiyet ve dinin nasıl birlikte işbaşında olduğunu da yansıtmaktadır.

Yahudilik, Hıristiyanlık ve İslam gibi dünya dinlerine bakıldığında, kadınların dini pratiklerinin görmezden gelindiğine, ikincil olarak görüldüğüne ya da erkeklerin dini pratikleri ile karşılaştırıldığında değersizleştirildiğine dair gözlemler hemen göze çarpacaktır (bkz. Tapper & Tapper 1987; Kraemer 1992; Schimmel 1994; Woodlock 2010). Erkek ve kadınların dini pratikleri arasındaki sınırlar çok keskin olmasa da bazı dinlerde belli toplumsal cinsiyetlere özgü dini ritüeller bulunmaktadır. Dahası, kadınlar genellikle heterodoks dini ritüeller yapıyor olarak görülürler. Örneğin, çoğu Müslüman bir Ortodoks ibadet olan günde beş vakit namaz ibadetini gerçekleştirir ve aynı zamanda Ramazan ayında, kutsal gün ve geceler olarak kabul edilen kandil günlerinde veya bir dilek ya da sıkıntıları olduğunda heterodoks bir pratik olan türbe ziyareti ritüelini de gerçekleştirirler. Zaman zaman Sünni İslami otoriteler ve halk tarafından batıl bir ritüel olarak addedilen türbe ziyareti ritüelini erkeklerden daha çok kadınların gerçekleştirdiği gözlemlenmiştir (bkz. Tapper 1990; van Bruinessen 2005; Hart 2013). Dahası, ziyaret pratiğinin kendisi günlük namazla karşılaştırıldığında ikincil ve daha az ruhani değeri olan bir pratik olarak görülmektedir. Bunun devamı niteliğinde de ziyaret ritüelini gerçekleştiren kadınlar

erkeklerden daha az dindar ve erkeklere ikincil olarak değerlendirilmektedirler. Kadınların dindeki ikincil konumlarına işaret eden başka bir konu da dünya dinlerinin çoğunda kadınların kamusal dini alanda yapılan cemaat ibadetlerinden ya tamamen dışlanmaları ya da ikincil bir pozisyonda olmalarıdır. Kadınlar çoğunlukla kamusal dini mekânlardan ve dini liderlik pozisyonlarından dışlanmaktadırlar. Bu tez, İslami dini pratiklerdeki ve ritüellerdeki bu baskılanan konumlarına rağmen dindar kadınların aile, komşuluk ve arkadaşlık çevrelerinde sosyal konumlarını iyileştirip iyileştiremediklerini sorgulamaktadır. İslam'da bir Müslüman'ın ruhani konumunun dini pratiklere ne kadar sadık olduğu ve "takvada üstünlüğü" üzerinden belirlendiği göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu soru önemli bir soru olmaktadır. Kuran'a göre Müslümanlar arasındaki farkı belirleyen tek şey takva olmasına rağmen, kadınlar dini pratik seviyesinde baskılanan ve ikincil Müslümanlar konumundadırlar.

Kadınların dini pratiklerdeki ikincil konumunu göz önünde bulundurursak, dindar kadınlardan ataerkil dinlere karşı pek çok karşı çıkış ve bu dinlerle mücadele alanı olduğunu görmek incelemeye değerdir. Bu mücadele alanları, kadınların dini liderlik pozisyonlarına gelmek, ortak ve kamusal dini alanlarda yapılan ibadetlere katılım "haklarını" elde etmek ve genel olarak dini pratiklerdeki konumlarını iyileştirmek için açtıkları alanlardır. Dindar kadınlar hem dini ritüelleri yapmakta hem de dinin yerleşmiş ataerkil normlarını sorgulamaktadırlar. Bu sorgulamanın gerçekleşmesinde, dindar kadınlara İslam'ı yaşamanın ve ibadet etmenin farklı şekilleri olabileceğini tecrübe ettiren Hac ve Umre ziyaretlerinin çok önemli bir etkisinin olduğunu belirtmek gerekiyor. Bu dönüşümde, dindar kadınların vaizelerin sohbet gruplarına katılmak ve camiler ve kitle iletişim araçları vasıtasıyla dini bilgi edinmek gibi dini kaynaklara erişimlerinin artması ve kolaylaşmasının da etkisi büyüktür.

Fakat, kadınların ibadet haklarını aramaları ve dini pratiklerdeki ikincil konumlarını sorgulamaları İslami tevazu ve adap sınırları içerisindedir. Kadınların dini pratik yapmalarının şekli ve sınırları onlara atfedilen geleneksel roller olan ev kadınlığı ve

annelik rolleri tarafından belirlenir. Bu nedenle burada kadınların söylediği ve yaptığı arasındaki farka dikkat çekmemiz gerekir. Kadınlara sorulduğunda "kadının ibadet yeri evidir" söylemini desteklerlerken, kadınların gündelik hayatlarında ne yaptıklarına baktığımızda mümkün olduğunca evlerinden dışarıda, cami ve Kuran kurslarında ya da mescitlerde ibadet ettiklerini; hatta bazı kadınların ev dışındaki dini alanlarda varlıklarından rahatsızlık duyan erkek cemaat üyelerine ve eşlerine karşı çıktıklarını görürüz. Dindar Müslüman kadınların söyledikleri ve yaptıkları arasındaki ikileme ilişkin aynı gözlemi Mernissi (1987) yapmış ve bunun nedeninin dindar kadınların söyledikleri ile Allah'a, eşlerine ve ailelerine itaat eden kadınlar olarak kimliklerini kurmak olduğunu savunmuştur. Aynı dindar kadınların pratikleri ile İslam'ı yaşarken karşılaştıkları eşitsiz muameleyi sorgulayarak bir faillik gösterdiklerini düşünüyorum. Dahası, iddia ettiğim gibi dindar kadınların ibadet pratikleri dini bilgi ve ataerki ve din tarafından belirlenen "makbul kadınlık" normlarını yerine getirme gibi etmenlerle bir araya geldiğinde bu kadınların sosyal konumları yükselmektedir. Aynı anda gerçekleşen iki süreç olan dindar kadınların konumunun yükselmesi ile ortodoks İslam'la mücadelelerinin yerleşmiş sosyal ve dini düzenin sınırlarını zorlayıp zorlamayacağı bu tezin ana sorunsallarından biridir.

Türkiye 2002 yılından beri yeni-muhafazakâr İslamcı Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) tarafından yönetilmektedir. O tarihten bugüne yönetici elitlerin "makbul kadınlık" üzerine söylemleri ve ilgili politikaları Türkiye'de kadının konumunun standartlarını belirlemektedir. Günümüz Türkiye'sinde kadının doğal alanı "aile" (Coşar & Yeğenoğlu 2011; Acar & Altunok 2013; Beşpınar 2014) ve kadının öncelikli işlevi annelik (Ayata & Tütüncü 2008) olarak düşünülmektedir. AKP'nin gündeminde tanımlanan *makbul kadın*, kariyerinin önüne anneliği koyan, kürtaj yaptırmayan ve en az üç çocuk doğuracak olan kadındır. Böylesi bir makbul kadın fikri, ataerkil bir ortodoks İslam yorumuna dayanan bir anlayıştır.

Bu noktada, bu tezde tartışılan konular için Türkiye'deki siyasi ve sosyal bağlamın öneminin altını çizmek gerekir. Geçtiğimiz son 15 yıldır İslamcı bir siyasi parti iktidardadır ve bu bağlamda kadınların kamusal dini etkinliklere katılımları

kolaylaşmış ve hatta bu etkinliklere katılım kendi sosyal çevrelerinde onlara belli bir seviyede itibar da kazandırmıştır. Bu süre zarfında Türkiye'de kadının konumu muhafazakâr hükümetlerin ataerkil parametrelerine göre belirlenmiştir. Türkiye'de devlet mekanizmalarından birisi olan Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (DİB), kadını dini alan içerisinde de annelik ve eşlik rolleri bağlamında tanımlayarak kadının madun konumunu pekiştirmekte kendi rolünü oynamaktadır. Buna ek olarak, din işlerinden sorumlu devlet kurumu olarak DİB, kadının din ile olan ilişkisini Kuran kursları ve Aile İrşat ve Rehberlik Büroları üzerinden kurarak yine kadınlığı ailevi ilişkiler üzerinden inşa etmektedir. DİB, kadınların dini alandaki varlığını bu çerçeve dışında yalnızca Müslümanlar olarak algılamaya son yıllarda, camilerdeki kadınlara ayrılan bölümlerin uygunluğuna dair araştırmaları üzerinden başlamıştır. Denebilir ki böylesi bir sosyal ve siyasal bağlam içerisinde, Türk dini alanında bir alt-alan olarak kadın dini alanı ortaya çıkmaya başlamıştır.

Bu tezde İslam ve İslami pratikten bahsederken kastedilen Sünni İslami geleneğin Hanefi mezhebi ve bu mezhebe göre yapılan ibadetlerdir. İbadet, Allah'a tapınma eylemlerini içerse de Türkiye dini alanında ibadet beş vakit namazdan ev temizlemeye kadar değişik faaliyetleri içerebilmektedir. Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'de ortodoks İslami pratikleri yaşayan ve İslam'ın devlet versiyonunu tatbik eden kadınlar incelenmektedir. Dindar kadın kavramı ile kastedilen gündelik yaşamlarını dini pratiklerine göre belirleyen ve yoğun bir şekilde ibadet ve dini pratik ile meşgul olan kadınlardır. Sosyal konum kavramı ise kadınların yakın sosyal çevrelerindeki konumlarına işaret etmektedir. Bu kavram, dindar kadınların ailelerinden, komşularından ve özellikle dini çevrelerdeki arkadaşlarından gördükleri itibar ve saygıyı içermektedir. Son olarak, kadının failliği ile kastedilen ise kadınların eylem kapasiteleridir (bkz. McNay 2000, Mahmood 2001, Charrad 2011). Tezde, Burke'nin (2012) geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet bağlamlarında karşılaşılan faillik formları kategorizasyonu kullanılmıştır. Bu faillik formları, aşağıda anlatılmaktadır.

241

Müslüman toplumlarda kadının hem madun hem de fail özneler olmaları sebebiyle paradoksal konumlarına yoğunlaşarak, burada sunulan araştırma iki ana araştırma sorusuna işaret etmektedir:

İlk olarak, bu çalışmada Sünni İslami ritüellerde dindar kadınların konumunu ve faillik şekillerini ve seviyelerini analiz ederek dindar kadınların ortodoks İslam'ın kadını baskılamasına karşı verdikleri mücadeleyi araştırıyorum. Bu amaçla, dindar kadınların kamusal dini mekânlarda hangi ibadetleri yaptıklarını, bu ibadetleri neden yaptıklarını ve dini eylemlerine hangi anlamları yüklediklerini soruyorum. Bu soruları cevaplarken, dindar kadınların İslam'ın kamusal ve cemaatle beraber yapılan dini ritüellerindeki ikincil konumlarını ve kamusal dini mekânlardan dışlanmalarını sorguladıkları durumları analiz ederken "direniş failliği-*resistance agency*" kavramına başvurdum. Dindar kadınların dini pratikleri kanalıyla nerelerde ve nasıl dini olmayan avantajlar elde ettiğine dair gözlemlerimi sunduğum analizlerde "araçsal faillik-*instrumental agency*" kavramını kullandım. Son olarak, dindar kadınların onları makbul eşler ve anneler rollerine hapseden ataerkil normları ve İslami öğretileri onayladıkları durumları açıklarken "uysal faillik-*compliant agency*" kavramını kullandım. Bu kapsamda, araştırma sahamın üç farklı semtinde gözlemlediğim dindar kadınların çeşitli şekil ve derecelerde ortaya koydukları faillikleri arasındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları da inceledim.

İkinci olarak, dindar kadınların dini pratikleri ile sosyal konumları, diğer bir deyişle dini sermayeleri ile sembolik sermayeleri arasındaki ilişkiyi analiz ediyorum. Kadınların dini pratiklere katılmasının, aileleri, komşuları ve Kuran kursundan ve camiden arkadaş grupları arasındaki sosyal konumlarını nasıl etkilediğini anlamayı amaçlıyorum. Bu konuya ilişkin sorular şunları kapsıyor: Dindar kadınlar dini pratikleri yaptıklarında sosyal konumları iyileşir mi? Ya da dindar kadınların sosyal konumları dini bilgi ve dini tecrübe şeklinde karşımıza çıkan dini sermayeye sahip olduklarında iyileşir mi? Kamusal İslami pratikleri tatbik ettiklerinde dindar kadınların failliğinden bahsedebilir miyiz? Hane dışında bir işte çalışsın ya da çalışmasın, hanenin ve ailenin günlük işleriyle hâlihazırda fazlasıyla meşgul olan

kadınların- ücretli bir işte çalışan kadınların üzerindeki yükün katlandığını belirterek-dini hayatları ile gündelik sorumluluklarını nasıl dengelediklerini sorgulamak önemlidir. Bu olgu, kutsal ve gündelik arasındaki ikili karşıtlığın sınırlarını bulandırır ve dindar Müslüman kadınların hayatlarında ev kadınlığı, annelik, eşlik, çalışan ve dindar Müslüman rolleri arasında bir denge bulmalarını sağlayacak bir müzakere sürecine yol açar. Bu soru kapsamında son olarak, sembolik sermaye olarak kavramsallaştırdığım sosyal konumun dindar kadınların İslami pratik performansları yoluyla kültürel, sosyal ve ekonomik sermaye gibi diğer sermaye türlerine nasıl dönüştüğünü inceliyorum.

Tezin Giriş bölümünde yukarıda saydığım araştırma sorularını belirttikten sonra, tezin İkinci Bölümü olan çalışmanın kuramsal çerçevesini çizdiğim bölümde, din, ritüel ve İslam kavramları etrafındaki tartışmaları, modernleşme, sekülerleşme ve dini uyanış, özellikle İslamcılık ve post-İslamcılık, arasındaki girift ilişkiye ve bu hareketlerde kadınların rolüne dair tartışmalar izliyor. Bu bölüm, tüm dünyada dinlerin ortodoks biçimlerinin ataerkil yorumlamalarına dindar kadınların verdiği bir cevap olarak inanç feminizmlerine de yer vermektedir. Daha sonra, İslam'ın ataerkil yorumlamalarının kadınların konumları üzerindeki etkisine geçilmektedir. Günümüzde de güncelliğini koruyan İslami pratikler yoluyla Müslüman kadınlar güçlendirilir mi yoksa tabi mi kılınır tartışmalarına bir örnek olarak örtünme tartışmalarına bu bölümde yer verilmektedir. Türkiye'de kadının konumu tartışmalarına ise özel bir bölüm ayrılmıştır. Kuramsal tartışmaların yapıldığı bu bölümün son kısmında ise neden kadınların kendilerini kontrol eden ve baskılayan dinlerde ve dini hareketlerde aktif rol almayı seçtikleri sorusuna verilen kuramsal cevaplar tartışmaya açılmıştır. Dolayısıyla, "yaşanan din-*lived religion*", "gündelik din-*everyday religion*" ve "dine uyma-*doing religion*" kavramlarını, Türkiye'deki dindar Sünni Müslüman kadınların ibadet pratiklerini inceleyerek, geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet bağlamlarında dindar kadınların failliği etrafında dönen tartışmalara vurgu yaparak tartıştım.

243

Tezin Üçüncü Bölümü, etnografik alan çalışması sırasında uygulanan yöntembilimsel yaklaşım ve teknikleri detaylandırmaktadır. Dini eylemin sosyal eylem olduğu fikrinden hareketle, dindar kadınların dini eylem motivasyonlarını, bağlılıklarını ve eylemleri sonucunda ne elde ettiklerine dair hislerini tam anlamıyla anlayabilmek amacıyla yorumlayıcı yaklaşım benimsenmiştir. Ayrıca, ataerkil iktidar ilişkilerinden etkilenen İslami pratikleri doğru olarak analiz edebilmek ve anlayabilmek için feminist yöntembilim bakış açısının gerekli olduğunu öneriyorum. Araştırmanın yöntemini anlattığım bu bölümün ikinci kısmı, araştırmanın Ankara'da iki yıldan uzun süren saha araştırması kısmına yoğunlaşmaktadır. Bu kısımda Bahçelievler, Çukurambar ve Sincan semtlerinde bulunan DİB'in Kuran kursları ve sohbet gruplarında nasıl araştırma yaptığıma dair tecrübelerimi anlatıyorum. Ayrıca, dindar kadınların dini pratikleri çalışılırken katılımcı gözlem yapmanın avantajlarını tartışıyorum. Daha sonra görüşme yaptığım kadınların yaşları, evlilik, eğitim ve mesleki durumları ve çocuklarının sayısı ve yaşlarına dair bilgiler veriyorum. Son olarak, çalışmamın kapsamı ve kısıtlılıklarını ele alıyorum.

Dördüncü Bölüm, tezimin Türkiye'deki dini alanı anlattığım arka plan bölümüdür. Bu bölümde, ana akım ya da resmi İslam ve onun doksası olarak nitelediğim Hanefi mezhebine göre Türkiye'de kadınların dini alandaki rollerini betimliyorum. İslam'ın ve İslami pratiklerin ortodoks ve ataerkil yorumlarını, ortodoks-heterodoks İslam arasındaki farkları ve İslam'ın bu iki versiyonuna karşılık geldiği kabul gören- bir erkek dini alanı olarak ortodoks İslam ve bir kadın dini alanı olarak heterodoks İslam- toplumsal cinsiyet kategorilerini tartışıyorum. Türkiye'deki dini alanda dindar kadınların sahip olmak istediği dini sermayenin bileşenlerini sıralıyorum ve dini sermayenin üretim, yeniden üretim ve dağıtım kanallarını betimliyorum. DİB'i, dini vakıfları, tarikatları, cemaatleri ve dini şirketleri, dini sermayenin üretim, yeniden üretim ve dağıtım süreçlerinin kurumsal kanalları olarak kavramsallaştırırken; devletin ve cemaatlerin vaizelerini, kendisini yetiştirmiş kadın hocaları, dini çevrelerinde itibar kazanmış olan dindar kadınları ve ulusal alanda ün yapmış hocaları, Türkiye'deki kadın dini alanında dini sermayenin üretimine ve

244

devamlılığına katkıda bulunan bireysel özneler olarak görüyorum. Ayrıca kadınların evlerde düzenledikleri dini toplantıları da dini sermayenin üretilip dindar kadınlar arasında yayıldığı etkinlikler olarak anlatıyorum.

Tezin Beşinci Bölümü ve Altıncı Bölümü'nde, araştırmamın ana argümanlarını ve bulgularını geliştirip sunuyorum. Beşinci Bölüm İslami ritüellerde kadınların konumunu ve kamusal dini pratikler yoluyla kadınların ortaya koyduğu faillik formlarını tartışmaya açıyor. Bu bölümde, Ankara'daki dindar kadınlar üzerine yaptığım vaka çalışması ile dindar kadınların Sünni İslam'ın onları baskılayan yönlerine ve pratiklerine karşı çıktıklarını gösteriyorum. Fakat bu karşı çıkışın direk ve organize bir mücadele olmadığının; İslam'ın ataerkil yorumları tarafından Müslüman kadınlara biçilen rollerin sınırlılıkları içerisinde geleneğe karşı bir direniş olduğunun da altını çiziyorum. Beşinci Bölüm'de aynı zamanda Kuran okuma, sohbet ve ziyaret gibi kadınların dini alanında önemli pratiklerin kadınlar için ne anlamlara geldiğini ve onlara dini olmayan ne gibi faydaları hangi koşullar altında sağlayabileceğini de inceliyorum.

Altıncı Bölüm, Beşinci Bölüm'ün bulgularını, dindar kadınların aile üyeleri, arkadaşları ve komşuları gibi yakın çevrelerinden gördükleri saygı ve itibarı hangi etkenlerin etkilediğinin bir değerlendirmesi ile bir araya getiriyor. Dini bilgi ve tecrübe, kişinin sosyal konumunu iyileştiren bu etkenlerden biri olarak karşımıza çıkıyor. Sahadan gözlemlerime dayanarak vaizeler gibi kadın din uzmanlarının ve kendi çabalarıyla dini bilgi sahibi olmuş hoca olmayan kadınların, hem formel dini topluluklarda hem de formel olmayan sosyal çevrelerinde arkadaşları tarafından saygı gördüklerini iddia ediyorum. Ayrıca, ibadet etmenin, ibadet sırasında duyguların gösterilmesi gibi etkenlerle bir araya geldiğinde, ibadet eden kadınlara iyi bir sosyal konum ya da saygı kazandırdığını gösteriyorum. Bu bölümün en önemli bulgusu ise dindar kadınların gündelik sorumlulukları ile dini görevlerini dengede tutmalarının bir konum iyileştirici faktör olarak karşımıza çıkmasıdır. Bunlara ek olarak, dini sermayenin itibar ve saygı şeklinde nasıl sembolik sermayeye

245

dönüştüğünü gösterdikten sonra dindar kadınların bu sembolik sermayeyi nasıl diğer sermaye biçimlerine dönüştürdüğünü de gösteriyorum.

Tezin Yedinci Bölümü'nde bu çalışmanın temel bulgularını özetleyip tartışıyorum. İslami pratiklerde dindar kadının madun konumunu, özellikle de kamusal alanda ve cemaatle beraber yapılan ibadetlerdeki konumunu ve Türkiye'deki dindar kadınların hangi ibadetleri ve dini pratikleri neden yaptığını tartışmaya açıyorum. Müslüman kadınların sosyal konumuna yönelik çalışmalara ve saha araştırmamdan edindiğim verilere atıfta bulunarak kadın failliği kavramını, dindar kadınların sosyal konumları ve ibadet pratikleri arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi ve İslami ritüeller yoluyla dindar kadınların ailenin ve hanenin bakıcıları olmalarının pekiştirilmesini tartışıyorum. Son olarak, dindar kadınların faillik seviyeleri ve biçimleri ile sahada karşılaştığım ve mülakatlar yaptığım kadınların profilleri temelinde alan araştırmamı gerçekleştirdiğim üç semt arasındaki farkları ve benzerlikleri özetliyorum.

Dindar kadınların kamusal ortodoks dini pratiklerde yer alması, onların İslam tarafından baskılandığı anlamına gelmemektedir. Bu basitçe, dindar kadınların camilerdeki ve Kuran kurslarındaki varlığının ya da ortodoks İslam'la mücadelelerinin onları güçlendirdiği anlamına da gelmez. Dindar kadınlar kamusal dini alanlardaki dini pratiklere katılırken farklı biçim ve seviyelerde faillik biçimleri göstermektedirler. Kadının camideki varlığını engelleyen ortodoks İslami normlara meydan okurken, cemaatle kılınan namazlara iştirak ederken ve imamlık yaparken; dindar kadınların failliği direniş failliği biçimini almaktadır. Ancak, dindar benlikleri oluştururken meydan okudukları normlara uyup dine uyarken *(do religion)* uysal faillik de gösterebilmektedirler. Avishai'nin (2008) dine uyma *(doing religion)* çerçevesi Türkiye dini alanı içerisindeki Müslüman kadınların dindarlık ve faillikleri arasındaki bağlantıları kurmaya çalışırken kullandığım en merkezi yaklaşımlardan biridir. Ankara'daki saha araştırmamın üç semtindeki dindar kadınlar sosyalleşme, evden dışarı çıkma ve diğer Müslüman kadınlarla dayanışmaya girme gibi dini olanın dışında kazanımlar edindiklerinde de araçsal failliğe sahip olmaktadırlar.

246

Bu çalışmada itibar ve saygı çerçevesinde kavramsallaştırdığım dindar kadınların sosyal konumu ile onların ibadet pratikleri arasındaki ilişkileri anlamaya çalışıyorum. Bu çalışma sonucunda, İslami pratik yapmanın belli koşullar altında dindar kadınlara itibar ve dolayısıyla sosyal statü kazandırdığını ortaya koydum. Bu koşulların başında, dindar kadınların dini etkinliklerle aktif olması, dini konularda özellikle bilgili olmaları ve İslami konularda bu sahip oldukları dini bilgiyi diğer kadınlara ve yakın çevrelerine yayma konusunda da etkin olmaları gerektiği geliyor. Dahası, "makbul kadınlık" kavramına atfettikleri, ev işlerini ve çocuk bakımı gibi işleri düzenlemede pratik olmak, temiz olmak ve hem kutsal hem de profan işleri yaparken gündelik hayatlarını planlı bir şekilde yaşamak gibi toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini de yerine getirmeleri gerekiyor. Bu nedenle bu çalışma hem dindar hem de itibar gören bir kadın olmanın, kadınların üzerine çok fazla sorumluluk yüklediğini iddia ediyor.

Dindar kadınların konumlarının iyileşmesinin şartlarından birinin dini bilgiye sahip olmak olduğunun altını çizdim. Dindar kadınların dini bilgi elde etmesinin çeşitli yolları olabilir. Devletin vaizesi olan kadınlar dini bilgiye üniversite eğitimi yoluyla ulaşırlar. Bunun dışında kendisini bir cemaat ya da tarikat bünyesinde yetiştirerek dini bilgiye ulaşan hoca kadınlar olduğu gibi, dini bilgi öğretme işiyle uğraşmayan fakat kendisini dini konularda yetiştirmiş "sıradan" dindar kadınlar da vardır. Türkiye bağlamında vaizelerle ilgili yapılmış çalışmalar mevcuttur fakat bu çalışmalar dini bilgi ve vaizelerin sosyal konumları arasındaki ilişkiyi incelememektedirler. Bu çalışmalar daha çok Müslüman kadın kimliğini şekillendirmede ve dindar kadınların sekülerlik ile ilişkisinde vaizelerin rolüne yoğunlaşırlar. Örneğin Maritato (2015), Türkiye'de bir meslek kolu olarak kadın vaizelerin yaptıkları işin gelişimini anlatmaktadır. Maritato, Türk devletinin vaizeler kanalıyla kadınlara yalnızca "doğru" dini bilgi sağlamadığını aynı zamanda ahlaki alanda destek olduğunu da iddia eder. Benim çalışmamın ana bulgularından bir tanesi dindar kadınların sosyal konumları ile dini pratik arasındaki ilişkiyi göstermesi açısından kritiktir: vaizelerin sohbetlerine katılan ve kendi çabalarıyla dini bilgilerini arttıran kadınlardan bazıları, sohbet grubunun diğer katılımcıları tarafından "hoca"

247

olarak anılmaya ve sohbete katılan diğer kadınlar tarafından saygı gösterilmeye başlanmaktadırlar. Bu nedenle bu çalışma dindar kadınların hayatında dini bilginin önemini vurgulayan çalışmalara bir katkı sunmaktadır.

Dindar kadınların konumunu etkileyen bir diğer etken grubu, ibadet etme sırasındaki performansla ilgilidir. Bu etkenlerden bazıları, zorunlu olan ibadetten fazlasını yapmak, ibadet esnasında duyguları dışa vurmak ve Kuran'ı güzel ve etkili bir biçimde okumak gibi etkenlerdir. Örneğin, Mahmood (2005) 1990'ların sonlarında Mısır'da kadınların "cami hareketini" incelediği çalışmasında ibadeti kadınların dindar benlikler yaratmada kullandıkları metotlar olarak kavramsallaştırmış ve kadınların uysal Müslüman özneler olma yolunda tevazu, huşu ve takva gibi duyguları bilinçli bir şekilde kullandıklarını göstermiştir. Benim saha çalışmamdaki dindar kadınlar da- namaz sırasında ağlamak şeklinde karşımıza çıkabilen- huşu ve takva gibi duyguları dindarlık göstergeleri olarak addetmişlerdir ve Mahmood'un (2005) bulgularına benzer bir şekilde benim çalışmamdaki dindar kadınlar için de ahlaki bir benlik oluşturmak, dindarlığı yaşayışlarının önemli bir parçasıydı.

Bu çalışmanın en önemli bulgularından bir diğeri ise dindar kadınların gündelik sorumlulukları ile dini görevlerini dengeleme çabalarının, kadınların ibadet yoluyla itibar kazanmasına dair en çarpıcı etkenlerden birisi olduğudur. Ev işlerini ve aile üyelerinin bakımını halleden ve İslam'ın zorunlu ibadetlerine ek olarak nafile namaz, sohbet katılımı ya da Kuran okuma gibi İslami etkinlikler için zaman yaratabilen bir kadın, yakın sosyal çevresinde saygı duyulan bir birey olmaktadır. Böyle bir kadın, "makbul ve dindar" bir eş, bir ev kadını ve bir anne olarak görüldüğünden hem dindar hem de itibarlı bir kadın olarak addedilir. Modern dindar bir kadından, bir anne ve eş olarak, hanenin ve ailenin ihtiyaçlarını karşılaması ve dininin gereklerini yerine getirerek "İslami gelenek ve kültürün koruyucusu" olması beklenir. Bu kadın eğer ev dışında bir işte çalışıyorsa, kadının aile bütçesine katkıda bulunması da görevleri arasına girer. Bu İslamcıların programında kadının nasıl resmedildiğini göstermektedir (bkz. Yazbeck Haddad 1982; Saktanber 2002; Raudvere 2012). Bu görevleri ve beklentileri yerine getirmeye çabalayan dindar kadının konumu, onun

248

müzakere yeteneğinden etkilenir. Saha araştırmam gösterdi ki bu müzakere sürecinde dindar ve itibarlı kadınlara çeşitli özellikler atfedilmektedir. Bu özelliklerden bir tanesi, ev işlerini ve ibadetleri yaparken pratik olmaktır. Burada çoğu dindar kadının ev işlerini ve gündelik işleri de "Allah rızası için" yapmaya niyet ettikten sonra ibadet olarak gördüklerini belirtmem gerekir.

Saha çalışmamdaki kadınlar, ibadet yapma motivasyon ve nedenlerini belirtirken İslami eylemin araçsal bir eylem olmadığı yönündeki görüşlerinin altını çizmişler ve "Allah rızası için" ibadet ettiklerini vurgulamışlardır. Bunun yanında, İslamı pratik ederken "sevap kazanmak" gibi dini içerikli faydalardan ve ibadet etmenin bazı sosyal avantajlarından da bahsetmişlerdir. Dindar kadınların bu cevapları dini eylem çıkar eğilimli bir doğası olabileceğini de göstermektedir. Bu noktada Bourdieu'yu takip ederek, "Allah için" ya da "Allah'ın rızasını kazanmak için" ibadet etmek gibi söylemlerin dini eylemdeki çıkar etmenini sakladığını ve dinlerin çıkar eğilimli doğalarının görünmezliği sayesinde meşruiyetlerini pekiştiriyor olabileceğini iddia ediyorum. Ayrıca bu görünmezliğin dinlerin güçlü baskı kanalları olmasını da kolaylaştırdığını düşünüyorum.

Bu noktada altını çizmem gereken başka bir konu daha bulunuyor. Bu çalışma dindar kadınların çıkarcı bir şekilde yüksek statülü ve itibarlı Müslümanlar olmak için dini pratiklerini araçsallaştırdığını savunmamaktadır. Dindar kadınların yaptığı şeyin, Kandiyoti'nin (1988) belirttiği gibi "ataerkil pazarlık" olarak adlandırılan bir strateji olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Dindar kadınlar, Avishai'nin (2008) söylediği gibi ibadet ederlerken dine uyum gösterirler ve bu esnada "ataerkil pazarlıklar" yaparlar. Böylelikle, Müslüman dindar kadınlar bir yandan ataerkil İslami öğretilere göre şekillenen geleneksel annelik ve eşlik rollerini güçlendirir ve madun pozisyonlarını sürdürürken, öte yandan dini pratikle yukarıda saydığım etmenlerin bir araya gelmesi sonucunda itibarlı ve saygı gören kadınlar haline gelerek çeşitli seviye ve şekillerde faillikler kazanırlar.

Dindar kadınlarla yaptığım mülakatlar ve sahadaki gözlemlerim bu iddiayı desteklemektedir. Saha çalışmamın bulguları aynı zamanda görüştüğüm dindar kadınların kutsal ve profan kategorilerini ikili karşıtlıklar şeklinde düşündüklerini de göstermektedir. Fakat yemek yapmak gibi gündelik bir eylemin ibadet olarak görülüp görülmeyeceği sorulduğunda, bu tutumlarıyla çelişir cevaplar vermektedirler. Bu örnekte görüldüğü gibi profan eylemlerin kutsanması, dindar kadınların gündelik hayatlarında İslamcı siyasetin yansımalarından bir tanesidir. Bütün Müslüman toplumlardaki İslamcı hareketler tarafından bazı gündelik ev işlerinin ibadet olarak değer kazanması bilinçli bir strateji olarak uygulanmaktadır. Mısır'da Hasan al-Banna'nın, İran'da Ruhollah Khomeini'nin ve Hindistan/Pakistan'da Abu al-A'la Mawdudi'nin öğretileri, cami ve siyaset bağlamında kutsal ve profan kategorilerini bir araya getirmeye çalışan çabalara örnek olarak gösterilebilir (Abu-Rabi' 1987). Burada kritik olan ise şudur: İslamcı hareketler, ev işlerini ve eş ve çocuklara hizmet etmek gibi profan eylemleri kutsayarak aslında bir gelenek olarak İslam ve ataerkil toplum tarafından kadına yüklenen geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine değer atfetmekte ve bu rolleri kutsamaktadırlar.

Bloch'un (1974) önerdiği üzere, ritüeller grupların ve bireylerin kontrolü için araçsal olabilmek adına gerçeği yanlış yansıtırlar. Dindar kadını tanımlayan kutsal ve profanın müzakeresinde pratik olmak ve eş ve çocuklara hizmette itaatkâr olmak gibi özellikler, ailede ve toplumda kadının ikincil konumunu ve baskılanışını gizlemektedir. Kadının İslami ritüel performansını çevreleyen bu mekanizmalar birbiriyle bağlantılıdır ve İslami ataerkil ideolojiler tarafından erkeğin dindar kadını baskılamasını meşrulaştırmakta kullanılmaktadırlar. Diğer yandan, dindar kadınlar dini pratiklerde artan sayılarda yer alarak İslami ataerkil sistemin devamlılığına katkıda bulunmaktadırlar.

Ankara örneğinde dindar kadınların ibadet pratikleri ve statüleri arasındaki ilişkiyi incelerken, çeşitli yöntembilimsel yaklaşımlar benimsedim. Kadınların ibadetlerine yükledikleri anlamları anlayabilmek için yorumlayıcı yaklaşımı ve dindar kadınların dini yaşayışlarının arkasındaki ataerkil iktidar ilişkilerini gözler önüne sermek için

ise feminist yaklaşımı benimsedim. Dindar kadınları gündelik ortamlarında gözlemleyebilmek ve dini yaşayışları hakkında derinlemesine bilgi edinebilmek amacıyla katılımcı gözlem ve yarı-yapılandırılmış 26 görüşme yaptım. Müslüman bir bağlamda dindar kadınlar hakkındaki bu çalışma için bahsettiğim yöntemler çok faydalı oldu. Tek başına görüşme tekniği ortodoks İslam'ı yaşayan dindar kadınları kısıtlayan iktidar dinamiklerini ve bu kadınların ataerkil dini yapıya karşı mücadelesini ortaya çıkaramazdı.

İki yılı aşkın bir süre boyunca devam eden bu saha çalışması Ankara'nın merkezi camilerinde, mahalle camilerinde ve Bahçelievler, Çukurambar ve Sincan semtlerindeki Kuran kurslarındaki kadınların dini pratik performanslarını incelemiştir. Temel amacım orta sınıflardan dindar kadınları incelemek olduğu için bu üç semti seçtim. Bu nedenle, bu tezin bulguları ve tartışmaları orta sınıf dindar kadınların tecrübelerini ve kentsel bir dindarlığı konu edinmektedir. Ayrıca, saha çalışmamdaki kadınlar Sünni İslam'a mensup olup aralarında etnik ve mezhepsel çeşitlilik bulunmamaktadır. Yine de, araştırma alanlarım arasında kadınların din deneyimleri açısından çeşitli farklılıklar bulunmaktadır. En temel farklar kentleşme düzeyi ile alakalıdır. Bahçelievler ve Çukurambar semtleri kır-kent skalasının kent ucunda yer alırken, Sincan kır ucuna yakındır.

Birinci olarak, Bahçelievler ve Çukurambar'da kentsel bir olgu olan direniş failliğini daha fazla gözlemlediğimi söyleyebilirim. Örnek vermek gerekirse, Cuma ve Bayram namazlarına katılım gibi direniş deneyimleri özellikle Bahçelievler Kuran Kursu'nda yaşanmaktadır. Öte yandan, Sincan'da bu tarz pratiklerle karşılaşmadım. Bu durum, bu semtlerdeki Kuran kursu ve sohbet katılımcılarının profilleri ile alakalıdır. Bahçelievler ve Çukurambar'da karşılaştığım kadınlar daha yaşlı, genellikle emekli, bürokrat eşleri olan ve sürekli bakmaları gereken küçük çocukları bulunmayan kadınlardan müteşekkil bir profili oluşturmaktadır. Bu kadınların pek çoğu belirli bir yaştan sonra kamusal dini pratiklere katılmaya başladıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca, bu kadınlar kent hayatına daha alışkındır.

Öte yandan, Sincan'da sohbetlere katılan kadınlar daha genç yaşlardalardır. Bu kadınların pek çoğu çalışmakta olup öğle aralarında veya hafta sonlarında bu etkinliklere katılabilmektedir. Ayrıca, Sincan'daki kadınların daha güçlü politik ve dini motivasyonları olduğu görülmektedir. Bu anlamda, Sincan'daki sohbet toplantıları Bahçelievler ve Çukurambar'dakilere göre daha resmi bir ortamda yürütülmektedir. Bu farklılıklar kadınların politik motivasyonlarında da görülebilmektedir. Sincan'da karşılaştığım kadınlar politik olarak daha angajedir. Pek çoğu kendisini iktidardaki AKP'ye yakın görmekte ve bu yakınlıklarını açıkça ifade etmektedirler.

Diğer taraftan, Bahçelievler ve Çukurambar'daki sohbet toplantıları ve Kuran kurslarının katılımcıları daha seküler arka planlardan gelmekte, politik görüşlerini ifade etmekten geri durmakta ve zaman zaman dindarlıklarının modern bir dindarlık olduğunu vurgulama ihtiyacı hissetmektedirler.

Bu durum söylemlerinde de izlenebilmektedir. Yukarıda da belirttiğim gibi, Sincan'daki kadınlar ilimli kavramını kullanırken, Çukurambar ve Bahçelievler'de bilgili kavramını tercih etmektedirler. Veya, Çukurambar ve Bahçelievler'deki kadınlar seküler Müslümanlar olduklarının altını çizmektedirler. Bu durumun bir örneği de, bu semtlerde yaşayan hacca gitmiş bazı kadınların kendilerini daha dindar arka planlardan gelen hacca gitmiş Müslüman kadınlardan ayırt etmek için "modern hacı" tanımını kullanma tercihleridir.

Araştırma alanlarındaki farklılıklar kadar özellikle Çukurambar ve Bahçelievler semtleri arasındaki benzerliklerin de kayda değer olduğunu düşünüyorum. Saha araştırmamın başında Çukurambar'da daha muhafazakar bir örneklem ile karşılaşmayı bekliyordum. Bunun temel sebebi, bu semtin AKP elitleri arasında popüler olduğu yönündeki bilgiydi. Fakat, araştırma sırasında Çukurambar semtinin orta sınıf bir semt olduğunu ve burada yaşayan orta sınıf ailelerin daha seküler politik motivasyonları olduğunu fark ettim. Aslında bu durum 4. Bölüm'de verdiğim seçim sonuçlarından da izlenebilmektedir. Ancak, muhafazkar elitler arasında bu semti tercih ettiği gerçeğini de yadsımıyorum. Belli ki, bu kişiler semt camilerine fazla

gitmiyorlar. Milletvekili ve yüksek bürokrat eşleri gibi muhafazakar elitler diyebileceğimiz kadınlarla karşılaştığım etkinlikler Diyanet İşleri'ne bağlı vaizelerin davetleri ile katıldığım hayırseverlik ve yardım toplantıları idi.

Son olarak araştırma alanlarım arasındaki iki benzerliğin altını çizmek isterim. Bunlardan birincisi, son 10 – 15 yılda oluşan politik ve sosyal bağlamın üç semtteki kadınların da kamusal alandaki dini faaliyetlere daha fazla katılabilmesini kolaylaştırdığıdır. Araştırma alanlarım arasındaki ikinci ortaklık ise, prestijli ve dinar kadının inşasındaki benzerliktir. Saygın Müslüman kadın hem kendisinden beklenen geleneksel eş ve anne cinsiyet rollerine uygun olarak günlük işlerini hem de İslam'ın dini gerekliliklerini yerine getirebilen kadın olarak inşa edilmektedir. Ancak, bu durumun zorluğu ve anne ve ev kadını olmanın dezavantajları kadınlar tarafından sıklıkla işaret edilmektedir. Her üç semtte de, hem dindar hem de "düzgün" ev kadınları, eşler ve anneler olabilmeyi başarabilen kadınlar emekli veya dışarıda çalışmak zorunda olmayan, bakıma ihtiyaç duyan küçük çocukları olmayan veya evinde baskıcı bir eş veya kayınvalide gibi güçlü bir eril otorite figürü bulunmayan kadınlardır.

Dini kurallara uyan bir kişinin kendi dini topluluğunda sosyal statüsünün iyileşmesi veya yükselmesi beklenen bir sonuçtur. Bu çalışmanın katkısı, İslami pratiklerin zorunlu olarak sadece kadınları baskılamadığı, tersine belirli koşullarda ve başka etkenlerle etkileşim içinde dindar kadınların sosyal statülerini kendi çevrelerinde iyileştirebileceğidir. Ayrıca, dindar kadınlar İslami pratiklere katılarak edindikleri bu sosyal statüyü sosyal, ekonomik veya kültürel sermayeye dönüştürebilmektedirler.

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**Scholarships and Academic Achievements**

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|---|---|
| April 17-21, 2011 | State scholarship for the "SIEF 2011" Conference |
| Sep. 28-30, 2007- | |
| April 9-11, 2008 | Goethe Institute Scholarship for "German-Turkish Future Workshop I" |
| Nov. 8-9, 2007 | State scholarship for the "Migration and Identity in the European Union" Conference |

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**Publications**

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**Experience**

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| April 2014-present | Research Assistant at the Department of Sociology, Bülent Ecevit University, Zonguldak |
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| August 2011-April 2014 | ÖYP Assistant, Uludağ University, Department of Sociology |
| September 2007-present | Research Assistant at the Graduate School of Social Sciences (METU) |
| September 2007-2009 | Assistant of the GetMA (German-Turkish Masters Program in Social Sciences) at Graduate School of Social Sciences (METU) and Berlin Graduate School of Social Sciences (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) |
| December 2006 | External Evaluation of Girls' Education Campaign (Haydi Kızlar Okula), Ministry of National Education in cooperation with UNICEF; Data collector, field work in Sakarya, Turkey |
| April 2005- Aug. 2005 | Internship at DIfU (Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik-German Institute for Urban Studies) in Berlin, Germany; Researcher in the project "Immigrants in the City" |
| Jan. 2003- Feb. 2003 | Early Childhood Development Project, UNICEF; Province coordinator in Şanlıurfa, Turkey |
| Nov. 2002- Nov. 2003 | Student representative of Department of Sociology in the Student Representatives Commission at METU |
| Sep. 2002- June 2003 | Student assistant at Sociology Department, METU, SPSS lecturer |
| July 2002- Sep. 2002 | Köykent (Village-Town) Project, World Bank. |

|  | Project assistant, field work in Van-Özalp Köykent site and Düzce-Kaynaşlı Köykent site, Turkey |
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| Dec.2001- May 2002 | Beneficiary Assesment Project of Social Solidarity Fund (SSF) in Turkey, World Bank. |
|  | Project assistant, field work in Sakarya and Balıkesir, Turkey |

**Workshop Organizations**

| Sep. 15-20, 2010 | "Deutsch-türkische Zukunftswerkstatt III" (German-Turkish Future Workshop III), Goethe Institute of Ankara, Turkey and GetMA Program (German-Turkish Masters Program in Social Sciences) of Middle East Technical University |
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| Dec. 2-4, 2009 | "Deutsch-türkische Zukunftswerkstatt II" (German-Turkish Future Workshop II), Goethe Institute of Ankara, Turkey and GetMA Program (German-Turkish Masters Program in Social Sciences) of Middle East Technical University |

**Conferences**

| July 10-14, 2016 | 3rd ISA Forum of Sociology, Vienna, Austria, presentation with Esra Demirkol on "From South Korea to Turkey: Interactions of Youth Culture through South Korean TV Serials and Korean Music in Turkey" |
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| June 2-4, 2016 | Coğrafyacılar Derneği Ulusal Kongresi, Burhaniye, Turkey presentation with Esin Özlem Öztürk on "Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Mekân Kullanımı İlişkisinde Bir Baş Etme Mekanizması Olarak Bilişsel Haritalama" |
| October 9-11, 2015 | International Conference on Knowledge and Politics in Gender and Women's Studies, presentation together with Atilla Barutçu on |

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|  | "Media Coverage of International Women's Day Demonstrations in Turkey after 2002" |
| August 25-28, 2015 | 12th Conference of the European Sociological Association, Prague, Czech Republic, presentation together with Atilla Barutçu on "Woman's Blood as Dirt in Islamic Catechism: Exclusion of Women from Religious and Social Life in Turkey" |
| April 6-8, 2015 | Annual Conference of British Sociological Association, Glasgow, UK, presentation on "Participant Observation of Islamic Rituals: Negotiating 'Worship and Business'" |
| August 18-22, 2014 | Fourth World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies Conference, Ankara, Turkey; presentation on "Pious Women's Religious Activities at the Mosques in Ankara, Turkey" |
| July 13-19, 2014 | XVIII ISA World Congress of Sociology, Yokohama, Japan; presentation on "Public Religious Activities of Muslim Women in Turkey" |
| December 7-9, 2012 | "TMiE'12: Turkish Migration in Europe", London, UK; presentation together with Esra Demirkol on "Empathy without Contact: Narratives of Highly Skilled Migrants from Turkey on Their Migration Experiences in Berlin" |
| April 17-21, 2011 | "SIEF 2011: People make places-ways of feeling the world", Lisbon, Portugal; presentation on "Competitive Sharing of Women's Section at the Kocatepe Mosque, Ankara" |
| January 20-22, 2011 | "I.N.T.E.G.R.A.T.I.O.N." Bremen, Germany; presentation on "Social Integration of Highly Skilled Migrants in Berlin" |
| June 1, 2009 | "The Kocatepe Mosque: Neighboring Differences and Negotiating Tensions" |

Symposium, Ankara, Turkey; presentation on "Gendering Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Friday Prayers at the Kocatepe Mosque"

Sep. 28-30, 2007-

April 9-11, 2008      "Deutsch-türkische Zukunftswerkstatt I" (German-Turkish Future Workshop I), Goethe Institute of Ankara, Turkey and Berlin, Germany

Nov. 8-9, 2007      "Migration and Identity in the European Union" Conference, Oradea, Romania; presentation on "Social Participation of Turkish and Arabic Immigrants in the Neighborhood"

Dec. 14-19, 2005      "Lost on Location" Graduate Student Workshop at the University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam the Netherlands; presentation on "Politics of Difference in the Netherlands"

Nov. 16-18, 2005      Model Project Forum, European Urban Studies 2005 at Bauhaus University-Weimar, Germany; presentation on "Social Participation of Immigrants in the Neighborhood: Case Study of Berlin-Moabit"

June 17-18, 2005      "Politics of Bodies and Spaces" Conference-Workshop at Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands; presentation on "Politics of Moving Bodies: Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Turkey"

June 2004      German-Turkish Joint Seminar at Free University- Berlin and Middle East Technical University-Ankara; presentation on "Development of Squatter Housing in Turkey"

May 2, 2003      IX. Sociology Students Congress at Süleyman Demirel University, Isparta/Turkey

Presentation on "Köy-Kent (Village-Town) Project"

260

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| **Computer Skills** | MS Office Applications |
| | SPSS |
| **Language Skills** | English (Fluent) |
| | German (Intermediate) |
| | Spanish (Intermediate) |
| | Turkish (Mother Tongue) |

# C. TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

## ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü      ☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü      X

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü      ☐

Enformatik Enstitüsü      ☐

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü      ☐

## YAZARIN

Soyadı : UZAR ÖZDEMİR
Adı     : FİGEN
Bölümü : SOSYOLOJİ

**TEZİN ADI** (İngilizce) : THE STATUS OF PIOUS WOMEN IN SUNNI ISLAM: A STUDY ON THE PUBLIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF WOMEN IN ANKARA

**TEZİN TÜRÜ** :  Yüksek Lisans  ☐        Doktora    X

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.    ☐

2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.    ☐

3. Tezimden bir bir (1)  yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.      X

**TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ**: