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THE EFFECTS OF MODERN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS ON CULTURAL IDENTITY: THE CASE OF RITES OF PASSAGE IN TÜRKİYE

Abstract

An analogy is often established between the concepts of cultural change and cultural transformation. The forms represented by innovations that allow a concrete follow-up of culture in folk life can arise through change and transformation. The connection established between these two concepts is limited to new representation forms. Apart from this limited cooperation, cultural change often takes place in a balanced and harmonious manner without any obligations. Cultural transformation refers to a fragile process in which the individual or the community is forced to accept, often through the manipulation of the powerful, the elements such as history, origins, and sense of belonging in order to create an identity. Political identities and ideologies that affect the natural course of social and cultural change in Turkish sociology and culture have become dominant since the 2000s. The rich diversity of birth, marriage and funeral ceremonies contains important findings for understanding the arguments that affect the transformation of

folk life and culture. This article discusses the impact of Islamist and secular ideologies and groups on the structural and functional transformations observed in rites of passage in Turkish folk life. The study argues that the roles of conflicting socio-political identities in the processes of reinterpretation and representation of folkloric knowledge are more pronounced than in the past. Data obtained with ethnographic research techniques also support this claim. The qualitative field research was conducted within the constraints of ritualistic traditional ceremonies of birth, marriage and death in urban and rural communities in western Türkiye.

Keywords: Folk life, political and cultural identities, rites of passage, cultural alienation, invented traditions.

MODERN SİYASİ HAREKETLERİN KÜLTÜREL KİMLİK ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİLERİ: TÜRKİYE'DE GEÇİŞ DÖNEMİ TÖRENLERİ ÖRNEĞİ

Öz

Kültürel değişim ve kültürel dönüşüm kavramları arasında sıklıkla analojik bir ilişki kurulur. Kültürün halk hayatında somut olarak takibine olanak sağlayan yeniliklerle temsil edilen biçimleri değişim ve dönüşüm yoluyla ortaya çıkabilir. Bu iki kavram arasında kurulan ilişki, yeni temsil biçimleri ile sınırlıdır. Bu sınırlı ortaklık dışında, kültürel değişim, çoğu zaman herhangi bir zorlama olmaksızın dengeli ve uyumlu biçimde gerçekleşir. Kültürel dönüşüm ise çoğu zaman muktedirlerin kimlik icat etmek üzere tarih, köken, mensubiyet gibi unsurlar üzerindeki manipülasyonlarıyla gerçekleşen, bireyin veya topluluğun zoraki biçimde kabullendiği kırılgan bir süreci ifade eder. Türk sosyolojisi ve kültüründe toplumsal ve kültürel değişimin doğal seyrini etkileyen siyasi kimlikler ve ideolojiler 2000'li yıllardan itibaren baskın hale gelmiştir. Doğum, evlilik ve cenaze törenlerinin zengin çeşitliliği, halk yaşamının ve kültürünün dönüşümünü etkileyen argümanları anlamak için önemli bulgular içermektedir. Bu makale, siyasal İslamcı ve seküler ideoloji ve grupların Türk halk yaşamındaki geçiş törenlerinde gözlemlenen yapısal ve işlevsel dönüşümler üzerindeki etkisini tartışmaktadır. Çalışma, folklorik bilginin yeniden yorumlanması ve temsil edilmesi süreçlerinde çatışan sosyo-politik kimliklerin rollerinin geçmişe kıyasla daha belirgin olduğunu savunmaktadır. Etnografik araştırma teknikleriyle elde edilen veriler de bu iddiayı desteklemektedir. Nitel saha araştırması, Türkiye'nin batısındaki kentsel ve kırsal topluluklarda ritüelistik geleneksel doğum, evlilik ve ölüm törenlerinin kısıtlamaları içinde yürütülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Halk hayatı, politik ve kültürel kimlikler, geçiş dönemi ritüelleri, kültürel yabancılaşma, icat edilmiş gelenek.

Introduction

In Türkiye, which transitioned to secularism starting from 1923 and to multi-party democracy from the mid-1940s, political and ideological arguments have always been

prominent among the dominant determinants of the social and cultural structure. The pains experienced during the transition to a multi-party democracy have evolved into ideological polarizations of a different dimension after the transition. The impacts of ideological conflicts on the social and cultural structure became particularly evident and closely monitored, starting from the early 2000s. The ongoing polarization between Political Islam and Secularism, in general, has led to the emergence of new meanings and functions in the cultural representations of Turkish society. The ritual samples that make up the research universe were determined using ethnographic research techniques in the limited sample of urban and rural communities in the west of Türkiye between the years 2020-2022. The examples given in the study consist of the rites of passage related to birth, marriage and death. The case samples included in the study are related to the period of identity and cultural invention, which accelerated from the 2000s onwards. The research also includes introductory information about the meanings and functions of the mentioned ritualistic practices. In order to understand the current meanings attributed to ceremonies, references have been made to their traditional forms, along with the social, economic, political, and cultural background of the current situation. Centering on folklore-based cultural representations, this research includes references to arguments such as identity, ideology, political history, gender, and social psychology.

The research model has been developed taking into consideration the principles of cultural uniqueness and the potential for cultural representation to change. A multiple cultural representation approach, which allows for confirmation and reaching general conclusions instead of a limited number of examples, has been followed. Interview and observation techniques have been applied among groups with diverse characteristics in terms of economic, political, and social aspects. On the other hand the authors of this study are aware of the fact that identity is a compass that affects feelings and behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes towards others and, therefore, took an objective approach. The argument that the subjective interpretations of a certain group towards the sociocultural values of other groups might result in debasement and degradation was also considered since it would hamper a scientific and academic approach.

Associating the transformation of traditional ceremonies in Turkish folk life with a highly comprehensive and problematic phenomenon such as “identity” is not a new discovery in terms of cultural research. However, the effects of new identity constructions imposed on Turkish social life on cultural forms of public life appear in a different way compared to the processes of folk culture in the past. Cultural transformation, which becomes an unnamed obligation with the help of ideological arguments and internalizing socio-economic tools, can cause speculative traditional knowledge to become a degenerative tool. According to Sorokin, social change, which also affects culture, takes place within the framework of immanent limits and reason. The immanent reasons of change – every scientific, religious, aesthetic,

philosophical, familial, commercial and professional element in the nature of the system – carry the seeds of change in themselves. With these continuously produced results that come with each change, a system determines the quality and direction of its future in an observable way. The sequence of all the changes it underwent through its existence is mostly an opening of its own immanent potential (Sorokin 1947: 696-697).

The political and economic factors of the sociocultural change in Türkiye have been much more effective than the other universal factors (cultural interaction, etc.). Understanding the thresholds of modern Türkiye's transformation is important to understand the transformations in traditional practices seen in folk life. Transformation thresholds and determinants can be chronologically summarized as follows:

1. From 1920 to 1940: Reconstruction around the ideology of secular nation state. In the late Ottoman period, a period of self-discovery through national and cultural resources, which were the main references of the nation's state building in accordance with the principles set by nationalist intellectuals. In other words, it was a period of an optimistic deep-rooted transformation, in which the idea of fusing traditional cultures with modern national culture and internalizing the universal culture became the official cultural policy. During this period, rural lifestyle and traditional forms of the representation of public life still prevailed.

2. From 1940 to 1960: Transition to the multi-party political system and the first period of polarization in folk life, caused by reasons such as choosing between the two opposite poles that were formed after World War II. It was the period when the political schism was visible in folk life and cultural representations for the first time. It was the period when migrations from rural to urban areas became noticeable and traditional representations with heterogeneous characters began to appear in folk life.

3. From 1960 to 1980: the period of the 1960 military coup and therefore the polarizing global policies of the Cold War era to interfere with politics, economy, and the social and cultural fabric. More explicitly, it was the period of a conflict in which conservatism evolved into political Islam and organized nationalist fronts and communitarianism evolved into an organized and actional ideological field. It was also a period when the migration phenomenon was accelerating and the rural-urban divide was interrogated from sociocultural and economic perspectives.

4. The period from 1980 to 2000: The period of the elimination of nationalist and socialist poles through the 1980 military coup. The time of Political Islam's articulation of politics which were defined as "fundamentalist" and "moderate" and shaped through the acceptance of the realities of a free market economy and therefore liberalization. It can also be called as the era of the resurfacing of political Islamist ideologies which took a passive actional stance during the conflict between nationalists and socialists.

5. 2000 and later: A period of new identity and cultural constructions in which political Islamist leaders[1] became popular and came to power as a consequence of their presentation as a way out of political and economic crises[2]. The legal Islamic ideology, whose foundations were laid in the late 1940s and which started to hold power in the last 20 years, has begun to intervene in cultural processes and representations. This ideology has turned into a unique interpretation of the historical and cultural sphere in order to expand its social base, and adopted the Ottoman dynasty as a model. The political defenders of this model, which can be expressed as "Neo-Ottomanism", have made intriguing promises in order to spread the model in general sociology. Reviving the Ottoman Empire, increasing economic prosperity, and gaining international dignity have been the most prominent ones among these commitments. This process, which began with the change of public resources, private capital and basic socioeconomic powers such as media, continued with the construction of new fictional histories and cultural representations to unite the masses that would legitimize the misleading meanings that the next generation of political Islamist oligarchs would impose on universal cultural concepts. Some constructed traditions have been imposed on public life over a very short period of time compared to the long chronology of man and culture, and some traditions taken down from the dusty shelves of history have been transformed into a form according to the expectations of the political Islamist identity. Hobsbawm suggests that the invented tradition is guided by publicly or implied accepted rules and exhibits a ritual or symbolic trait by considering it as a set of practices that instil certain values and behavioural norms based on repetitions that coincide with a natural continuity with the past. Hobsbawm includes traditions that have emerged in a short and certain time period that cannot easily be traced, as well as institutionalized traditions invented, built and institutionalized on a formal platform. According to him, all invented traditions refer to history to form and legitimize group's unity as much as possible. History, which becomes a part of the ideology or information capital of a nation, state or movement, is not actually formed from what is contained in the public's

[1] The paradigm of the "sacred wise leader," which continues to be observed among Middle Eastern peoples, has a significant impact on the relationship of the Turkish people with political figures. The conservative consciousness, which seeks to give meaning to its own existence around this central "cult" and desires to live a similar story with aspirations such as material well-being, often prefers to trust the references of leaders it perceives as "sacred chosen." Despite the looseness of the connections of these references with modernity and reality, crowds emerge who strive to live a reconstructed past through a fictional, utopian creation process. These crowds, composed of individuals who believe they have been excluded by a secular oligarchy in social, cultural, and economic domains, believe they will experience the rise of their wise leaders themselves. Instead of a consciousness that appears to create its cosmos from its own chaos, a chaotic collective consciousness emerges that is unafraid to manipulate principles with universal value.

[2] There are also different approaches to Türkiye's political, social, economic and cultural transformation periods. Regarding his topic, which is very popular for community and political scientists, these references can also be seen: (Karpat 2016; Dağtaş 2011; Savaşkan and Ertan 2018; Sunar 2016; Kalaycıoğlu and Yaşar 2000).

memory, but from the information packages selected, written, depicted, popularized and institutionalized by those who are supposed to do it (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2006: 2, 16).

In Ricoeur's words, narrative-based representations are used as functional tools in the process of manipulating social memory by dominant ideology[3]. According to Ricoeur (2002: 104), the framework of the action is drawn in a narrative representation, such as the placement of folks in an event at the same time as the event is described, while the identity of the parties is also created. The narrative's function to choose offers opportunities and tools of manipulation for a cunning strategy that turns into a strategy of both forgetting and remembering. What turns into the rhetoric of justification is the power of ideology in which the sources of manipulation presented by the narrative are based on. Domination is not about physical obligation. In order to respond to the demand for legitimacy brought forward by the executives, the surplus value added to the belief of the ruler also has a narrative texture: singing narratives of foundation, honor and humiliation feed the heartwarming or frightening rhetoric. Thus, it is possible to connect deliberate memory abuses to the effects of ideology. The memory imposed at this level in sight wears the armor of "allowed" history, official history, and publicly learned and celebrated history.

The main motivation of the critique directed by conservatives to the official historiography of the Republican period in Türkiye has been the historical perspective and content shaped parallel to the nation-state ideology. The official anti-history stance of liberals in Türkiye, which overlaps with the above statements of Ricoeur, has led to an open cooperation with politically emerging conservative groups. Liberals and conservatives have acted together against the identity components of the nation state, even if they had different expectations.

Since the 1980s, the first application area of the massification desires of groups evolving into political Islam has been the strategy of "reckoning with the past". This reckoning has been carried out in the form of creating an alternative historical perspective against the official history thesis. In the early 2000s, political Islamists, who also received international support from liberals both in the country and abroad, came to power in Türkiye and were supported by politicians and bureaucrats who were able to develop a "new identity" in line with the rhetoric of "New Türkiye". With the new ideology, the name of which is not mentioned but officially represented, the process of rebuilding a social memory towards Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and some of the Ottoman sultans of the 19th century has gained momentum.

1. Different Forms of Rites of Passages Around Life Stages

[3] As one of the sources that examines the deterioration of collective memory through interventions, see: (Schudson, 2000).

The rituals seen around these three periods in folk life have preserved the traces of the traditional worldview for centuries. Since the early 2000s, the functional aspects of traditional representation, determined in the axis of folk beliefs, have started to weaken. Some ceremonies, which had not been encountered before in folk life, started to be seen from this period. For example, in Turkish folk life, parties have started to be held with the participation of the soon-to-be-mother's friends shortly before birth under the name *"baby shower"* in the last ten years. By transferring it to the post-birth period, this new ceremony, which is not seen in traditional folk life, has replaced the traditional *kırklama*, a tradition which will be mentioned below. The "baby shower" activity, which is carried out before the birth for gift collection purposes, is an entertainment for the participation of women. In those parties, a variety of games are played among women to have fun. Finding hooked needles in a rice bowl blindfoldedly, finding how many pieces of toilet paper would cover around the mother's belly, predicting the price of baby items stuffed in baskets, tasting baby food, and guessing the contents of it are some of these games. The ceremony was first seen among a small number of secular elites in İstanbul; it was, then, seen among the wealthy conservatives of İstanbul. It is possible to say that this new group, which is financially supported by the political authorities, tries to prove that they have the same status as the secular rich class. Created with the content of presenting gifts to pregnant women in North America and the United Kingdom, this party has been adapted to modern Turkish folk life in the form of a practice focusing on presenting gifts to the baby.

Figure 1. Figure from the "baby shower" ceremony of a conservative family.



Another ceremony that has been seen around childbirth in recent years is the "gender reveal party". This party is held during the period of the biological development of the foetus, when the gender becomes detectable with the help of ultrasonography devices. The expectant mother learns the gender of the child with a doctor's examination without letting family members know. The following party declares the gender of the child to the future father, family members and friends. Beliefs and practices to predict the gender of the baby in the

mother's womb have been followed since the transition from the times when medical imaging tools that help to learn gender were not available in Turkish folk life. The prediction of the unborn baby's gender focuses on the physical and spiritual changes observed in the mother candidate during pregnancy, along with her food preferences and behaviours in daily life. Some of the traditional ways of predicting gender are as follows: It is believed that the expectant mother who prefers sour foods during pregnancy will give birth to a baby girl, while the expectant mother who prefers sweet foods will have a baby boy. The gradual enlargement of the hips or the freckles on the face of the future mother is associated with the baby girl. It is also believed that if the belly of a pregnant woman becomes sharp, she will have a boy, and if it becomes flat, she will have a girl[4]. "Gender reveal party" participants are no stranger to the traditional characteristics and gender prediction-related beliefs because, in the social and cultural circles they grew up, until recently, traditional practices had continued without paying attention to the recognition of official religious institutions as "superstitions". However, conservative groups trying to get away from these beliefs, which are declared to be "superstitious" with the influence of religion-based ideologies they are involved in, have turned to an alternative "gender party". It can be seen that these alternatives are actually modelled on sociocultural practices such as "baby showers" in the popular cultures of Christian North America and Continental Europe where they are named as "gender reveal parties".

Figure 2. Figure from a gender learning party.



The *kırklama/kırk uçurma* ritual performed in Turkish folk life with beliefs representing the traditional worldview in the postpartum period is one of the rites of passage that began to change in the recent past. Kırk uçurma is also practiced today as a ritual that bears the traces of ancient beliefs among Muslim Turks. According to the mythic sources of the traditional

[4] The stated beliefs in the settlements located in the western part of Türkiye were identified during field surveys conducted at different times. For more examples seen across Türkiye, see: (Acıpayamlı 1974).

worldview, the forty-day period after birth is very important for the mother and baby. In this forty-day period, both are believed to be physically and spiritually powerless; so, they can be the target of deadly attacks by evil spirits[5]. For this reason, it is necessary to protect and keep the mother and baby under supervision. The female evil spirit, which is given names such as "red spirit (*al ruhu*), red woman (*al karısı*)" in Turkish folk beliefs, is a particularly metaphysical threat to be considered. This female spirit evokes Lilith of Jewish mythic narratives with her actions (Graves and Patai 2009: 103-108). In different parts of Türkiye, spell-casting ceremonies are held in order to protect the mother and her baby from this spirit. Tying a red ribbon to the mother's forehead or waist; hanging a gun, a male's jacket, the Quran, etc. on the wall of the baby and mother's room; and putting iron stuff under the pillow of the mother or the baby are among the examples of these practices (Acıpayamlı 1974: 81-84). The mother and baby are somehow liberated by overcoming this forty-day long critical time, getting released from restrictions such as not accepting visitors and not leaving the house. Gifts are given to the baby and his/her mother, who are bathed with water, and small golds and stones are thrown into it during the kırklama ritual which is carried out with the participation of the women of the family and friends. In some parts of Türkiye, the baby is washed under the name "*yarı-kırk*" on the twentieth day after birth. On the 40th day, the baby is washed for the last time under the name kırklama. Kırklama is a symbolic act aiming to transform the baby, who was born as a biological entity, into a cultural entity, as in the other rites of passage based on birth. The traditional kırklama ceremony with its ritualistic character has become a popular entertainment and show-orieted event in recent years.

Figure 3. Examples of materials used in the traditional "kırklama" ceremony.



[5] The data regarding this belief common in Turkish folk life were determined by field surveys conducted at different times between the communities in the north of Türkiye. For comparative examples of similar beliefs and practices among various Turkic peoples, see: (Açа 2005).

Another postpartum practice, which has traditional representations in Turkish folk life, is *bebek mevlidi*. This ceremony, which is more historical compared to "baby shower" and "gender reveal party", has expanded its practice area in relation to the rise of political conservatism. In the ceremony, whose participants are women among relatives and neighbours, *hafız* women who know the Quran by heart reads verses from the book. Then, all together, hymns and prayers are recited. During this traditional ceremony, guests are offered food and drink, and they present gifts to the baby. This ceremony has become a flashy show in recent years through receiving services from social organization companies in specially rented event areas. It can be said that this change based on political and economic status is effective in this transformation seen between both secular and conservative groups.

Figure 4. Scenes from traditional "bebek mevlidi".



Another traditional practice in Turkish folk life, in which the biological development of the baby is associated with the culturalization process, is the *diş buğdayı* (tooth wheat) ceremony performed during the time the teeth start to grow. It is important for teeth to start growing, to have the privilege of chewing solid foods, and to accelerate the physical development of the baby. This important biological process has been the source of a traditional ritual within culture, like other processes around birth. After it is discovered that the baby's first tooth has come out, a modest celebration of a traditional nature is organized with the participation of close friends and family members. Wheat boiled in water to establish a magical analogy with the tooth, which has come out and is often called *hedik*, is served to those who attend the celebration and to neighbours. In the meantime, participants offer gifts to the baby. The ceremony for the post-partum rite of passage has also begun to be transformed in recent years. The diş buğdayı (tooth wheat), which is held in a small festival atmosphere as in "baby shower" and "gender reveal party", is preferred by both secular and conservative groups. However, because of the fact that the baby's physical development is an important stage, the entertainment and blessing-based ritual dimension shaped on the traditional worldview axis has been replaced by entertainment and social status shows.

Figure 5. A "diş buğdayı" tooth party scene in Türkiye.



Another ritual followed by its traditional feature after childbirth is a ceremony called *altı ay kınası* which is performed six months after the birth of a girl. In this ceremony, which is widely applied in Turkish folk life, the girl is wished to marry a good husband when she reaches the age of marriage. This ritual, in which expectations for later periods of the baby's life are revealed by imitation, are carried out in houses with the participation of women, as in other traditional rituals. In the ritual, which is an imitation of the *kına gecesi* (henna night), an important ritual of marriage in Turkish folk culture, henna is applied to the baby girl and her mother's hands. Meanwhile, folk songs specific to the ceremony are sung. With the songs, it is emphasized that the paths of the mother and daughter will be split in the future. In the ceremony, accompanied by songs and dances, treats are offered to participants. This traditional ritual, which used to be performed according to the gender after childbirth, has been transformed into a social status show by being removed from its cultural meanings and functions, as in the previous examples. The henna ceremonies performed by a limited number of participants with modest entertainment tools have been replaced by wide-ranging, expensive and flamboyant "baby hennas". Clothing and entertainment styles with Indian and Arabic motifs, which are also encountered in circumcision and marriage ceremonies and will be mentioned separately in this study, can be seen in the updated versions of the ceremony. In these new ceremonies, where secular and conservative groups prefer different forms of entertainment, the common aspect of the two groups is that they spend a lot of money to show off. Luxurious ceremony venues, and expensive clothes, treats and shows constitute the expenditure items in the ceremonies of both groups.

Figure 6 and Figure 7. Scenes from traditional and transformed baby henna ceremonies.





Another traditional ceremony that has been practiced for centuries after birth is *adım çöreği*. The baby and the mother are at the centre of this ceremony, which is carried out as a result of the realization that the baby, who continues his/her biological development in a healthy way, has started to stand and take the first steps. Specially baked cupcakes are served to participants at the ceremony where family members, friends and neighbours are invited. Sometimes, this cupcake is rolled like a wheel to create an analogical connection with the child's walking. Participants in the ceremony celebrate this positive development by giving gifts to the baby and his/her mother. Continuing today in rural settlements, this ceremony has been transformed in urban areas. As in the other rites of passage, expensive and flashy "first step parties" have been organized by show and organization companies. The efforts of organization companies to expand their program portfolio in order to appeal to this new wealthy class triggered the transformation. The neo-conservative aristocracy that became more affluent by the economic privileges provided by the political Islamist powers quickly accepted this new concept.

Figure 8 and Figure 9. Scenes from the traditional "Adım Çöreği" ceremony.





Sünnet (circumcision), which was included in Turkish folk life after the adoption of Islam, is a ritual encountered in different cultures and beliefs, associated with religion; however, its cultural aspect is more dominant. The source, meaning, functions and effects of circumcision, which is also applied to girls in the Arabian peninsula and North African communities, are also being discussed today. Circumcision, which is applied to boys in Turkish folk life, is one of the important transition periods of the male-dominant society because circumcision is seen as a condition of being a Muslim as well as an exertion of masculinity. It is possible that uncircumcised male individuals will be excluded from folk life. Circumcision has been performed in folk life for over a thousand years, with sometimes unpretentious, and sometimes flashy ceremonies. The circumcision ceremonies of the *shehzades* (Ottoman sultan's sons) during the Ottoman period were conducted in a great style that could be a subject for books, while the same period was simpler in folk life. Among the invented traditions that have been spread among the economically wealthy groups after the rise of political Islam to power in Türkiye, there are also new forms of circumcision

ceremonies. For example, the child is surrounded by show attendants dressed in Indian and Arabic motifs in concubine clothing and janissary uniforms, enthroned, taken out in the presence of the participants with a mehter anthem[6], greeted with takbirs, and treated like a prince. This preference of many parents can also be seen as the declaration of their political Islamist identity to the community. Festival-like invention ceremonies also have the function of spreading the Neo-Ottomanist ideology. As Hobsbawm and Ranger (2006: 3) express when commenting on invented traditions, the specificity of the invented traditions that refer to certain historical periods lies in the largely artificial and fabricated nature of this continuum. These are the traditions which are adapted to new situations, seen as forms that bring old situations to mind, or recreate their own past with semi-obligated repetitions.

Figure 10. Scenes from the Sur-name of 1582, on the circumcision of Sultan III. Murat's son Prince Mehmet.



Source: (Atasoy 2002).

Figure 11. Even in the COVID 19 pandemic "show off" can be more important.



Before moving on to marriage-related rituals, there will be another example of a rite of passage, represented by several examples in recent years that have caused controversy in Turkish folk life. Problematic approaches to gender perception are effective at the basis of the discussions. This ceremony, called the "menstrual party", is carried out with the participation of the girl and her mother's friends after the first period of the girl who is on the brink of

[6] Army harmonica of the Ottoman period. Today, it has been popularized again by Islamist and nationalist political forces.

puberty. This ceremony, like the "baby shower" ceremony, which is seen as "menarche ritual" or "red party" in the popular cultures of North America and Continental Europe, was first organized in Türkiye by a psychologist mother who wanted to draw attention to gender equality in 2008. Mostly, the perception of gender shaped by religion has prevented the spread of this ceremony.

Figure 12. A menstrual party scene in Türkiye.



In Turkish folk life, marriage-related ceremonies are carried out in three periods, as in the ceremonies related to childbirth. These three periods consist of ceremonies a) which are held after the wedding ceremony, b) which take place in the period from the decision of marriage to the wedding ceremony (wedding), and c) which are held during the marriage ceremony (wedding).

Traditional marriage in Turks has been carried out for centuries with such types of marriage as matchmaking, *kaçma/kaçırma* (runaway match), *levirat*, *sororat*, and *beşik kertme* (marriage in the cradle[7]). Nowadays, there are limited examples of these types of marriage, and couples often meet and marry with their own decisions.

Surprise marriage proposal formats had never been seen before in modern Turkish folk life; however, they have recently been popular. Men sometimes receive services from wedding-organizing companies in order to plan a surprise marriage proposal. In recent years, as a consequence of the influence of western popular culture, high-budget marriage proposal organizations have gained popularity, especially among conservative rich groups.

After the marriage decision with some traditional ceremonies, an "engagement" planning which is held before the wedding ceremony is carried out by wearing a promise ring between the families of man and woman, as it has been for centuries. From past to present, the "engagement" ceremony in traditional families has been held in the prospective bride's family house. In the engagement, which is a small model of the wedding ceremony, guests are served

[7] It is a type of marriage that continues until 40 years ago. It is not implemented today. Two families, one with a baby boy and a girl, make a verbal agreement to marry their children in the future.

meals, and entertainments of music and dance are held. The couple, who previously wore promise rings, wear engagement rings this time. The wedding follows the engagement; in other words, wedding ceremonies are held after the engagement[8].

"Henna night/Bridal henna" is among the constant elements of traditional or modern-character marriage ceremonies in Turkish folk life. Henna night is a ritual performed in the girl's family house the night before the wedding day, and participants are women. This ritual is another rite of passage with a threshold character with the functions of saying farewell to the house, where the girl grew up, and saying goodbye to her family and moving on to her new home, family and status.

Performing the party with gifts sent from the groom's family; guests walking to the girl's house with instruments and burned candles; playing various games; the bride wearing a veil with silver embroidery covering her face as henna clothes; making the bride face qibla while applying henna; and the mother-in-law throwing money over the bride's head while she sits for henna are among the henna practices. When henna is applied to the bride's hands, the bride is placed somewhere where all guests can see, and a veil covers her face. This veil is usually red. The red colour is known as the symbol of femininity and symbolizes fertility in many situations (Aça and Yolcu 2019: 379). At the henna ceremony, the bride is made to cry with folk songs with significant melodies. Meanwhile, some of the guests also join and start to cry. In order not to cause a similar situation in the future, they care not to have widows or divorced women among those who apply henna to the bride's hand.

Figure 13 and Figure 14. Scenes from traditional henna nights in Turkish folk life.





Henna night is among the ceremonies transformed among the rites of passage in folk life. In new henna nights, which have started to be seen in folk life within a short span of twenty years, the practices, which were previously carried out on the axis of traditional folk beliefs, have been transformed into shows which reveal the new status of the new Islamist

[8] Marriage ceremonies included in the study were identified by field research conducted among different communities located in the west and north of Türkiye. For similar ceremonies seen with slight differences between other communities, see: (Örnek 2000).

upper class. The house, where relatives and acquaintances were invited, has been replaced by henna nights with a home concept in which crowds attend rented halls, and expensive services are taken from social organization companies for show and entertainment. Expenditures incompatible with the socioeconomic structure of Türkiye are made for elements such as salon decorations, treats, music, dance, and special costumes for the bride.

Vanity and glamour on henna nights refer to Indian, Middle Eastern and Ottoman cultures rather than those associated with North American and Continental Europe regarding some of the rituals mentioned before. Special costumes, similar to traditional *bindallı* which is made of colourful fabrics and stones imported from India but used as traditional henna clothes for enthusiastic shows performed by show groups during the henna night, are the visible reflections of these references. As Hobsbawm and Ranger (2006: 8) indicate, new traditions, which sometimes recline on old traditions, can be arranged by borrowing from the rich repertoire of official rituals, symbolism and moral sermons. On the other hand, these examples can be seen as degenerate wannabes at first glance. However, all these should also be evaluated as an indication of the superiority of the newly invented identity.

Figure 15. Traditional "bindallı" and "caftan" samples worn at henna nights are together.



Figure 16. Examples of Indian and Arabic style "caftans" on display in stores that rent/sell wedding clothes.





The bride and groom are greeted by the Ottoman janissaries protecting the couple as a layout on 'new' henna nights where the sultan and the queen (princess) sit on a rather flamboyant throne. This scene refers to the palace life of the Ottoman period, as in the circumcision ceremonies. On the other hand, such scenes have begun to appear in the previously mentioned "engagement" ceremonies.

Figure 17 and Figure 18. Scenes from Indian henna night concepts that can be seen among all kinds of social groups in Türkiye.





The new type of henna nights seen in urban areas[9] has quickly spread to rural settlements. In rural settlements, where traditional life based on agricultural and animal production continues partially, rented halls have been replaced by village squares or gardens. According to the official records, annual income per capita in Türkiye fell from $12,582 in 2013 to $8,600 in 2020 (https://tr.euronews.com/2022/09/06/turkiyede-kisi-basina-dusen-milli-gelir-kac-dolar-yillar-icinde-nasil-degisti (accessed: 10.10.2022). However, in reverse proportion, there has been a significant increase in the amount spent on ceremonies organized on the axis of passage periods, as in other areas of everyday life. While the amount spent on all processes of marriage ceremonies, including henna nights, can reach a minimum level of $10,000, there is no upper limit. A similar situation is observed in new circumcision ceremonies mentioned earlier. Turkish people, who evolve into a consumption-oriented society, reveal their new identity through transformations in the rites of passage. The historical, social and cultural sources of this transformation, which have serious effects on sociocultural and economic life, are examined by Turkish social scientists. Erol Göka (2006: 56-57), for example, drew attention to the historicity of vanity and fondness for glamour, which, like many underdeveloped countries, does not match with rational behaviour patterns in Türkiye and prepares the ground for sociopathy and mafialike formations. Göka states that historical examples of vanity and glamour in Türkiye are ignored and that the emphasis on simplicity in Sufism is

[9] Cities are a set of economic, social, political and cultural relations in which not only individuals but also different social and cultural communities live. Cities are a space and environment where capitalist relations are reproduced in daily life. (Lefebvre 1982: 9).

highlighted. Indeed, looking at the lifestyles of the past in nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, the desire to be easily enriched, and an opportunistic worldview on this point of view can be observed.

In Turkish folk life, it can also be seen that henna nights are organized as a "bachelorette party". This ceremony, which had only been seen among secular rich groups, is carried out with the traditional application of henna in the bride's hand and with clothes special to the night. However, these ceremonies designed as enthusiastic club parties that last for long hours do not leave much time for traditional elements. Such parties, which can be attended by men as well as women, can also become marginal entertainments with the concept of "strip party" later in the night. The elements of henna nights with the concept of "bachelorette party", which are not seen in traditional Turkish folk life, have been transferred from premarital parties seen in Western societies. This transfer quickly gained acceptance among wealthy conservative groups. Unlike secular groups, bachelorette parties that do not include erotic elements in luxurious yachts and venues in Istanbul have become more common.

Figure 19 and Figure 20. Scenes from henna night entertainments with the concept of bachelorette party between secular and conservative groups in Istanbul.





Source: (https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/gunaydin/cankurt/2013/08/09/kina-gecelerinin-degismez-adresi (accessed: 12.06.2020), https://www.sondakikaturk.com.tr/yasam/turbanlilarin-bekarliga-veda-partisi-dilipak-i-kizdirdirdi-h137384.html (accessed: 30.04.2020)

After the end of biological vitality, traditional ceremonies are carried out in Turkish folk life as in many societies[10]. In ceremonies carried out in certain periods after death, verses are read from the Qur'an to demand God to forgive the sins of the deceased in eternal life and to accept them into the heaven. However, in the cultural and religious background of these ceremonies held on the 7th, 40th and 52nd days after death, there are traces of the pre-Islamic

[10] For more information and examples about traditional ceremonies after death in Turkish folk life, see: Örnek 1979.

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Shamanism era, and that is why these ceremonies are not been in many other Muslim societies. These ceremonies, which continue in the folk life of Turkish people, who have been Muslims for more than a thousand years, have been prevented by religious authorities. This attitude, which has been going on for centuries, has taken a much more dominant form in the last 20 years. Today's political Islamist power apparatuses, which have supported the understanding of Sunni Islam for nearly 600 years, object to the rituals performed after death through official religious institutions using the terms "bid'at[11]" and "superstition". Some of the religious sects that were activated after the weakening secular management are producing discourses in parallel with the current political authority's attitude towards the issue.

Condolence tents seen in Turkish folk life recently are one of the areas where the new ideological climate manifests itself. Previously, condolence tents used to be often seen in tribal communities in the eastern and south-eastern regions of Türkiye. Recently, condolence tents, which are also seen in other social and cultural areas, have become a political field where local politicians and tradesmen attend and offer their condolences to those at the funeral house. Condolence tents have become places not only for expressing condolences but also a field for political show-off and for rebuilding and reinforcing power.

Conclusion

Culture is open to interaction and change due to its dynamic nature. Even traditional societies resistant to change are affected by the winds of change. While this is often gradual and internalized through natural factors, it sometimes happens much faster and with marginal consequences through political identities. As a consequence of the globalisation process, cultural changes occur much faster and much more effectively. The sight of ceremonies, which have not been previously represented in local cultures, and the structural and functional change of existing ceremonies are the natural consequences of cultural dynamism. Considering the examples in this study, the changes in the rites of passage in Turkish folk life can be stated as follows:

1. The addition of motifs, cultural patterns and ceremonies seen in Western cultures to folk life and cultural processes as a consequence of the process of globalization,

2. The addition of ceremonies with Arab motifs to folk life and cultural processes with the charm of the luxurious lifestyles of oil-rich Arab countries,

3. The addition of the rites of passage reminiscent of a festival of the rich class in India, which attracts the attention of the whole world with its exotic character,

[11] This term is used for traditions and practices that are applied as an indicator of cultural diversity in Muslim communities but are expressed by sharp religious authorities as they are believed to be incompatible with the sunna of the Prophet of Islam.

4. The addition of the palace ceremonies of the legal Islamist authority which has attempted to build a fictional history by claiming to have modelled the Ottoman Empire administratively, socially and culturally,

5. The addition of the lifestyle invented by marginal social groups to a mafialike lifestyle for reasons such as unemployment, despair, injustice, and social and economic inequality.

Understandably, the changes seen in the rites of passage in Turkish folk life are based on sociological, economic, cultural and political reasons. The inventions of the legal Islamist authority towards structuring social and cultural life are particularly dominant in the mentioned references. This main reference feeds the other references specified, except for the first one.

Societies that cannot focus on the future often find the remedy to take refuge in the past and to reconstruct it. Social traumas triggered by the domino effect of political traumas can, in some cases, lead the community to turn their face to the future by turning away from the past. Unlike such processes, which have a positive effect on the consequences, this type of "reckoning" does not occur in societies where political movements are made the main determinant of the social and cultural climate; therefore, future designs are replaced by refuge in the past, and reality blindness in both individuals and the masses is revealed. This situation, which is compatible with the meaning that social psychology imposes on the concept of mass schizophrenia, can concretely be followed in Turkish society and culture, especially in the practices carried out in traditional ceremonies.

The next generation of the aforementioned rites of passage are in an alternative reality perception disconnected from the actual reality, and the masses, which understand reality with bias and measure everything according to their own stance, focus on their own desires and interests in their mind and feed their invented identity with an economy of consumption regardless of the universal values of humanity. Other members who would like to take advantage of the concessions provided to the group by getting close to it, which is economically fed by political will, strive to push the boundaries of their social and economic status. In order to organize glamorous marriage and circumcision ceremonies, their way of using large sums of bank loans is just one of the concrete indicators of this effort. The consumption potential of this audience, which pursues trends seen as indicators and requirements of the elite conservative way of life, is also very strong in other matters than transitional practices. While the political authority provides financial resources to the lucky minority of this new identity created on a social and cultural basis, the remaining crowd often appears to provide a veiled consensus on the basis of consumption. The individual and social effects of unlimited consumption fuelled by the slogans "blessed cause" and "blessed leader" have been ignored, and the profile of "middle-income citizen" created in Türkiye in the 1980s

has been pulled from the stage and left behind a sharp double polarity consisting of the profile of "elite citizen" and "obeying poor citizen". These new elites, competing with the secular group, and those who "obey" them, ironically, do not mind breaking away from the historical reality while trying to keep the memories of the Ottoman's rising era alive and referring to the political and social structure of the Abdulhamid's era. Dramatically, it is known that the bureaucratic elites of the Abdulhamid II era supported an Islamic policy as much as naturalized bribery, corruption, censorship and lawlessness. As a matter of fact, the atmosphere of the collapse period of the Ottoman empire coincides with the current social texture.

Invented as a result of Turkey's political and economic traumas in the second half of the 20th century, this new identity, with all its arguments and discourses followed since the beginning of the 21st century, is in an attitude that sanctifies its own existence. This attitude, while seeing itself superior to others through elements such as history, culture, language and faith, has started to produce marginalized groups having utopian discourses that have deepened the historical fiction in a sociological structure with an increasing number of objections and arguments on modernism. Members of this new identity, which is being built by political references, unite around the idea of unlimited obedience with the magic and dream of the status they obtain or achieve through this reference.

The recent trauma of the Turkish social fabric and culture, which has evolved in a fragile manner under the influence of political and economic determinants since the 1950s, has become much deeper, as can be understood from the ceremonies that constitute the population of this study. On the other hand, the lives of popular or invented identities and the cultural ceremonies related to them can end much faster than in the past due to the dizzying speed of the age. The identity imposed on Turkish folk life and culture and the invented traditions that depend on it, the resources it feeds, and the arguments it uses to be visible have a similar fate. In Turkish folk life, other political identities that may cause chronic antagonisms in the future can also be invented. However, the sediments that the existing invented identity will leave behind will be in previously unseen dimensions in Turkish society life and culture. Similar historical experiences experienced by societies with fragile political, social and cultural atmospheres seem to support this argument.

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